



Wayne Metropolitan
Community Action Agency

2026 Community Needs Assessment

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Executive Summary

Purpose of the Community Needs Assessment

Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency (Wayne Metro) conducts a comprehensive Community Needs Assessment (CNA) every three years to determine the needs of the larger community, specifically those who are living in poverty. The findings help identify challenges and trends that inform the agency's strategic plan and allocation of resources.

The CNA is an opportunity to engage residents and local organizations in conversations about services, resources, and policies. It provides space to consider quantitative and qualitative data from a range of sources. With a deeper understanding of the current and emerging needs of residents who are living in poverty, the CNA allows Wayne Metro to consider whether current programs and services are achieving their intended goals, as well as new programs and services that should be introduced for emerging needs.

Between 2023 (previous CNA) and 2026, community priorities shifted sharply from empowerment-focused goals to basic economic survival, highlighting cost-of-living pressures, utility rate increases, and inflation. Civic engagement (broadly defined as actions that individuals or groups take to address the concerns and well-being of their communities, their social groups, or society as a whole) fell from the top priority of Wayne Metro's 2023 *Community Needs Assessment* to seventh place in 2026, while income adequacy and utility costs surged to the top, forcing households from stability to crisis management.

Since 2020, poverty in Wayne County has been increasing, while national poverty rates have declined slightly. Michigan's overall poverty rate has remained relatively stable over the past four years. The simultaneous rise in median household income and poverty rates in Wayne County suggests that income growth has not kept pace with the rising cost of living. It also reflects ongoing challenges related to job quality and wage levels, indicating that many residents are not benefiting equitably from broader economic gains.

Key Findings

Analysis of data collected for the 2026 CNA compared to prior years identified key findings:

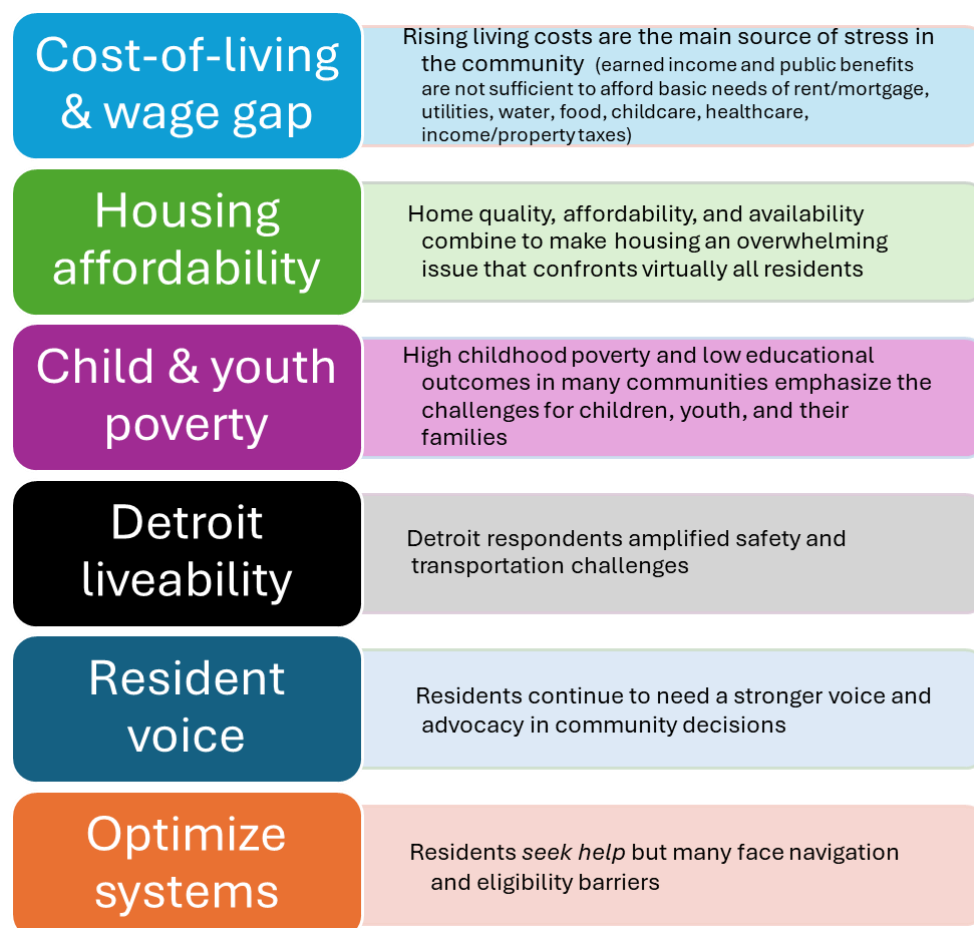


Exhibit 1 Key Findings

Wayne Metro's Impact on Community Needs

Wayne Metro's services generally address the primary needs identified. Implications for Wayne Metro's resources follow the high-level recommendations listed below:

Increase public benefits and income supports to assist people with bridging the gap between their earned income and basic living expenses.

Wayne Metro's services that provide income support increase monthly budgets, such as financial assistance for *rent or mortgage, utility and water bills, income tax and property tax payments, childcare, and public benefits enrollment*.

The agency continues long-standing relationships with local and regional food banks to provide *food support*, including client referrals, co-location of services, and event partnerships. Food insecurity has wide-ranging impacts on health, educational outcomes, and long-term economic stability. Findings demonstrate that food insecurity is both a symptom and a driver of poverty, reflecting insufficient income, rising living costs, and limited access to affordable resources. Addressing food insecurity in Wayne County, therefore, requires integrated strategies that combine income supports, housing stabilization, nutrition assistance enrollment, transportation access, and community-based food distribution, rather than emergency food responses alone.

Invest in strategies to increase home quality, affordability, and availability.

Wayne Metro's strategies include *improving safety, energy efficiency, and water conservation* for home quality, *financial coaching and homeownership counseling* for increasing affordability, and *emergency, temporary, and permanent supportive housing* for increasing availability.

The agency has restarted *home building* as a means to address the quality and affordable housing shortage.

The agency prioritizes *outreach and engagement* on housing issues through combined leadership in regional housing coalitions, such as coordinating the Region N Housing Coalition for the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA), as well as the Detroit and Out-Wayne-Continuum of Cares, which are the federally designated entities for homelessness services in our geography.

Increase wrap-around support for young children and youth.

Wayne Metro's *early childhood education* and *youth enrichment* programs apply a wrap-around, whole family approaches to improve early childhood and youth outcomes.

Wayne Metro continues to transform service delivery to youth and children. For example, staff are embedded in schools to better reach unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness and single parents.

Invest in strategies to connect residents to living wage jobs.

Wayne Metro continues to offer career pathways for its employees and clients. The agency continues to offer *adult basic education and digital literacy* in close coordination with services for children and youth.

The agency has various career pathway programs to develop skills needed for employment at Wayne Metro and beyond (Growing Green (Weatherization), Career Institute (Customer Service), STEAM Works, (Afterschool Programming in Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Mathematics), etc., workforce development programs).

The agency continues to strengthen partnerships with workforce development providers so staff may seamlessly refer clients.

Advocate for clients' needs as well as amplify their voices.

Wayne Metro continues to advocate for clients' needs at all levels of government and within the business community.

Community outreach and engagement works alongside community organization leaders and residents to help raise awareness and action on community issues, such as neighborhood health, safety, or transportation.

Participatory grantmaking through the Regional Advisory Councils gives power to local groups to design locally grown solutions for their community's needs.

Design services using a client-centered lens to optimize experience and outcomes.

While Wayne Metro strives toward processes, systems, and staff professional development that optimizes its clients' experience and outcomes, that is not always the customers' experience. Close to a third of respondents cited issues with how to access Wayne Metro services, time needed to access services, and service eligibility. Wayne Metro's *navigation and referral* services, or Connect Center, along with our *Innovation Lab*, are leading process integration to optimize service delivery and outcomes.

When designing services and staff professional development, the agency focuses on special populations, such as people with disabilities. For example, the agency continues to strengthen partnerships with agencies specializing in disability benefits and service navigation. The success in reaching participants with disabilities is evidenced by 40% of clients identifying as having a disability, while this group represents about 17% of the population in poverty as measured by census data.

When designing systems, the agency continues to advance data collection and analysis for improved time, quality, and cost of service.

Close gaps through strengthening partnerships and referral systems for services not offered by Wayne Metro.

While Wayne Metro provides multiple services across a variety of departments, there are still gaps in service area needs as documented by incoming client calls in fiscal year 2025 in the areas of Healthcare, Mental Health Services, and Transportation. Wayne Metro provides referrals and connections to alternative resources for services that the agency does not provide internally.

Two areas of need in which Wayne Metro assists families with referrals are primary healthcare providers and services for children with special needs. Wayne Metro does not have primary healthcare or mental health and disability service providers on staff, so they coordinate with partners. The referral process results in 100% of children receiving physical and dental health services each year. WM has formal and informal relationships with healthcare and mental health providers. For example, the agency has MOUs to refer clients to Hegira Health and The Children's Center. Journey to Healing, another mental health provider, offers services located at our Night Shelter.

Section 1: Introduction

Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency (WM) is a nonprofit, federally designated Community Action Agency that addresses the causes and conditions of poverty in Wayne County, Michigan, by empowering people and communities to be strong, healthy, and thriving. The graphic below lists the agency's services by Department.

Key Programs and Services		
Programmatic Department	Empowerment & Integration	• Financial products • Financial/Housing Counseling & Education • Housing payment assistance (homeowner and rent) • Income Tax Preparation • Navigation and referrals (Connect Center) • Participatory grantmaking • Utility (energy and natural gas) assistance • Water assistance • Community outreach
	Green & Healthy Homes	• Home repair • Water conservation • Weatherization • Workforce development • Innovation Lab
	Whole Family	• Education (adult) • Education (early childhood) • Education (K-12) • Food Assistance
	Supportive Housing & Homeless Services	• CAM & Coordinated Entry (Out-Wayne) • CoC (Out-Wayne) • Emergency Shelter • Supportive housing

Exhibit 1.1 Wayne Metro Services

As a Community Action Agency, WM is required to conduct a Community Needs Assessment (CNA) every three years. The purpose of the CNA is to provide the agency with a clear and comprehensive understanding of the challenges, strengths, and opportunities within the communities we serve. The scope encompasses Wayne County and its 43 diverse cities and neighborhoods, with a particular focus on communities disproportionately impacted by poverty.

Our CNA process centers the voices of residents and stakeholders in shaping how we respond to poverty, inequity, and systemic barriers, while analyzing readily available data. The CNA considers multiple dimensions of well-being, including employment, education,

housing, food security, transportation, health, and access to services. It draws on both quantitative data (such as Census statistics, labor force data, and agency service records) and qualitative insights (stakeholder survey). The CNA serves as both a compliance requirement and a strategic tool, guiding our programs, partnerships, and resource allocation.

The goals of the CNA are to:

- Identify and prioritize the most pressing needs faced by low-income individuals, families, and vulnerable populations in our service area.
- Map community assets, resources, and opportunities that can be leveraged to strengthen outcomes.
- Elevate resident and stakeholder voices through inclusive engagement strategies such as surveys.
- Provide reliable, data-driven insights that inform strategic planning, program development, and funding decisions.
- Strengthen accountability by ensuring our work aligns with the needs identified.

Ultimately, the CNA provides a roadmap for WM to refine its services, advocate for systemic change, work collaboratively with partners to address the root causes of poverty, and inform the agency's strategic investment decisions over the next three years.

Section 2: Stakeholder Input & Survey Findings

Wayne Metro generates feedback on the community needs of Wayne County in the critical areas of housing, employment, transportation, food access, safety, education, civic engagement and employment from clients as well as community stakeholders. This engagement process provides opportunities to discuss pressing needs of the community and offer recommendations to alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty. Qualitative data was collected through survey responses as well as feedback collected over time through the WM CONNECT Center.

Survey Overview

Wayne Metro fielded a comprehensive community needs survey from October 13, 2025, to December 7, 2025, and received 1,509 responses. Respondents were screened to ensure they live or work in Wayne County before being able to complete the survey questions.

Demographics of Survey Respondents

Demographically, the survey reflects a population that is **predominantly low-income, working age, and racially diverse**, with strong representation from **Black or African American residents** and residents of color. Most respondents fell within the **25–64 age range**, indicating the data primarily captures adults who are actively navigating employment, housing, and family-support systems. Gender responses skewed female, a common and expected pattern in community needs surveys tied to social service utilization.

Age

Respondents were primarily middle-aged and older adults, with 53% between the ages of 45 and 64 and an additional 23% age 65 or older. Adults aged 25 to 44 comprised roughly 24% of the sample, while young adults aged 18 to 24 were minimally represented at 0.4%. This age distribution indicates that the survey respondents were predominantly individuals experiencing long-term or fixed-income financial strain rather than short-term economic instability.

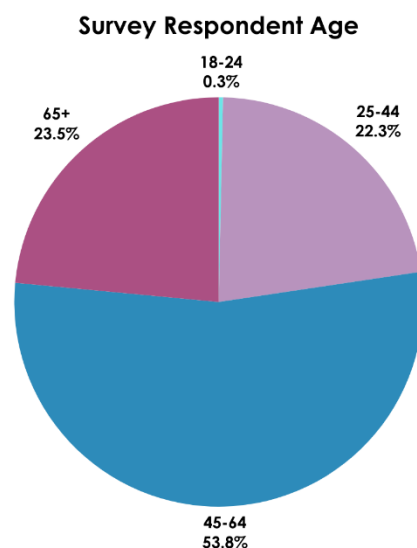


Exhibit 2.1 Survey Respondent Age

Gender and Race

The respondent pool was predominantly female and disproportionately Black or African American, consistent with populations facing higher structural and economic barriers. Women represented 85% of survey respondents, reflecting caregiving responsibilities, single-parent households, and patterns of engagement with social service systems. Racially, 78% of respondents identified as Black or African American, compared to approximately 38% of Wayne County's overall population, while 12% identified as White and 10% identified as other racial or ethnic groups.

Special Populations

The survey also captured high representation of residents with additional risk factors, including individuals with disabilities (43%) and single parents (27%), the majority of whom were female. Smaller but notable proportions of respondents identified as veterans or military family members (3%), LGBTQ+ (2%), or formerly incarcerated (2%). Collectively, these demographic characteristics demonstrate that the survey effectively reached populations experiencing overlapping vulnerabilities associated with increased risk of housing instability, income insecurity, and unmet basic needs.

Racial and Ethnic Breakdown of Responses

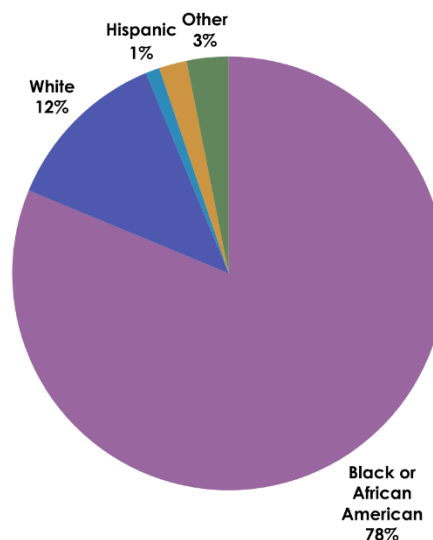


Exhibit 2.2 Racial and Ethnic Breakdown Responses

Geography

The majority of respondents reported living or working in Wayne County, confirming strong geographic relevance to Wayne Metro's service area. Responses were heavily concentrated in Detroit ZIP codes, with additional representation from inner-ring suburbs, aligning with Wayne Metro's priority populations. Of 1,509 respondents, 1,063 (71%) reside in Detroit, Highland Park, or Hamtramck, and 446 (29.5%) reside in Out-Wayne County.

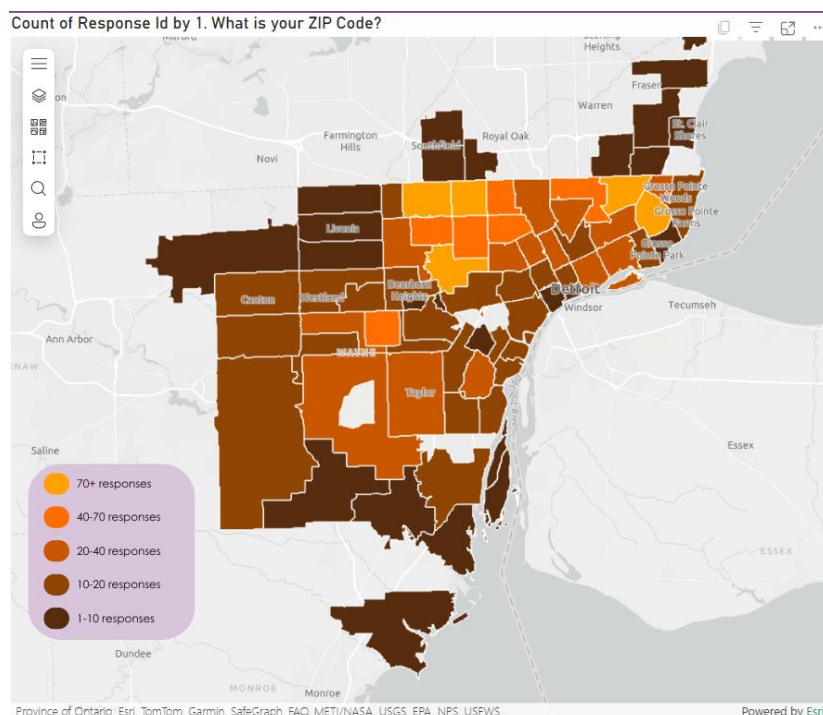


Exhibit 2.3 Geography of Respondents

Income

Across the dataset, responses consistently point to economic precarity as a defining condition for the surveyed population. Income-related questions show that respondents are disproportionately low-income and extremely low-income, reinforcing that the survey successfully reached Wayne Metro's target population rather than the general public. This income profile strongly contextualizes downstream needs related to housing instability, utility burden, food insecurity, and access to benefits.

Employment and income data suggest that work alone is not sufficient to ensure stability for many households. Even among respondents reporting employment, financial strain remains widespread, indicating issues related to low wages, underemployment, and rising costs of living, particularly housing and

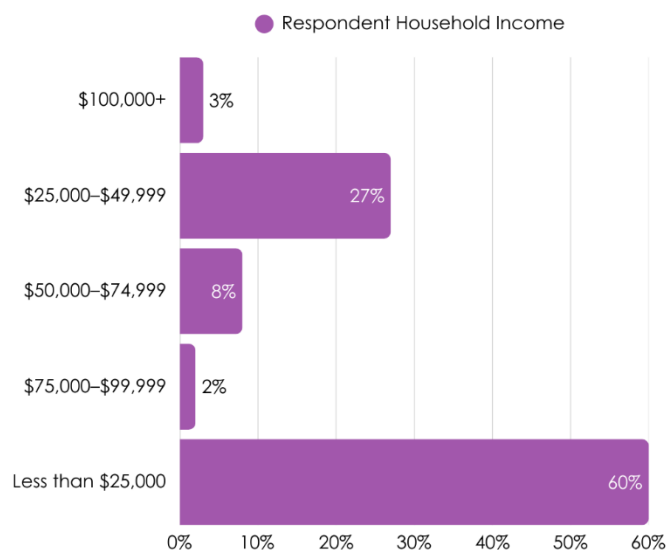


Exhibit 2.4 Respondent Household Income

utilities. This supports the framing of financial instability as a structural issue rather than an individual one.

60% of survey respondents report earning under \$25,000 per year, and 80% earning under \$50,000 per year.

Housing status

Responses consistently signal that housing affordability, utility costs, and basic needs are tightly intertwined. Respondents experiencing financial instability are also more likely to report difficulty maintaining housing, paying energy bills, or meeting food needs. This reinforces the importance of integrated service models (housing + energy + income supports) rather than siloed interventions.

48% of survey respondents own their home, 39% rent their home, and 10% either reside in emergency shelter or transitional housing, live with a friend or relative, or are experiencing temporary housing instability.

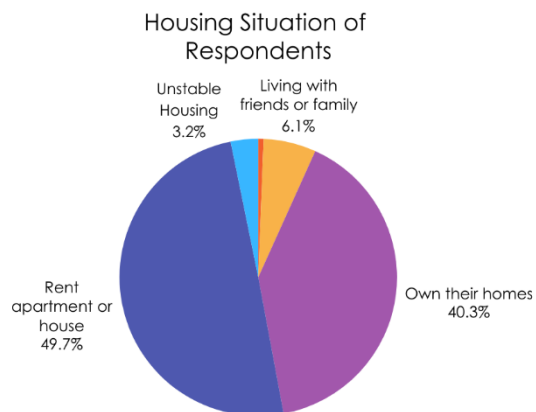


Exhibit 2.5 Housing Situation of Respondents

Employment status

Roughly 29% of respondents report being employed full-time, and 10% report working part-time. 26.2% of respondents are unemployed due to a disability, while 11% are unemployed and are actively looking for work.

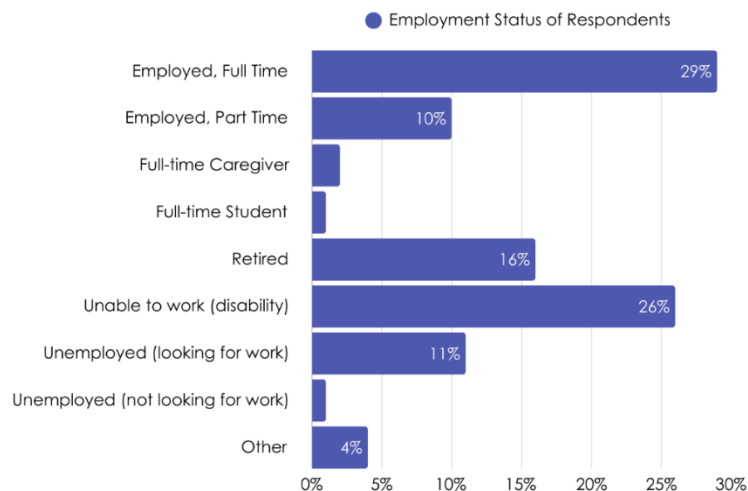


Exhibit 2.6 Employment Status of Respondents

Key Survey Findings

Wayne County residents are facing an economic survival crisis driven by high utility costs, low wages, disability-related barriers, and service access gaps. The data calls for immediate crisis assistance paired with long-term strategies focused on living wage employment, disability support, and system navigation.

Between 2023 and 2026, community priorities shifted sharply from empowerment-focused goals to basic economic survival. Civic engagement (broadly defined as actions that individuals or groups take to address the concerns and well-being of their communities, their social groups or society as a whole) fell from the top priority to seventh place, while income adequacy and utility costs surged to the top. This change reflects rising cost-of-living pressures, utility rate increases, and inflation, signaling that households have moved from a place of stability to one of crisis management.

Community Challenge Ratings

Respondents rated 20 different community challenges on a scale of 1 (not a challenge) to 5 (very big challenge). Nearly all respondents (approximately 1,508 out of 1,509) provided ratings for each challenge area. The following table shows how these challenges ranked based on average ratings and the percentage of respondents who rated each as a 'very big challenge' (5).

High utility costs, having enough income to cover basic needs, and access to healthy, affordable food were identified as the top three challenges facing households.

94% of respondents (1421 of 1496) cited high utility costs as a challenge for their household, with 62.5% of respondents citing it as a very big challenge for their household.

93% of respondents (1397 of 1496) cited having enough income to cover basic needs as a challenge facing their household, with 60.9% of respondents citing it as a very big challenge for their household.

86% of respondents (1289 of 1496) cited access to healthy, affordable food as a challenge facing their household, with 40.6% citing it as a very big challenge.

Notably, almost 50% of respondents cited finding a job that pays enough as a very big challenge for their household. 76% of respondents cited finding a job that pays enough as a challenge for their household.

Challenge Area	Average Score	% Rating 'Very Big Challenge'
High utility costs (water, gas, electric)	4.20	62.5%
Having enough income to cover basic needs	4.15	60.9%
Access to healthy, affordable food	3.59	40.6%
Managing money/building savings	3.58	44.3%
Finding a job that pays enough	3.54	49.2%
Affordable housing availability	3.52	48.5%

Top Three Urgent Priorities

After rating all challenges, respondents were asked to select their top three most urgent priorities to address among their household challenges. Out of 1,508 respondents who answered this question:

- **65.8% selected 'Having enough income to cover basic needs' (992 respondents)**
- **61.6% selected 'High utility costs (water, gas, electric)' (929 respondents)**
- **30.1% selected 'Finding a job that pays enough' (454 respondents)**
- 27.7% selected 'Affordable housing availability' (418 respondents)
- 22.7% selected 'Access to healthy, affordable food' (343 respondents)
- 17.5% selected 'Reliable transportation' (264 respondents)

Economic Survival needs, including utilities, income, and food, are among the highest-rated needs in 2025, showing a shift from 2023, when Civic Engagement was identified as the top priority. 2025 Data shows a clear shift toward immediate economic survival needs, reflecting ongoing cost-of-living pressures, inflation impacts, and utility rate increases in Wayne County.

Open-Ended Survey Responses

Open-ended survey responses reveal that residents face significant unmet housing needs related to habitability, affordability, legal protection, and accessibility. While many respondents are technically housed, deteriorating living conditions, rising costs, and lack of repair or legal assistance place households at ongoing risk of housing instability and displacement. These findings highlight the need for housing interventions that extend beyond rent assistance to include home repairs, eviction prevention, accessibility modifications, and legal support.

Major Themes Identified

1. Home Repairs & Habitability. The most common unmet need cited by respondents involves urgent home repairs necessary to maintain safe and livable housing. Residents reported needing assistance with heating systems and boilers, roof repairs, plumbing and water damage, electrical issues, structural repairs, and basic furnishings (beds, mattresses, appliances). Many respondents described living without essential systems (heat, hot water) or in deteriorating conditions that directly impact health and safety. These needs were frequently expressed by homeowners with limited income, indicating that while individuals may technically be housed, they lack the financial means to maintain safe living conditions.

2. Affordability & Rental Assistance Gaps. Respondents frequently cited the inability to access rent assistance or ongoing affordability supports, especially during periods of financial hardship. Common concerns included falling behind on rent due to income loss or rising costs, inability to secure emergency rental assistance, and difficulty qualifying for available programs. Several responses indicate that residents are working or on fixed incomes but still unable to keep pace with rent increases, placing them at heightened risk of eviction.

3. Legal Assistance & Tenant Protections. A notable portion of respondents explicitly requested help with legal issues related to housing, including eviction prevention, landlord disputes, and access to attorneys or legal advocacy. These responses suggest that residents are often navigating housing crises without legal guidance, increasing the likelihood of eviction or unsafe living conditions.

4. Accessibility & Disability-Related Housing Needs. Several responses referenced unmet needs related to disability or mobility limitations, including home modifications, safer living arrangements, and supportive housing options. These needs align with broader CNA findings showing a high prevalence of disability and suggest that many respondents are living in housing that does not meet their physical or functional needs.

5. Housing Quality, Safety, and Neighborhood Conditions. Respondents also described dissatisfaction with poor housing quality, unsafe or deteriorating environments, and limited availability of affordable, well-maintained housing. Some responses reflect a desire not simply for “any housing,” but for housing that is safe, clean, and dignified.

Section 3: Program & Service Utilization Context

What People Are Seeking Help For

Wayne Metro's Connect Center, an information and referral call center, provides access to a comprehensive range of programs and services under an integrated services delivery model for low-income residents. A majority of calls received by Wayne Metro come from within Wayne County. In fiscal year 2025, Wayne Metro received roughly 300,000 client calls. The three largest categories of client calls were housing instability and rental assistance needs (37%), water utility and billing assistance (21%), followed by general utility assistance (17%).

Fiscal Year 2025 Connect Center Calls by Category

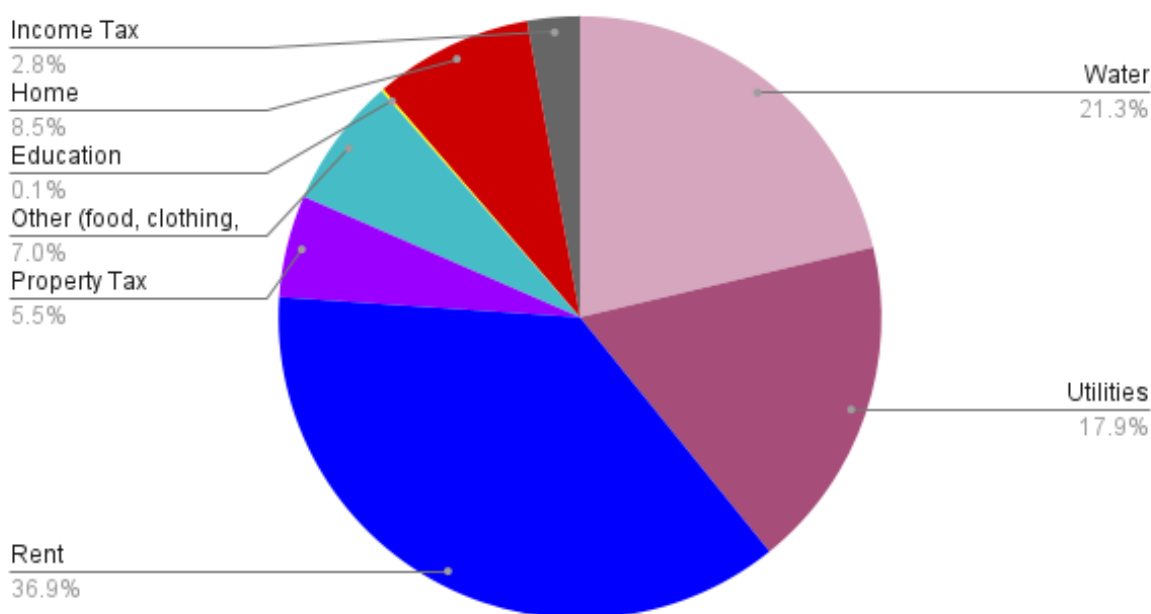


Exhibit 3.1 FY2025 Connect Center Calls by Category

Service Access and Barriers

70.8% of survey respondents reported having attempted to or have accessed services, highlighting widespread demand for support across housing, food, utilities, health, and legal aid. Across public health and social service systems, high attempted access rates often correlate with high unmet need, long wait times, system complexity, and inadequate information pathways.

Of those accessing supportive services, 19.1% reported that they were able to get assistance with no challenges, demonstrating that current services can and do work for

segments of the population. This affirms that models like coordinated entry, benefits navigation, and community-based referrals have value when effectively communicated and resourced. However, the contrast between those with smooth access and those encountering barriers highlights real inequities in who gets help and who does not — often based on awareness, timing, eligibility, and capacity rather than need alone. The three largest barriers to accessing services, as reported by survey respondents, includes:

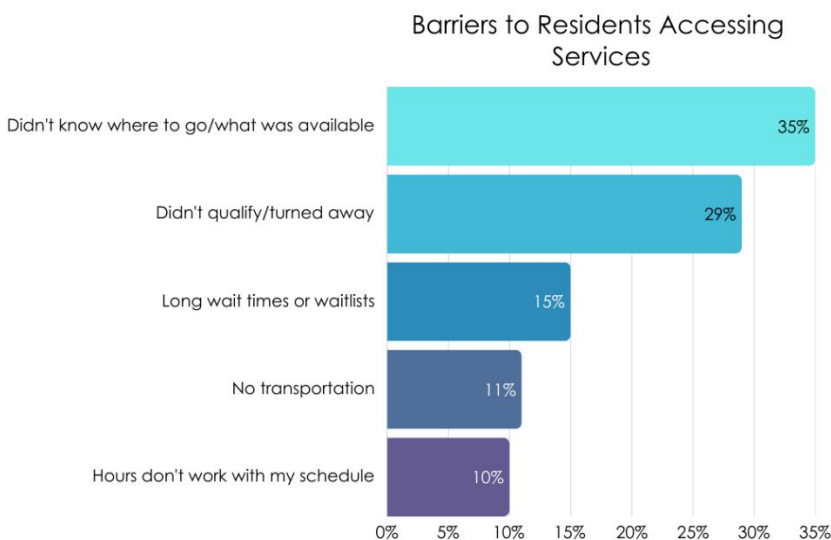


Exhibit 3.2 Barriers to Residents Accessing Services

Awareness Gap: Client didn't know where to go (34%)

One-third of respondents reported not knowing where to go when they needed help, indicating a large awareness gap between available services and people who need them.

Capacity Gap: Wait time for service too long (29%)

More than one in four respondents experienced wait times that were long enough to block or delay service access. This may refer to phone wait times, appointment backlogs, eligibility processing, or service slots filled before needs can be met.

Addressing wait times requires service expansion, staffing increases, streamlined intake, and technological improvements to reduce administrative bottlenecks. It also underscores the need for triage systems that prioritize the most urgent cases without imposing burdens on all seekers.

Eligibility Gap: Client didn't meet eligibility requirements (28%)

More than one in four respondents were told they did not qualify for services they tried to access. This reflects structural eligibility rules, documentation barriers, or program design that excludes people who nonetheless have clear needs.

Simplifying eligibility criteria where possible, offering pre-screening support, and providing appeal or referral pathways can reduce this barrier. Additionally, expanding program

flexibility and targeted pathways for ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed), working poor, disabled, and near-income-threshold populations can improve inclusion.

Section 4: Community Conditions & Needs Analysis

This section provides an overview of the 2026 Community Needs Assessment Survey data in comparison to other publicly available data sources across many topic areas that impact the lives of Wayne Metro clients and Wayne County community members. The public data is collected from a variety of sources, including U.S Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), American Community Survey Data, United Way for Southeast Michigan, U.S Department of Energy, The American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy, The National Low Income Housing Coalition 2025 Michigan Housing Profile and Out of Reach Report, Michigan's Campaign to End Homelessness, National Alliance to End Homelessness, The City of Detroit, Feeding America, Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, Transportation Riders United, and the Vera Institute of Justice.

The data illustrates how income insufficiency, rising utility costs, housing instability, food insecurity, transportation gaps, and neighborhood conditions are interconnected drivers of instability and poverty in Wayne County. Together, these indicators provide a comprehensive picture of both immediate household crises and systemic barriers that limit long-term stability.

By integrating lived experience with secondary data, this section identifies the conditions that sustain poverty in Wayne County and highlights the priority populations and disparities that must guide strategic investment and service delivery over the next three years.

4.1 Financial Stability & Income

Income Sufficiency: Pervasive Poverty in the Target Population

Wayne County households served by Wayne Metro, particularly extremely low-income individuals and families, are affected by pervasive poverty in their communities. Federal poverty level (FPL) guidelines, issued by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, simplify the equation for the official poverty thresholds used to determine the poverty rate. According to the guidelines, a two-person household is considered “in poverty” if its annual income is less than \$21,150. A three-person household with two children is considered “in poverty” if its income is less than \$26,650 ([U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#)).

Income

\$34,723

±\$685

Per capita income

about 80 percent of the
amount in Michigan:
\$40,990 ±\$308

about three-quarters of
the amount in United
States: \$45,256 ±\$100

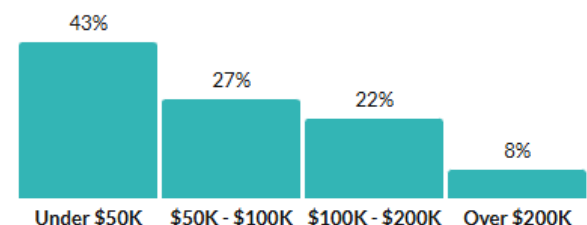
\$59,294

Median household
income

about 80 percent of the
amount in Michigan:
\$72,389

about three-quarters of
the amount in United
States: \$81,604

Household income



[Show data / Embed](#)

Exhibit 4.1.1 US Census Bureau Data on Wayne County Income and Median Household Income via Censusreporter.gov

The median household income in Wayne County is approximately \$59,294, which is notably below both the Michigan median (~\$72,389) and the U.S. median (~\$81,604) ([U.S. Census Bureau](#)). This indicates that half of the households in Wayne County earn less than about \$57K per year, reflecting lower overall earning power regionally.

Roughly 22.2% of Wayne County residents live below the poverty line, over 1.5 times the poverty rate for Michigan (13.5%) and the United States (12.2%) ([U.S. Census Bureau](#)). This high poverty rate underscores significant economic hardship across the county, with many residents unable to afford basic needs without public or community support. Higher poverty correlates with challenges in health, housing stability, food security, and educational attainment, affecting long-term economic stability.

Household Survival Budget, Wayne County, Michigan, 2023								
Monthly Costs	Single Adult	One Adult, One Child	One Adult, One In Child Care	Two Adults	Two Adults Two Children	Two Adults, Two In Child Care	Single Adult 65+	Two Adults 65+
Housing	\$930	\$1,047	\$1,047	\$1,047	\$1,334	\$1,334	\$930	\$1,047
Child Care	\$0	\$250	\$667	\$0	\$500	\$1,408	\$0	\$0
Food	\$468	\$791	\$710	\$857	\$1,438	\$1,269	\$430	\$789
Transportation	\$416	\$539	\$539	\$635	\$964	\$964	\$352	\$507
Health Care	\$180	\$447	\$447	\$447	\$670	\$670	\$587	\$1,175
Technology	\$86	\$86	\$86	\$116	\$116	\$116	\$86	\$116
Miscellaneous	\$208	\$316	\$350	\$310	\$502	\$576	\$239	\$363
Taxes	\$371	\$341	\$429	\$478	\$497	\$691	\$451	\$779
Monthly Total	\$2,659	\$3,817	\$4,275	\$3,890	\$6,021	\$7,028	\$3,075	\$4,776
ANNUAL TOTAL	\$31,908	\$45,804	\$51,300	\$46,680	\$72,252	\$84,336	\$36,900	\$57,312
Hourly Wage	\$15.95	\$22.90	\$25.65	\$23.34	\$36.13	\$42.17	\$18.45	\$28.66

Exhibit 4.1.2 Household Survival Budget, Wayne County, Michigan via <https://www.unitedforalice.org/county-reports/michigan#10/42.2425/-83.2111>

The 2026 Community Needs Assessment data indicate widespread and severe financial instability among Wayne County residents surveyed. Nearly 60% of respondents report annual household incomes below \$25,000, while 86% earn less than \$50,000, confirming that the survey reached an extremely low-income population rather than the general public. Having enough income to cover basic needs was cited as the second-highest challenge to survey respondents, with 74% of respondents citing this as a challenge. Poverty is pervasive in Wayne County, with the Cities of River Rouge (39.28%), Highland Park (39.08%), and Hamtramck (36.84%) having the highest poverty rates in the County as reported by Data Commons using ACS data ([Data Commons](#)).

Place	% in Poverty
River Rouge	39.29%
Highland Park	39.08%
Hamtramck	36.84%
Inkster	35.50%
Melvindale	33.73%
Detroit	30.90%
Dearborn	23.73%
Ecorse	23.59%
Lincoln Park	21.68%
Dearborn Heights	19.84%

Exhibit 4.1.3 Highest Percentages of Poverty in Wayne County by City

From 2015 to 2025, median household income increased at the county, state, and national levels. In 2015, median household income was \$41,421 in Wayne County and \$49,087 in Michigan. By 2025, it had risen to \$59,294 in Wayne County, \$72,389 statewide, and \$81,604 nationally ([U.S. Census Bureau](#); [Michigan Housing Data Portal](#)).

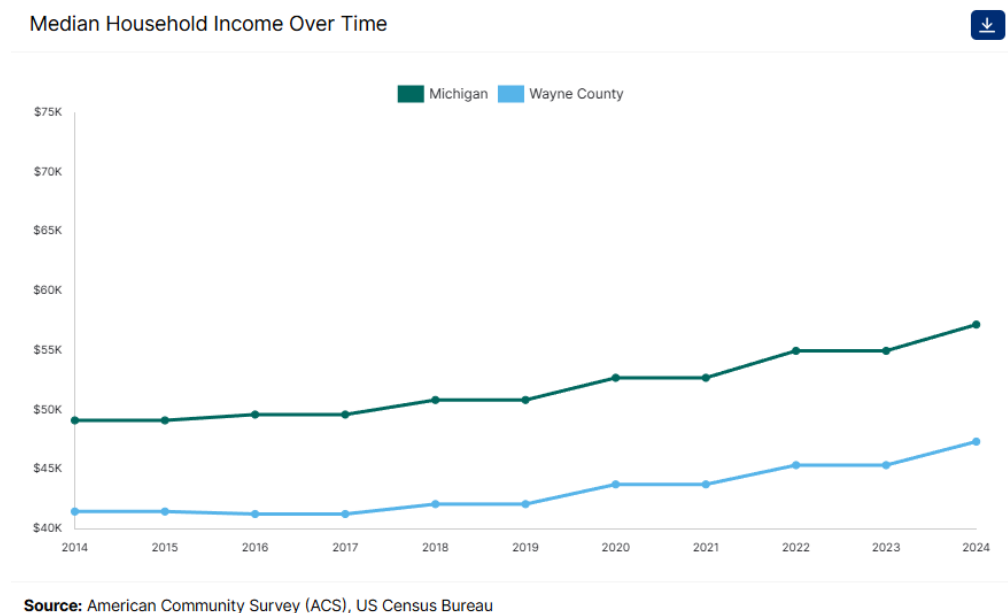


Exhibit 4.1.4 Wayne County Changes in Median Household Income over time via [censusreporter.gov](#)

Despite these gains, poverty trends tell a different story. Since 2020, poverty in Wayne County has been increasing, while national poverty rates have declined slightly. Michigan's overall poverty rate has remained relatively stable over the past four years, with modest decreases in recent years. The simultaneous rise in median household income and poverty rates in Wayne County suggests that income growth has not kept pace with the rising cost of living. It also reflects ongoing challenges related to job quality and wage levels, indicating that many residents are not benefiting equitably from broader economic gains.

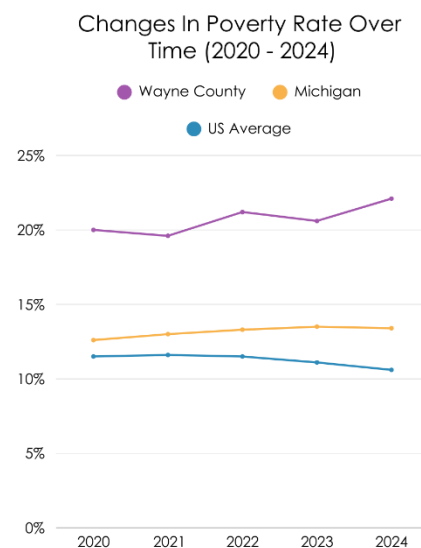


Exhibit 4.1.5 Changes in Poverty Rate over Time (2020-2024)

Job Quality and ALICE (Asset-Limited, Income Constrained and Employed): Income Insufficiency Persists Even with Employment

While Wayne County shows meaningful employment opportunities across sectors such as manufacturing, health care, and retail, overall income levels and economic outcomes reflect persistent financial strain for many residents ([United States Census Bureau](#)). 196 survey respondents report being employed full-time, but still low-income. Challenges by employment status are linked to income quality and the ability to find high-paying jobs.

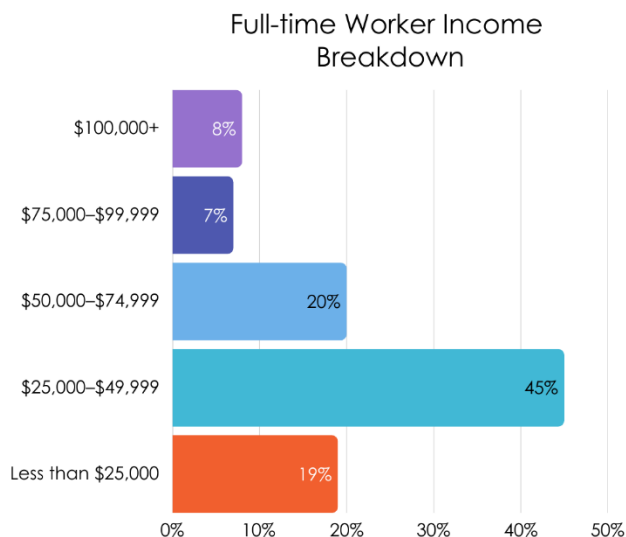


Exhibit 4.1.6 Full time Worker Income Breakdown

Survey respondents cited utility payments, not enough income, and quality employment as among the top challenges by income level for survey respondents (Wayne Metro Community Action Agency). As defined by the United Way, ALICE households are those whose income is above the federal poverty level but still insufficient to afford the basic cost of living (housing, child care, food, transportation, health care, technology, and taxes) ([United Way of Southeastern Michigan](#)). These families are working but still financially strained, as found similarly in our survey responses. In Wayne County, about 42% of households fall below the ALICE threshold ([United Way of Southeastern Michigan](#)).

2023 Point-in-Time-Data

Population: 1,751,169 **Number of Households:** 696,332

Median Household Income: \$57,281 (state average: \$69,183)

Labor Force Participation Rate: 60% (state average: 62%)

ALICE Households: 31% (state average 27%) **Households in Poverty:** 20% (state average 14%)

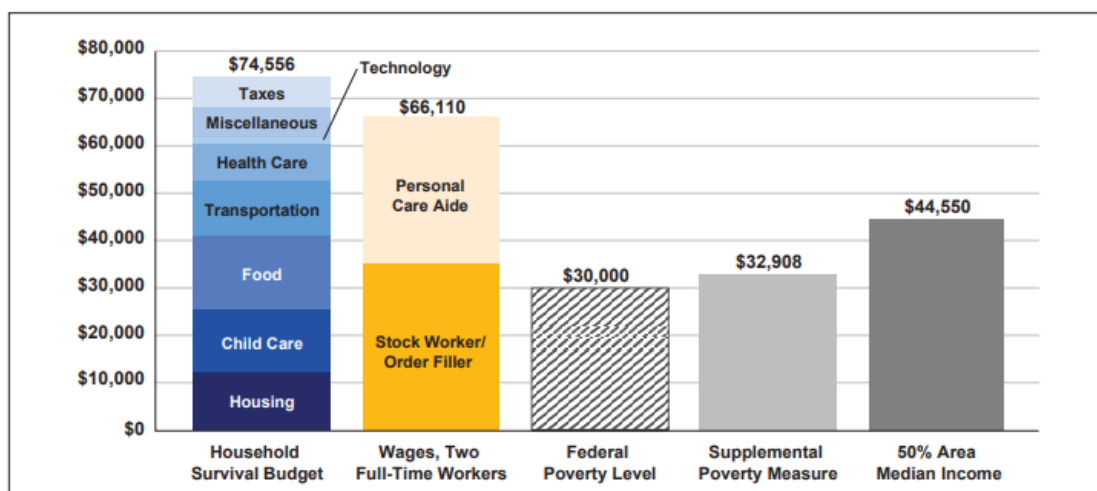
Exhibit 4.1.7 ALICE Point in Time Data (2023) Via [United Way of Southeastern Michigan](#)

28% of the WM survey respondents reported being employed full-time. Of these full-time employees, 65% report earning less than \$50,000 annually, and 19% reported earning less than \$25,000. 86% of survey respondent households report earning under \$50,000 per year, falling into the ALICE threshold ([United Way of Southeastern Michigan](#)). This shows that employed residents, including individuals working full-time who are traditionally assumed

to be financially stable, are facing instability in housing (paying over 30% of household income on housing-related expenses) and their ability to afford basic housing expenses due to poor job quality. Full-time workers rated income challenges at an average of 3.95 out of 5. This data shows that employment alone does not protect households from poverty, underscoring the prevalence of the working poor and the need for wages that reflect the true cost of living and Household Survival Budget in Wayne County ([United Way of Southeastern Michigan](#)).

Exhibit 4.1.8 Basic Costs Exceeded Wages of Common Jobs and Official Measures of Hardship via United Way of Southeastern Michigan

Figure 2. Basic Costs Exceeded Wages of Common Jobs and Official Measures of Hardship
Annual Budget, Wages, and Official Measures of Financial Hardship, Family of Four, Michigan, 2023



Note: Personal care aides monitor the condition of people with disabilities or chronic illnesses and help them with daily living activities. Stock workers/order fillers receive, store, and issue merchandise, materials, equipment, and other items from stockrooms, warehouses, or storage yards, and may operate power equipment to fill orders.

Sources: ALICE Household Survival Budget, 2023; Bureau of Labor Statistics–Occupational Employment Statistics, 2023; U.S. Census Bureau, Supplemental Poverty Measure, 2023; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, [Area Median Income](#) (State Income Limits), 2023

The Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM), first published by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2011, is a measure to better reflect the well-being of households based on the costs of food, clothing, shelter, and utilities ([United States Census Bureau](#)). In 2023, the SPM threshold for a renter household with two adults and two children in Michigan was \$32,908 ([United States Census Bureau](#)). In Wayne County, the per capita income is \$34,723, just above the supplemental poverty measure threshold. Michigan has a per capita income of \$40,990, and nationally, the per capita income is \$45,256. The per capita income of Wayne County, being \$34,723, signifies that a large portion of the population is living below the supplemental poverty level.

A majority of respondents earn under \$50,000 annually, and more than half earn under \$25,000, despite many working full-time. With per capita income in Wayne County hovering just above the Supplemental Poverty Measure threshold, and well below state and national

averages, many residents remain economically vulnerable. These findings underscore the prevalence of the working poor and demonstrate that job access alone is insufficient. Sustainable economic stability in Wayne County will require not only employment opportunities, but quality jobs with wages aligned to the true Household Survival Budget and the rising cost of housing, utilities, and essential goods.

Employment barriers

Over half of survey respondents (54%) reported not currently working, including: 26% unable to work due to disability, 16% retired, and 11.0% report being unemployed and actively seeking work. Only 28% of survey respondents are employed full-time, compared to roughly 40% nationally, based on ACS benchmarks.

43% of respondents report having a disability. 78% of people with disabilities earn less than \$25,000 annually. Over half of respondents (54%) who reported having a disability reported being unable to work due to their disability. ACS data similarly show that people with disabilities experience significantly lower labor force participation and earnings compared to those without disabilities ([United States Census Bureau](#)). Disability emerges as the single strongest driver of unemployment and poverty among survey respondents, indicating that traditional workforce models alone cannot address economic instability for this population.

Addressing employment barriers in Wayne County requires disability-focused services, accessible and inclusive workforce programs, benefits navigation, and supports for those unable to work, not employment-only strategies ([United States Census Bureau](#)).

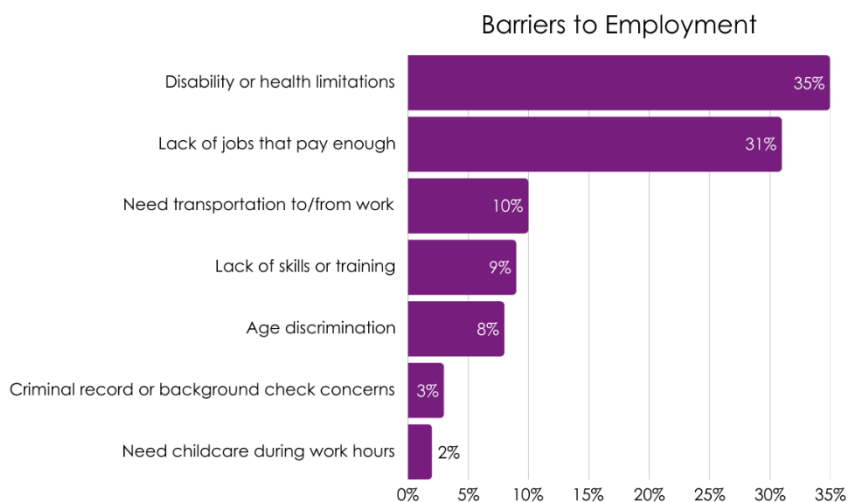


Exhibit 4.1.9 Barriers to Employment

4.2 Utilities & Energy

Burden: A Pervasive and Universal Household Crisis

High Utility Costs as a Core Driver of Financial Instability

High utility and energy costs represent one of the most severe and widespread economic pressures facing Wayne County households served by Wayne Metro. In the Community

Needs Assessment survey, 61.6% of respondents identified high utility costs as a top challenge, making utilities the second-highest overall need reported. Notably, 62.5% rated utility costs as a “very big challenge,” the highest severity rating of any of the 20 challenges assessed, and 61.6% selected utilities as an urgent priority.

Unlike many economic stressors, utility burden affects households across income levels. Survey data show that utility cost challenges extend even to respondents earning \$50,000–\$74,000 annually, indicating that rising energy costs are not limited to the lowest-income households. The challenge also demonstrated near-universal agreement among respondents, reflected by the lowest standard deviation of any surveyed need, underscoring the consistency and pervasiveness of this issue across demographic groups.

Energy Burden and the Cost of Essential Services

Energy burden refers to the share of household income spent on utilities such as electricity, natural gas, and heating fuel ([U.S. Department of Energy](#)). Nationally, households are considered energy-burdened when they spend more than 6% of their income on energy, while severe energy burden is defined as spending more than 10% ([U.S. Department of Energy](#)).

Utility Cost Burden Persists Across Income Levels

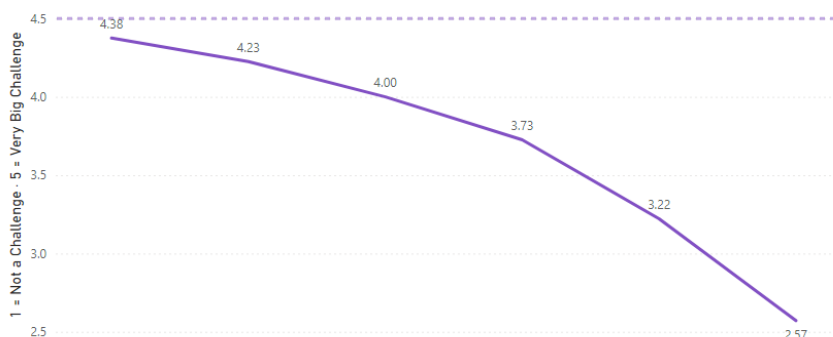
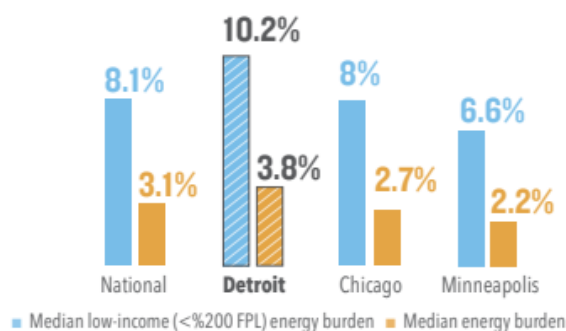


Exhibit 4.2.1: Utility Cost Burden Persists Across Income Levels

Public data consistently show that Wayne County

and the Detroit metropolitan area experience some of the highest energy burdens in the nation, driven by a combination of low household incomes, aging and inefficient housing stock, and high utility rates ([U.S. Department of Energy](#); [American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy](#)). According to research from the U.S. Department of Energy and the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy, low-income households in Southeast Michigan spend two to three times more of their income on utilities than higher-income

households, even when using less energy overall ([U.S. Department of Energy](#); [American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy](#)).



See ACEEE's 2020 report, *How High Are America's Residential Energy Burdens*, for a breakdown of median energy burdens for other groups nationally, regionally, and in 25 select metro areas: www.aceee.org/energy-burden.

Exhibit 4.2.2: Detroit Energy Burden via aceee.org/energy-burden

These structural conditions mean that utility costs function as a fixed expense that crowds out spending on food, health care, transportation, and housing, particularly for households already living below or near the poverty line ([American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy](#)).

The median energy burden is 3.8% nationally, compared to 10.2% in the Detroit metropolitan area (U.S. Department of Energy). A quarter of low-income households in Detroit have an energy burden above 19%, five times greater than the national average ([U.S. Department of Energy](#)).

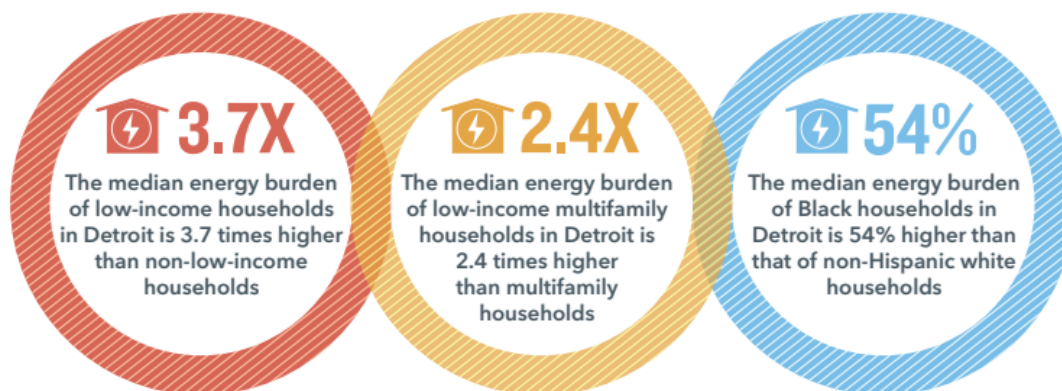


Exhibit 4.2.3 Median Household Energy Burden via US Department of Energy

Shutoff Risk and Housing Instability

High utility costs also translate directly into utility shutoff risk, a destabilizing event with cascading consequences. Households unable to keep up with energy bills face service interruptions that can lead to unsafe living conditions, housing code violations, and eviction

risk, particularly for renters. Shutoffs disproportionately affect seniors, people with disabilities, families with young children, and individuals with chronic health conditions who rely on electricity-powered medical equipment or temperature regulation for health and safety ([U.S. Department of Energy](#)).

In Wayne County, where a large share of housing was built before modern energy-efficiency standards, inefficient heating systems, poor insulation, and aging appliances further exacerbate costs ([U.S. Department of Energy](#); [American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy](#)). These factors increase both monthly bills and arrearages, making recovery from even short-term financial disruptions difficult ([U.S. Department of Energy](#)).

Survey findings clearly indicate that utility costs function not merely as a budgetary concern, but as an acute household crisis. Respondents ranked utilities as an urgent need across all income bands and a nearly universal concern regardless of employment status.

This aligns with broader research showing that energy burden is closely linked to poverty persistence, health disparities, and housing instability ([American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy](#); [U.S. Department of Energy](#)). Without intervention, households facing high energy burden are more likely to cycle between arrears, shutoffs, emergency assistance, and long-term financial insecurity ([U.S. Department of Energy](#)).

Addressing the utility and energy burden in Wayne County, therefore, requires comprehensive strategies beyond short-term bill assistance, including energy efficiency investments, arrearage management programs, consumer protections, benefits navigation, and coordinated housing and utility stabilization services ([U.S. Department of Energy](#); [American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy](#)). Utilities are not a peripheral issue—they are a central determinant of economic stability and household well-being for Wayne County residents.

4.3 Housing & Homelessness

Affordability vs. attainability

Housing affordability and attainability remain central challenges for residents across Wayne County. While median home values and rents are lower than in many metropolitan areas, they are misaligned with local incomes, particularly for extremely low-, very low-, and low-income households. According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates, Wayne County’s median household income falls well below the Michigan and U.S. medians, limiting households’ ability to absorb housing costs without becoming

cost-

burdened. ([U.S. Census Bureau](#); [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development](#)).

These pressures are further exacerbated by rising rents, increasing property taxes and insurance costs, and a limited supply of units affordable to households earning below the area median

income ([U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development](#)).

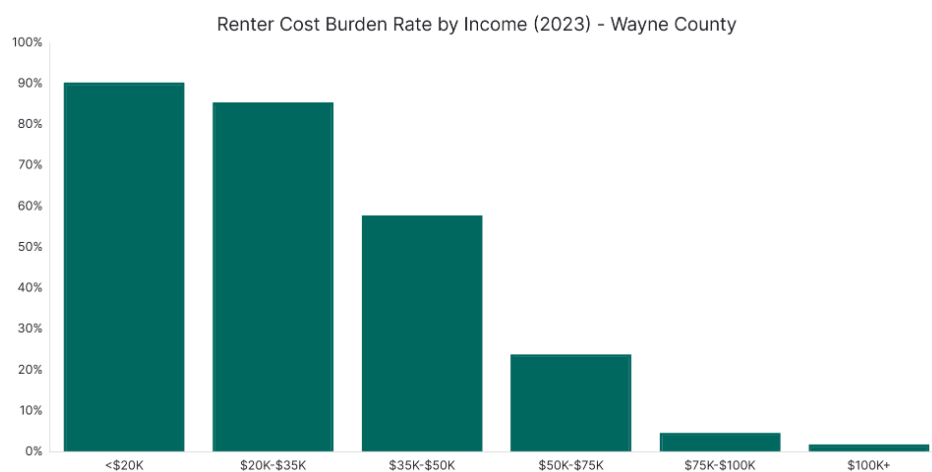


Exhibit 4.3.1 Renter Cost Burden by Income (Wayne County, 2023)

Based on survey response findings, affordable housing availability ranked as the sixth-highest overall challenge, with 48.5% of respondents rating it a “very big challenge” and 27.7% identifying it as an urgent priority. Risk of eviction or homelessness remains a concern, with nearly 30% identifying it as a serious challenge, particularly among extremely low-income and disabled respondents.

As reported by the National Low Income Housing Coalition, the Detroit-Warren-Livonia area is ranked among the top four most expensive areas in Michigan for housing costs and required wages to afford housing, highlighting the housing affordability challenges affecting Wayne County A

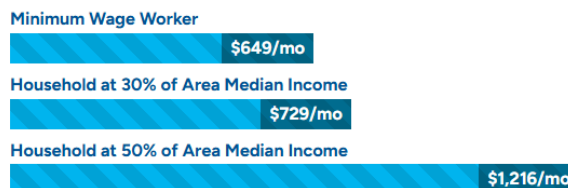
MOST EXPENSIVE AREAS	HOUSING WAGE
Ann Arbor MSA	\$30.90
Grand Rapids-Wyoming HMFA	\$27.75
Livingston County HMFA	\$27.13
Detroit-Warren-Livonia HMFA	\$26.50
Holland-Grand Haven HMFA	\$26.21

Exhibit 4.3.2 Housing Wage by Region via the National Low Income Housing Coalition

housing wage is the hourly rate a full-time worker must earn to afford a modest, fair-market rental unit without spending more than 30% of their income on housing costs, which is the standard definition of housing affordability. The 30% rule for housing costs is based on gross monthly income before taxes and other deductions. ([National Low Income Housing Coalition, *Out of Reach: Michigan*](#)).

According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition’s *Out of Reach Report 2025*, a minimum wage worker can afford a monthly rent of up to \$649 per month ([National Low Income Housing Coalition, *Out of Reach: Michigan*](#)). Households at 50% of the area’s median income make roughly \$1,226 ([National Low Income Housing Coalition, *2025 Michigan Housing Profile*](#)). Earning minimum wage at \$12.48 an hour would require 63 hours of work per week to afford a modest one-bedroom rental unit ([National Low Income Housing Coalition, *Out of Reach: Michigan*](#)). In Wayne County, the annual income needed to afford housing units based on average rent is as follows ([National Low Income Housing Coalition, *2025 Michigan Housing Profile*](#)).

Affordable Rent for Low Income Households



Fair Market Rent



Exhibit 4.3.4 Affordable Rent for Low Income Households in Michigan

Number of Bedrooms	Annual Income Needed (2025)
Studio (0 bedroom)	\$39,640
1 bedroom	\$43,600
2 bedroom	\$55,120
3 bedroom	\$67,520
4 bedroom	\$73,080

64% of survey respondents reported earning less than \$50,000 per year, placing them at significant risk of housing cost burden, with rent exceeding 30% of their monthly income. In 2020, the fair market rent for a one-bedroom unit in Wayne County was \$764 per month. By 2025, the fair market rent for the same unit type had risen to \$1,378 per month—an increase of more than 55% countywide. *This substantial growth in rental costs, coupled with persistently low household incomes among respondents, underscores that housing affordability and attainability have become increasingly urgent and escalating challenges in Wayne County since 2020.*

Rental vs homeowner split

Units & Occupancy

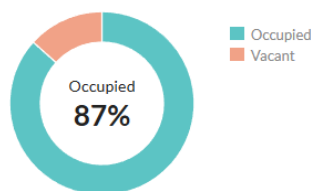
803,765

Number of housing units

Michigan: 4,642,957

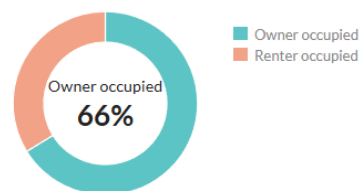
United States: 145,333,460

Occupied vs. Vacant



Show data / Embed

Ownership of occupied units



Show data / Embed

Exhibit 4.3.5: Total Housing Units and Occupancy Wayne County 2024 via censusreporter.gov

48.3% of survey respondents own homes, and 39.2% rent. 9.7% of survey respondents reported being housing insecure (living with others, temporary housing, or in a shelter). As reported by the US Census Bureau, there are 803,765 housing units in Wayne County, 343,649 of which

are in Detroit. 66% of units in Wayne County are owner-occupied (65% owner-occupied nationally), and 51% owner-occupied units in Detroit ([U.S Census Bureau](#)). The share of households by tenure (renting vs.

Share of Total Households by Tenure

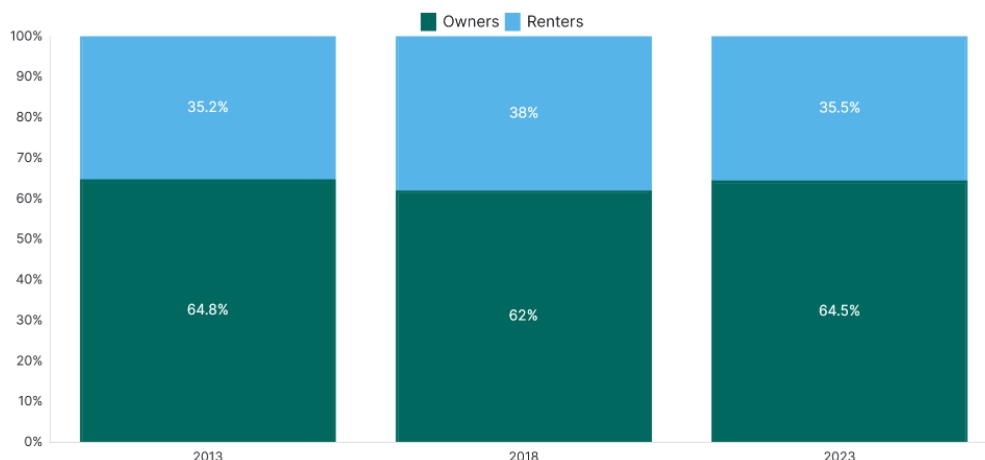


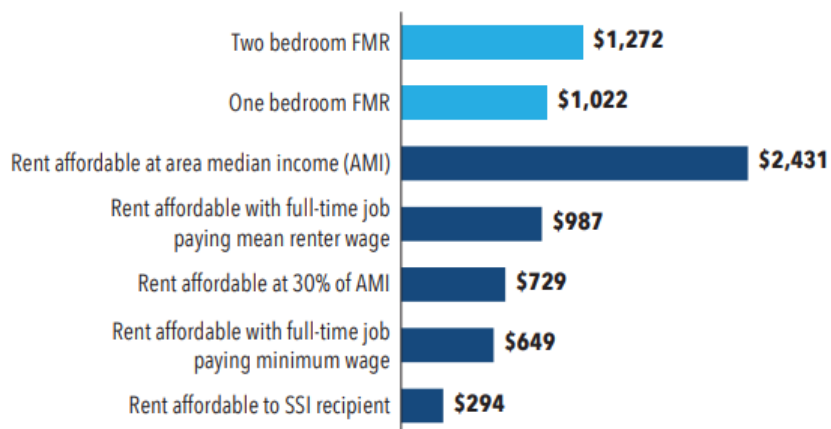
Exhibit 4.3.6: Share of Total Households by Tenure Wayne County

ownership) has stayed roughly the same from 2013 to 2023 ([Michigan Housing Data Portal](#)).

Homelessness

36.5% of survey respondents cited risk of eviction or homelessness as a challenge facing their household. 9.7% of survey respondents were currently experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity.

During the 2025 Point in Time (PIT) Count, a nationwide survey coordinated by HUD to count people experiencing homelessness on one specific night in January, capturing both sheltered and unsheltered homelessness, in Detroit, Hamtramck, and Highland Park, 1,442 individuals were identified as experiencing sheltered



OUTofREACH



Exhibit 4.3.7: Rent Affordability at Median Income in Michigan via the [National Coalition of Low-Income Housing](#)

homelessness on the night of January 29, 2025 ([U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2025](#)). No unsheltered count was conducted in Detroit, Hamtramck, or Highland Park in 2025. In Out-Wayne, 162 individuals were identified as experiencing homelessness, with 60% of respondents experiencing unsheltered homelessness ([U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2025](#)). According to Michigan's 2024 Annual Report on Ending Homelessness, 31,211 homeless individuals were identified as experiencing homelessness ([Michigan's Campaign to End Homelessness](#)).

Homelessness is caused by a variety of factors. The most common causes of homelessness are lack of affordable housing, poverty and stagnant wages, unemployment and underemployment, mental health issues, and domestic violence ([National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2025 Michigan Housing Profile](#)). According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition's 2025 *Out of Reach Report*, the fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment is \$1,272. Without paying more than 30% of household income on rent, a household would have to earn at least \$51,000 per year ([National Low Income Housing Coalition, Out of Reach: Michigan](#)).

From 2024 to 2025, the United States experienced an unprecedented rise in homelessness, driven largely by the nation's affordability crisis. Homelessness increased by 18%, as found by the National PIT Count data reported by the National Alliance to End Homelessness ([National Alliance to End Homelessness](#)).

In Michigan, 10 out of every 10,000 residents have experienced homelessness, as reported by the National Alliance to End Homelessness using 2024 PIT Count data ([National Alliance to End Homelessness](#)). 9,739 Michiganders reported not having a permanent place to live, an 8% increase from 2023. There was an increase in homelessness in Michigan across all age groups (youth under 25, adults ages 25–54, and older adults 55+) ([National Alliance to End Homelessness](#)).

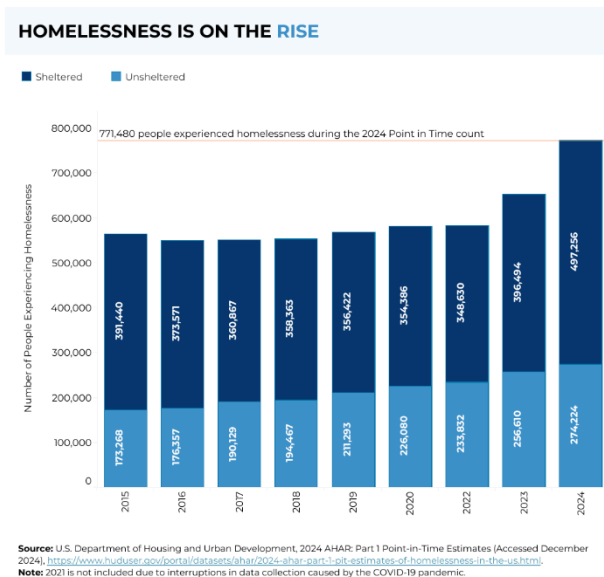


Figure 4.3.8: Homelessness on the Rise in Michigan via [National Alliance to End Homelessness](#)

Home Repair and Housing Stock Health

Wayne County housing is characterized by a high volume of older, established, and historic homes, with a median construction year of 1954. Approximately 35% of countywide housing stock was built prior to 1950. Homes are oldest within Detroit, Hamtramck, and the Grosse

AGE OF HOUSING STOCK

Detroit's housing stock is aging. Though older homes are not inherently problematic, health and safety issues such as lead exposure and structural disrepair can result in potentially hazardous living conditions.

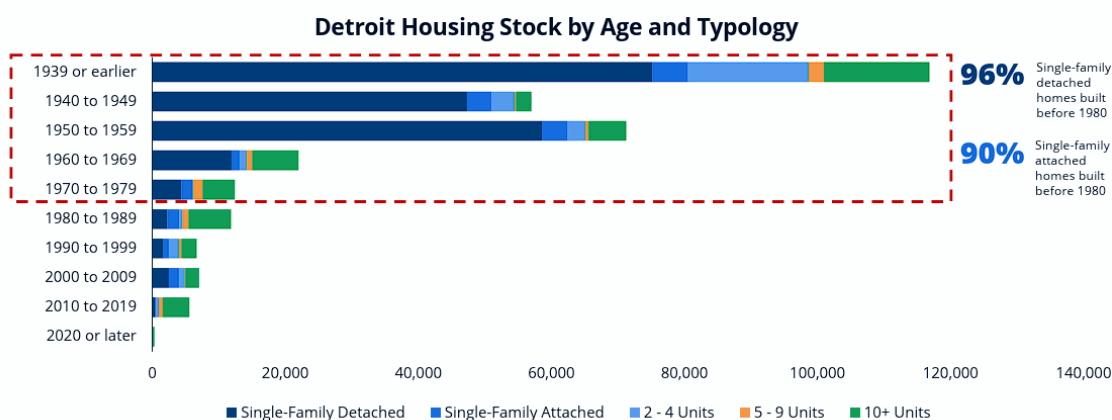


Figure 4.3.8 Detroit Housing Stock by Age and Typology via Detroit Housing Data Report (April 2024)

Pointes, where development was heaviest in the mid-20th century ([U.S. Census Bureau](#)). Detroit's housing stock is among the oldest in the nation, with approximately 96% of residential structures built before 1980 and roughly one-third constructed prior to 1940, according to a [2021 City of Detroit Housing Market Study](#).

The most common unmet need cited by respondents involves urgent home repairs necessary to maintain safe and livable housing (135 instances, 16.6% of open-ended responses). Residents reported needing assistance with heating systems and boilers, roof repairs, plumbing and water damage, electrical issues, structural repairs, and basic furnishings (beds, mattresses, appliances). Many respondents described living without essential systems (heat, hot water) or in deteriorating conditions that directly impact health and safety. These needs were frequently expressed by homeowners with limited income, indicating that while individuals may technically be housed, they lack the financial means to maintain safe living conditions.

OWNER COMPOSITION

Many single-family homeowners are long-term residents and/or have below-median household incomes, and may be challenged by rising maintenance costs associated with aging housing stock.

Owner Profile – Single Family Detached Housing										
	Owner HH (% of Total)	Household Type					Duration of Residence			
		Single	Couple, No Children	Couple, With Children	Other Families	Roommates	Under 2 Years	2 – 4 Years	5 – 9 Years	10+ Years
UNDER \$35K	43,994 (42%)	23,523 (23%)	4,578 (4%)	3,432 (3%)	11,342 (11%)	1,119 (1%)	2,615 (3%)	6,118 (6%)	7,384 (7%)	27,877 (27%)
\$35K TO \$75K	35,470 (34%)	10,524 (10%)	9,359 (9%)	4,299 (4%)	10,254 (10%)	1,034 (<1%)	2,022 (2%)	4,209 (4%)	5,171 (5%)	24,068 (23%)
OVER \$75K	24,474 (24%)	2,442 (2%)	11,384 (11%)	3,774 (4%)	6,423 (6%)	451 (<1%)	1,879 (6%)	2,239 (2%)	3,478 (3%)	16,878 (16%)
	103,938	36,489 (35%)	25,321 (24%)	11,505 (11%)	28,019 (27%)	2,604 (2%)	6,516 (7%)	12,566 (12%)	16,033 (15%)	68,823 (66%)

Sources: PUMS 2021

Note: "Other Families" include households with children and single householder.

Figure 4.3.9 Detroit Owner Profile - Single Family Detached Housing via Detroit Housing Data Report (April 2024)

Wayne Metro is one of the largest home weatherization providers in the state of Michigan. Through weatherization, homes are provided with energy efficiency improvements at no cost to the homeowner. Homes cannot be weatherized if the home has a damaged roof, asbestos, active knob and tube wiring, visible mold, or standing water in the basement, or major areas of infiltration (missing drywall, windows, etc.). This is known as "deferral." When a home

cannot be weatherized because it has structural or safety issues that must be fixed first, the weatherization work is postponed (deferred) until these barriers are resolved.

During Fiscal Year 2025 (Oct. 1, 2024, to Sept. 30, 2025), Wayne Metro completed 1,049 home assessments. Of these assessments, only 30% were ready for immediate weatherization. The remaining 70% of homes were deferred. WM uses a “stoplight” system to categorize these homes: 20% are “red light” homes, meaning the home has more serious repair problems that are outside of the scope of what weatherization funding will fix and an outside funding source is needed to correct deferral reasons; and 50% are “yellow light” homes with issues we can fix using existing weatherization deferral funds to correct home status and move towards weatherization.

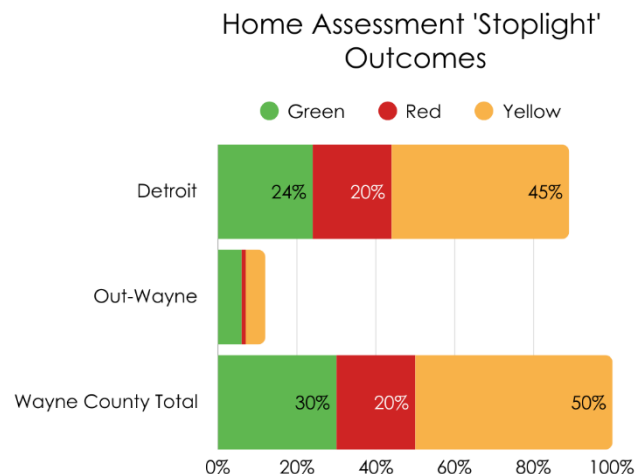


Figure 4.3.10 Wayne Metro Home Assessment 'Stoplight' Outcomes

4.4 Food Insecurity

Food Insecurity in Wayne County Households

Food insecurity, defined as limited or uncertain access to adequate, nutritious food due to economic or other barriers, remains a significant and persistent challenge for households served by Wayne Metro in Wayne County. In the Community Needs Assessment survey, 22.7% of respondents identified access to healthy, affordable food as a top-rated challenge. Food insecurity ranked as the third-highest overall challenge among the 20 needs assessed. In terms of severity, 40.6% of respondents rated food access as a “very big challenge,” and 22.7% identified it as an urgent priority, indicating both the prevalence and intensity of unmet food needs.

Food insecurity is closely linked to income insufficiency and utility burden. Respondents who prioritized utilities and income were also significantly more likely to prioritize food access, reflecting difficult household tradeoffs between paying bills and purchasing food.

Frequency and Severity of Food Insecurity

Public data show that Wayne County consistently experiences higher rates of food insecurity than the state and national averages, particularly among households with low incomes, seniors, people with disabilities, and families with children ([Feeding America, Hunger in America: Michigan](#)).

According to Feeding America’s Map the Meal Gap and U.S. Census Household Pulse Survey, approximately 1 in 5 Wayne County residents experience food insecurity, with even higher rates among households living below 200%

of the federal poverty level ([Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap 2025](#)). Rising food prices over the past several years have intensified this challenge, increasing the share of household income required to meet basic nutritional needs. As found in the 2023 Food Insecurity report on the overall population in Wayne County, 312,110 households in Wayne County are

In Michigan, 1,544,250 people are facing hunger - and of them 402,680 are children.



People facing hunger in
Michigan
are estimated to report needing

\$986,854,000

more per year to meet their food needs.

The average cost of a meal in Michigan is \$3.37. Data from Feeding America’s [Map the Meal Gap](#) study.
[Learn more >](#)

Figure 4.4.1 What Hunger Looks Like in Michigan via [feedingamerica.org](#)

experiencing food insecurity, totaling 17.6% of households ([Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap 2025](#)).

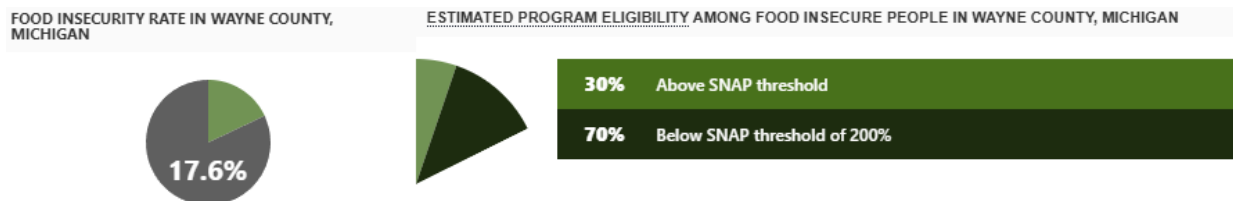
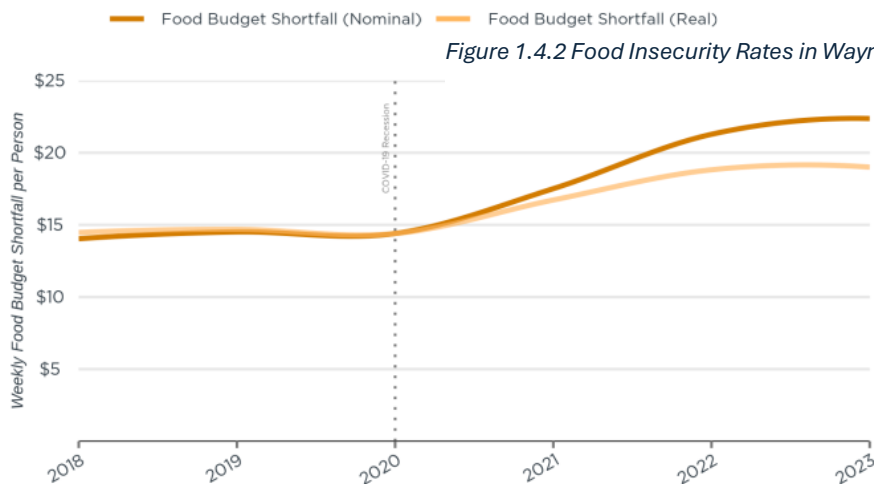


Figure 4.4.2 2023 Food Insecurity in Wayne County, Michigan via feedingamerica.org

Survey respondents' high severity ratings reinforce that food insecurity is not episodic for many households, but rather a chronic condition characterized by difficult tradeoffs between food, rent, utilities, transportation, and health care. Feeding America, using data from the current population survey (CPS) and USDA ERS data, reports that food insecurity has increased nationally year over year for the past three years ([Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap 2025](#)).

Figure 4. People Facing Hunger Report Needing More for the Third Year
Average additional dollars needed per week among people experiencing food insecurity, 2018-2023



Note: "Real" figures are adjusted for inflation and presented in 2020 dollars to reflect real (constant) prices.
Source: Calculated by Feeding America using data from the Current Population Survey (CPS) and USDA ERS.

Figure 4.4.3 People Facing Hunger Report Needing More for the Third Year (2023) via [Map the Meal Gap 2025 Report](#)

Relationship to Income and Housing Stability

Survey data indicates a strong relationship between food insecurity, income insufficiency, and housing instability. Households with limited income are often forced to reduce food

quality or quantity after covering fixed expenses such as rent and utilities. For renters in Wayne County, particularly those facing rising housing costs, food spending becomes one of the most flexible but vulnerable parts of the household budget ([Feeding America, Hunger in America: Michigan](#)).

Public research consistently shows that households experiencing housing cost burden are significantly more likely to be food insecure ([Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap 2025](#)). In Wayne County, where a large share of renters spend more than 30% of their income on housing, food insecurity frequently co-occurs with housing instability, utility arrears, and reliance on emergency food systems.

Food access challenges are further compounded by transportation barriers and uneven geographic access to full-service grocery stores. Many low-income neighborhoods in Wayne County have limited availability of affordable, healthy food options, increasing reliance on convenience stores with higher prices and fewer nutritious choices ([Feeding America, Hunger in America: Michigan](#)).

Food Insecurity as a Compounding Economic Stressor

Food insecurity has wide-ranging impacts on health, educational outcomes, and long-term

Charitable programs are unable to fully support those facing hunger. The combination of charity and government assistance programs are necessary to help bridge the meal gap.

SNAP, formerly food stamps, provides temporary help for people going through hard times – providing supplemental money to buy food until they can get back on their feet.

In Michigan,

33.8%
of households receiving
SNAP benefits have
children

\$1,701,430,344
distributed through
SNAP generated
\$2,892,431,585
in economic activity*.

*Economists estimate that every dollar a household redeems through SNAP generates about \$1.70 in economic activity.

Figure 4.4.4 SNAP benefits and Economic Activity via [Map the Meal Gap 2025](#)

economic stability. Individuals facing food insecurity are more likely to experience chronic health conditions, higher stress, and delayed medical care ([Feeding America, Map the Meal](#)

[*Gap 2025*](#)). Families with children experiencing food insecurity face increased risks related to developmental outcomes and school performance, while seniors may be forced to choose between food and medication ([*Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap 2025*](#)).

Survey findings demonstrate that food insecurity is both a symptom and a driver of poverty, reflecting insufficient income, rising living costs, and limited access to affordable resources. Addressing food insecurity in Wayne County, therefore, requires integrated strategies that combine income supports, housing stabilization, nutrition assistance enrollment, transportation access, and community-based food distribution, rather than emergency food responses alone ([*Feeding America, Hunger in America: Michigan*](#)).

4.5 Transportation

Overview

Transportation plays a central role in household stability, economic opportunity, and access to healthcare in Wayne County. For many residents, especially those without reliable personal vehicles, transportation insecurity affects employment access, medical appointments, childcare, and daily essentials. Rising costs of vehicle ownership, insurance, fuel, and maintenance further compound these barriers. 31.2% of survey respondents cited reliable transportation as a significant challenge, affecting their ability to get to work, appointments, childcare, and essential errands.

Roughly one in ten Wayne County households lacks access to a personal vehicle, limiting mobility for work, healthcare, and daily life. According to recent Census-derived data, approximately 11.8% of households in Wayne County do not own a vehicle, underscoring a substantial share of residents who must rely on public transit, rideshare, carpooling, or other mobility strategies ([Southeast Michigan Council of Governments; U.S. Census Bureau](#)). Most workers in Wayne County still commute by personal vehicle (drive alone or carpool), despite the proportion of households without a car. Highland Park has the highest rate of households with no car, with 31.5% of households reporting having no vehicle, followed by Highland Park (21%) and Detroit (20.7%) ([Southeast Michigan Council of Governments](#)).

In the *Transportation Riders United Report on Improving Public Transit in Wayne County: recommendations for Near-Term Action*, published in June 2023, Wayne County is among the largest counties in the nation without countywide public transportation. While there is public transportation provided in some areas, 350,000 Wayne County residents live in communities that lack fixed route transit, leaving tens of thousands of Wayne County residents with transportation challenges ([Transportation Riders United, 2023](#)).

Planning data collection is ongoing: The 2025 MDOT/SEMCOG travel survey will improve understanding of travel behavior changes since prior decades, which can inform future infrastructure and transit planning ([Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, 2025](#)).

4.6 Safety & Neighborhood Conditions

Wayne County Safety & Crime

Safety and neighborhood conditions remain important quality-of-life factors for households across Wayne County. According to local and publicly available data, both objective crime rates and residents' perceptions vary across communities, with crime concentrated in certain areas and overall safety views shaped by lived experience. Based on survey respondents, 28.2% cited safety in their neighborhood as a big concern. Of respondents who cited safety concerns, 85% of residents reside in Detroit, and 15% reside in Out-Wayne. This shows a higher concentration of safety concerns within Detroit city limits as compared to the rest of Wayne County.

As reported by the [Vera Institute of Justice](#), 53% of jail bookings in Wayne County are for misdemeanors, ordinance violations, or civil offenses. The City of Highland Park has the highest Per Capita crime rate of 7.21%, followed by Detroit at 6.14% ([Data Commons](#)).

Detroit

While Wayne County's broader crime rates reflect regional safety challenges, much of the county's elevated crime figures are driven by urban areas such as Detroit. Detroit has seen reductions in violent crime in recent years, including notable declines in homicides and shootings. Contrasts between countywide data and Detroit's specific trends should be interpreted with respect to population density, economic opportunity, and policing strategies ([City of Detroit](#)).

[Detroit saw reductions in crime across all categories from 2024 to 2025](#), as reported by the City of Detroit. Homicides were reduced by 19%, Nonfatal shootings decreased by 26%, Carjackings decreased by 46%, and sexual assaults decreased by 14% ([City of Detroit](#)).

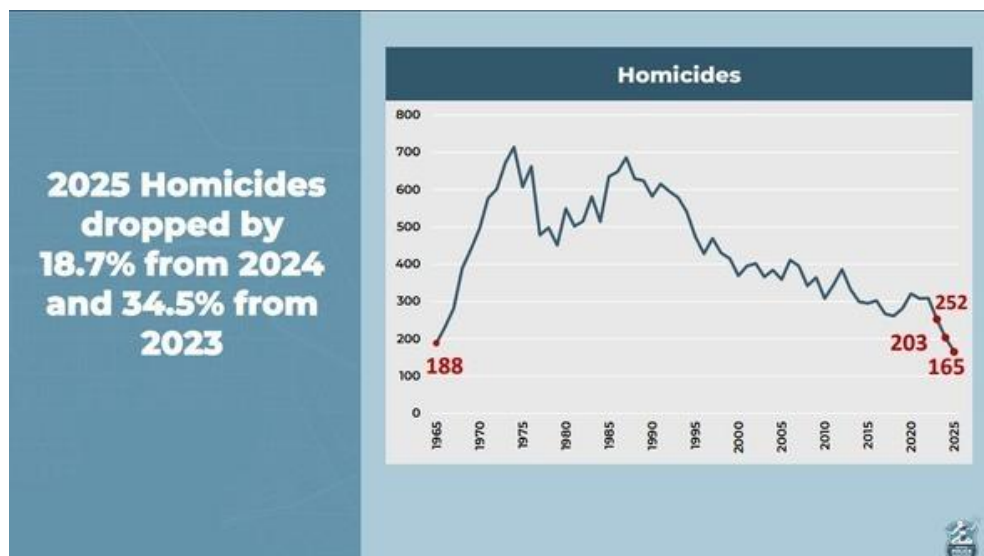


Figure 2.6.1 Homicide Rates Down 2024 from 2023 via [detroitmi.gov](#)

Section 5: Head Start and Early Head Start Needs Assessment

A. Demographic Information About Eligible Infants, Toddlers, Preschool-Age Children, and Expectant Mothers

Wayne Metro serves infants, toddlers, preschool-age children, and expectant mothers residing in high-need communities across Wayne County, Michigan, including: Dearborn, Dearborn Heights, Detroit, Garden City, Highland Park, Hamtramck, Harper Woods, Huron Township, Redford, Taylor, Westland, and surrounding areas. Wayne County is Michigan's most populous county and includes the City of Detroit, where concentrated poverty and racial and ethnic disparities significantly affect young children and families.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, approximately 29,000 children under age five in Wayne County live below the federal poverty level, representing about 28% of all children in this age group. In several of Wayne Metro's target zip codes, child poverty rates exceed 40–50%, with communities such as Highland Park, Hamtramck, Taylor, and parts of Detroit experiencing the highest concentrations of need ([Kids Count in Michigan](#)). These rates substantially exceed state and national averages ([United States Census Bureau](#)).

The specific zip codes in which Wayne Metro operates its early childhood education program have a high number of age-eligible children in poverty. Most classrooms are in zip codes with higher rates of children aged 5 and under in poverty than the County-wide average of 28%, as shown in Exhibit 5.1 (American Community Survey 2022, data.census.gov). The zip codes with less than 28% still have high actual numbers of children under age five in poverty, showing that pockets of children in poverty exist.

Exhibit 5.1. High percentage and number of children in poverty in service areas

Zip Code	City	Percent of children age 5 and under in poverty	Number of children age 5 and under in poverty
48203	Highland Park	54.6	593
48184	Wayne, Romulus, Van Buron	46.8	428
48212	Hamtramck	46.2	1,646
48180	Taylor	44.6	1,823

48120, 48126	Dearborn	40	1,667
48225	Harper Woods	33.7	289
48164, 48174	New Boston, Brownstown, Romulus, Huron Township	27.9	2,602
	Wayne County	28	29,325
48221	Detroit	26.5	659
48185, 48186	Westland	25	1,340
48135	Garden City	21	383
48239, 48240	Redford	16.4	476
48125	Dearborn Heights	15	228
48188 (feeder)	Canton	6.7	184

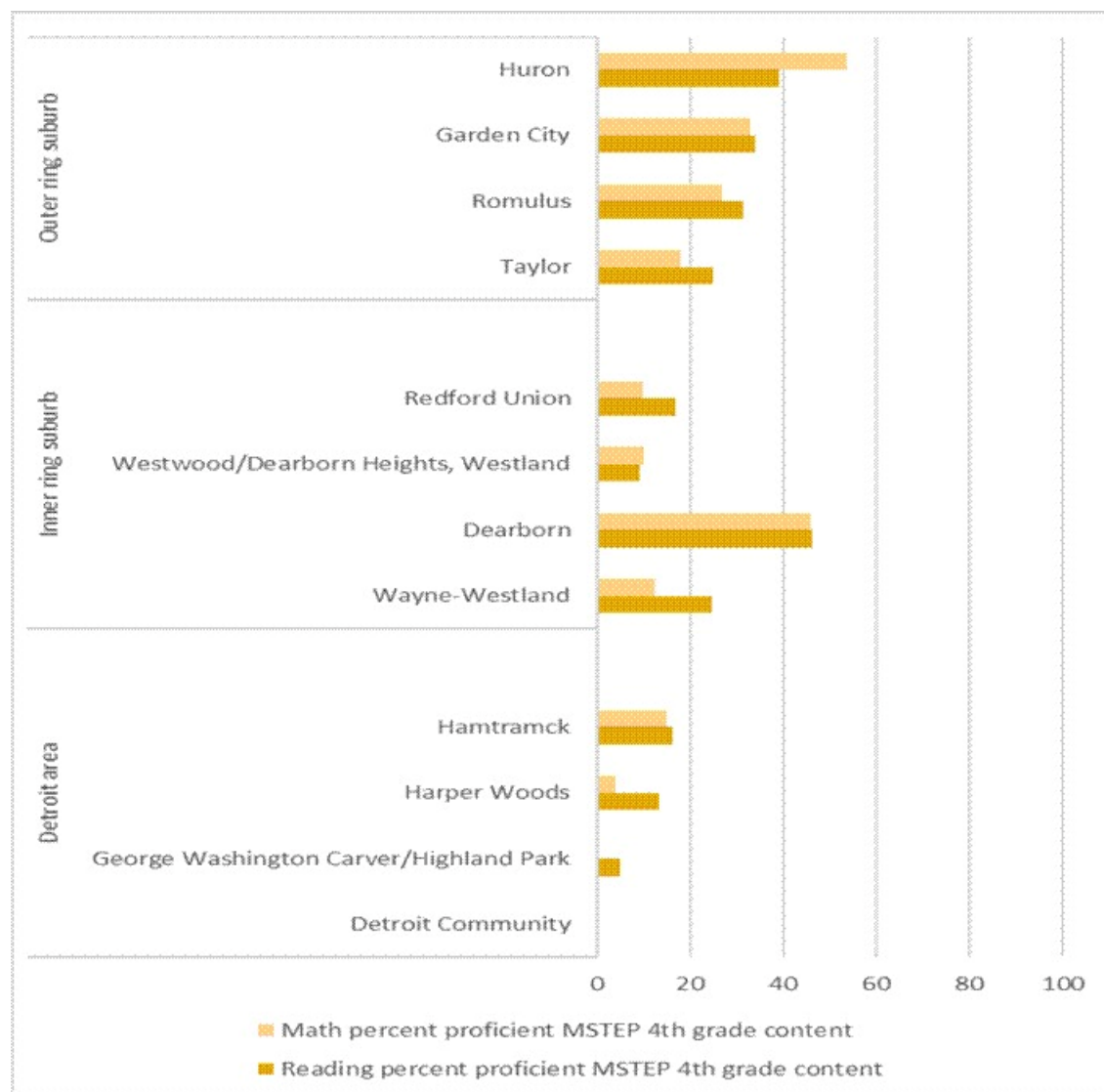
Unemployment for workers ages 16 and older in three communities ranges from 12-15%, while the other communities' unemployment rates range from 8-10%. These are higher than the State rate of 4% and Wayne County rate of 7% (American Community Survey 2022, data.census.gov). Expectant mothers in these communities are more likely to experience poverty, housing instability, limited access to prenatal care, and elevated health risks ([Michigan Department of Health and Human Services](#)).

B. Education, Health, Nutrition, and Social Service Needs of Eligible Children and Families

Children and families in Wayne Metro's Head Start and Early Head Start service areas face significant and interrelated educational, health, nutritional, and social service challenges. School readiness data indicate persistently low literacy and math proficiency rates, with many local school districts reporting kindergarten readiness and third-grade reading proficiency well below state benchmarks. These challenges underscore the *children's* need for high-quality early childhood education that addresses cognitive, social-emotional, and behavioral development ([Trinity Health, Community Health Needs Assessment](#)). These challenges also highlight the *families'* needs for support.

Educational outcomes for school-age children in the communities sound the alarm on unacceptable levels of resources. Proficiency rates in math and reading by school district displayed in Exhibit 5.2 show the majority of students are not proficient in reading and math as measured by Statewide M-STEP testing (MI School Data 2023-2024, mischooldata.org).

Exhibit 5.2 4th Grade Student Reading and Math Proficiency, 23-24 School Year by District



Health needs are substantial. Community health assessments identify mental health concerns, childhood trauma, obesity, diabetes, and limited access to preventive care as major issues affecting families ([Trinity Health, Community Health Needs Assessment](#)). Many children enter early learning programs without consistent access to medical homes, dental

care, vision screenings, or developmental evaluations ([Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)). Behavioral and social-emotional needs have increased in recent years, particularly among children exposed to housing instability, community violence, or family stress ([Trinity Health, Community Health Needs Assessment](#)).

Staff reviewed the Program Self-Assessment, which is an internal annual review of progress toward program goals and safety incident data. Each highlighted the need for additional support with children's challenging behaviors. In 2023 and 2024, 10 and 14 teachers, respectively, left the workplace to seek medical care after a student's behavior caused them injury. These incidents have increased drastically from 2022 when no teacher had to leave the workplace due to injury from a student's behavior.

Food insecurity remains a critical concern. Many families rely on Head Start for reliable access to nutritious meals for their children. Limited income, rising food costs, and transportation barriers contribute to inconsistent access to healthy food at home ([Feeding America](#)). Social service needs frequently include housing assistance, employment support, income stabilization, domestic violence intervention, and connections to public benefits such as WIC, SNAP, and Medicaid ([Trinity Health, Community Health Needs Assessment](#)).

Based on the poverty data, parents and caregivers of children eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start need support with achieving goals that increase income through *benefits* or *earned wages*. Increasing incomes through *benefits* like SNAP, MiBridges, and rent, mortgage, utility and income or property tax assistance adds dollars to a family's monthly budget. Increasing education through adult basic education or financial coaching and classes also assists adults on a pathway toward higher earned income.

Based on the educational outcome data, parents and caregivers of children eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start need support with achieving goals that improve their child's *readiness for Kindergarten*. Increasing knowledge of children's health and social-emotional development or parenting skills is relevant during a child's immense development between birth and three years of age. The comprehensive services for both children and families afforded by Head Start and Early Head Start help ensure children and families thrive.

C. Work, School, and Training Schedules of Parents With Eligible Children

Most parents of eligible Head Start and Early Head Start children in Wayne Metro's service area are engaged in employment, job training, or postsecondary education. Program data indicate that approximately 97% of enrolled parents report working, attending school, or participating in workforce training (Parent Survey data; Parent Council Focus Group; [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)). Many parents are employed in low-wage or hourly positions with

nontraditional schedules, including evening, early morning, weekend, or rotating shifts ([Head Start Program Performance Standards](#)).

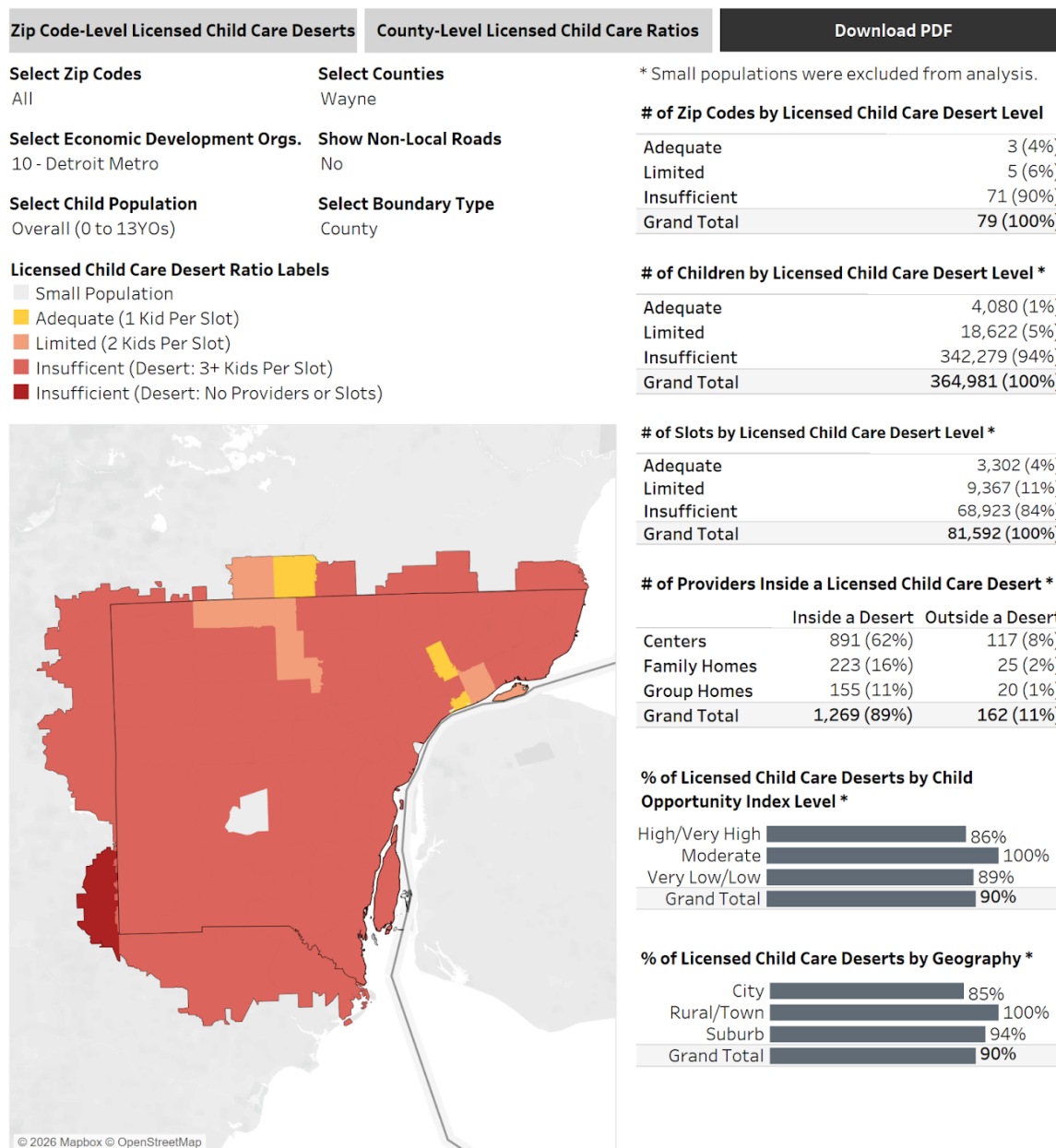
These work patterns create a strong demand for full-day, full-year early childhood services that align with parental employment requirements (Head Start Program Performance Standards). Families often balance multiple responsibilities, including work, education, caregiving, and participation in public assistance programs (Parent Survey data; Parent Council Focus Group; [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)). Flexible scheduling options, extended service hours, and reliable childcare are essential to support family economic stability and prevent disruptions in employment or training (Head Start Program Performance Standards).

Home-based Early Head Start options remain important for pregnant women and families who prefer in-home services due to cultural values, caregiving arrangements, or transportation limitations ([Head Start Program Performance Standards](#)).

D. Other Child Development Services, Child Care Centers, and Family Child Care Programs

Wayne County experiences a longstanding shortage of licensed, affordable, high-quality child care, particularly for infants and toddlers. Data from Michigan's Great Start to Quality system indicate that many communities served by Wayne Metro lack hundreds to thousands of licensed childcare slots for children under age five ([Michigan Department of Education](#)). This shortage disproportionately affects low-income families and families of color (IFF). The map in Exhibit 5.3 depicts the wide-spread insufficient childcare slots in Wayne County ([Michigan State, Engaged research and Evaluation Center](#)).

Exhibit 5.3 Insufficient child care map in Wayne County

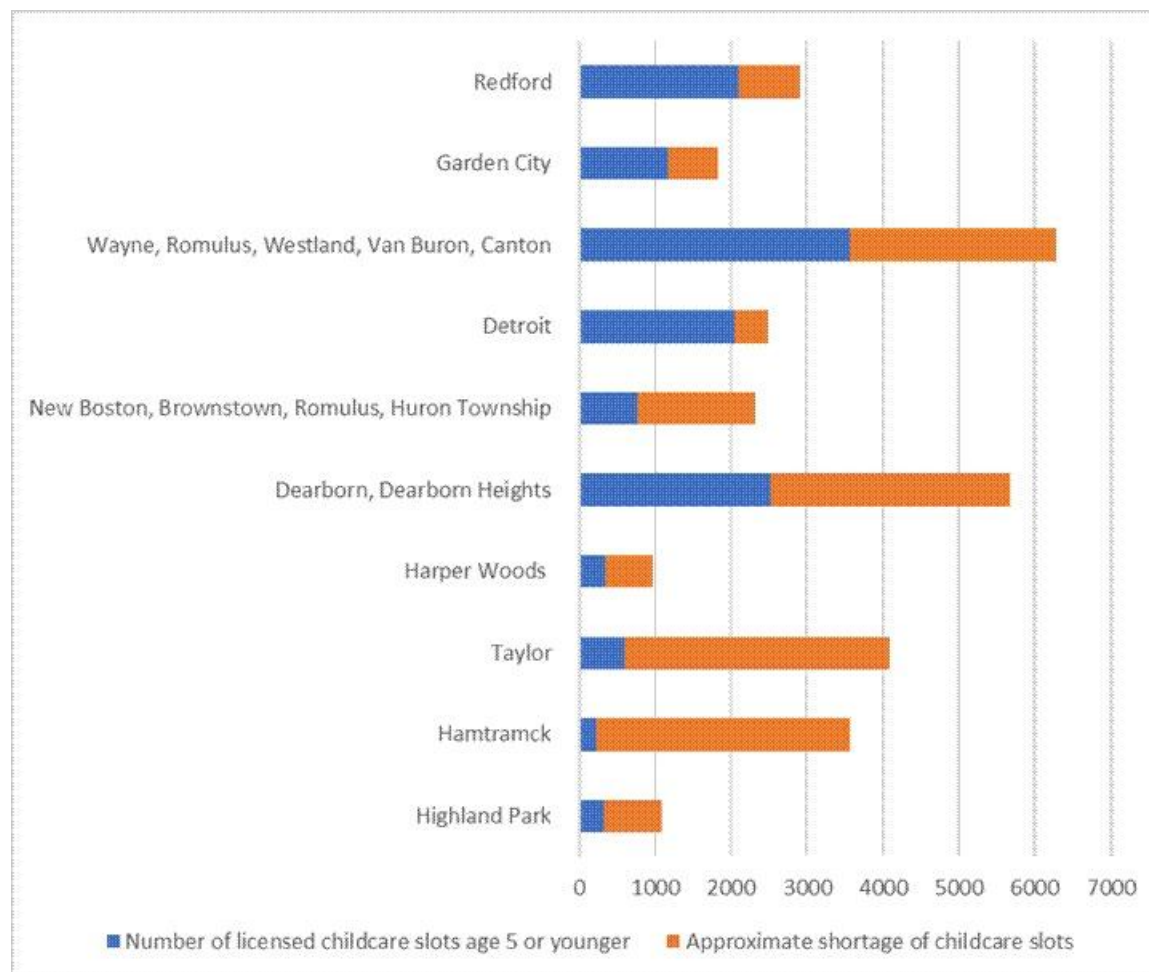


Early childhood education program availability is uneven and often inaccessible due to cost, location, or limited hours ([Michigan Department of Education](#)). In addition to the federal Head Start and Early Head Start programs, early childhood education and childcare options include the State-funded Great Start to Readiness Program (GSRP) for four-year-olds, private

childcare centers, and family child care homes. Long waiting lists are common, and infant and toddler care remains especially scarce ([Michigan State University](#)).

The ongoing shortage of quality child care, coupled with the high number of eligible children and pregnant women, demonstrates the need for preschool. Each city in which Wayne Metro has classrooms lacks hundreds of childcare slots for children aged 5 or younger. Exhibit 5.4 shows the shortage of childcare slots for children aged 5 or younger. This shortage was estimated by subtracting the number of licensed slots reported on the State of Michigan's Great Start to Quality licensing database from the number of children ages 5 or younger in each area estimated in the American Community Survey 2022 ([greatstarttoquality.org](#); [data.census.gov](#)).

Exhibit 5.4 Shortage of childcare program slots by area



Enrollment levels at all sites remain high at 95% to 100% capacity, reflecting a strong need in these communities (ChildPlus). Wayne Metro collaborates with other Head Start

providers, school districts, and community partners to minimize duplication of services and maximize access, while continuing to fill critical gaps in comprehensive, whole-family early childhood education ([Michigan Department of Education](#)).

E. Resources Available in the Community

Wayne County offers a wide range of community resources, though access varies by location and household capacity. Available resources include Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), public hospitals, WIC clinics, food banks, housing assistance programs, workforce development agencies, and domestic violence support organizations. Wayne Metro's designation as the county's Community Action Agency enables families to access income supports like rent, mortgage, utility, and income or property tax assistance, plus home improvement and financial coaching alongside early childhood education.

Two areas of need in which Wayne Metro assists families with referrals are primary healthcare providers and services for children with special needs. Wayne Metro does not have primary healthcare or mental health and disability service providers on staff, so they coordinate with partners. The referral process results in 100% of children each year receiving physical and dental health services. The agency has established collaborative agreements with all Local Education Agencies (LEAs) located within its service area to focus on assistance to children with disabilities. During the 2023-2024 school year, Wayne Metro reached a disability enrollment of 8% for HS and 10% for EHS. The lack of LEA staff to assess students referred in a timely manner has impacted Wayne Metro's ability to reach a 10% disability enrollment, so the agency has agreements with private mental health and disability service providers to evaluate students.

Strong referral networks exist through Continuums of Care (CoCs), Great Start Collaboratives, local school districts, and healthcare providers. However, families often require navigation assistance to successfully access and sustain these services due to systemic barriers, language access needs, and transportation challenges ([Michigan 2-1-1](#)).

F. Strengths of the Community

Despite persistent challenges, Wayne Metro's service communities demonstrate significant strengths. Families show strong engagement in their children's education, high enrollment demand, and consistent participation in Head Start and Early Head Start services. Cultural diversity, multilingual households, and strong family networks contribute to community resilience.

Wayne County benefits from a robust network of nonprofit organizations, healthcare systems, educational institutions, and advocacy groups committed to improving outcomes for children and families. Longstanding collaboration among Head Start providers,

community partners, and local governments strengthens service coordination and efficiency. Wayne Metro's deep community presence, trusted relationships, and comprehensive service model position it as a critical asset in supporting school readiness and family well-being.

G. Methodology for Head Start Needs Assessment

Wayne Metro analyzed data from a variety of sources to prepare the Head Start Needs Assessment. The program management and Head Start Policy Council reviewed demographic data from the US Census Bureau, the American Community Survey, and Michigan Department of Education outcomes, among other public sources, and data collected at the program level. Information from the program included: pre- and post-school year parent surveys, Parent Committee and Policy Council focus groups, as well as from ChildPlus, the database used to document child and family goals, referrals, and outcomes. Staff and Policy Council also reviewed the Program Self-Assessment, which is an internal annual review of progress toward program goals and safety incident data.

Section 6: Recommendations & Connections

Based on the data analysis presented in the preceding sections, recommendations connected to Wayne Metro's services include the following:

Increase public benefits and income supports to assist people in bridging the gap between their earned income and basic living expenses.

Wayne Metro's services that provide income support increase monthly budgets, such as financial assistance for *rent or mortgage, utility and water bills, income tax and property tax payments, childcare, and public benefits enrollment*.

The agency continues long-standing relationships with local and regional food banks to provide *food support*, including client referrals, co-location of services, and event partnerships.

Invest in strategies to increase home quality, affordability, and availability.

Wayne Metro's strategies include *improving safety, energy efficiency, and water conservation* for home quality, *financial coaching and homeownership counseling* for increasing affordability, and *emergency, temporary and permanent supportive housing* for increasing availability.

The agency has restarted *home building* as a means to address the quality, affordable housing shortage.

The agency prioritizes *outreach and engagement* on housing issues through combined leadership in regional housing coalitions, such as coordinating the Region N Housing Coalition for the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) as well as the Detroit and Out-Wayne-Continuum of Cares, which are the federally designated entities for homelessness services in our geography.

Increase wrap-around support for young children and youth.

Wayne Metro's *early childhood education* and *youth enrichment* programs apply a wrap-around, whole family approach to improve early childhood and youth outcomes.

Wayne Metro continues to transform service delivery to youth and children. For example, staff are embedded at schools to better reach unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness and single parents.

Invest in strategies to connect residents to living wage jobs.

Wayne Metro continues to offer career pathways for its employees and clients. The agency continues to offer *adult basic education and digital literacy* in close coordination with services for children and youth.

The agency has various career pathway programs to develop skills needed for employment at Wayne Metro.

The agency continues to strengthen partnerships with workforce development providers so staff may seamlessly refer clients.

Advocate for clients' needs as well as amplify their voices.

Wayne Metro continues to advocate for clients' needs at all levels of government and within the business community.

Community outreach and engagement works alongside community organization leaders and residents to help raise awareness and action on community issues, such as neighborhood health, safety, or transportation.

Participatory grantmaking through the Regional Advisory Councils gives power to local groups to design locally-grown solutions for their community's needs.

Design services using a customer-centered lens to optimize experience and outcomes.

Wayne Metro strives toward processes, systems, and staff professional development that optimizes its customers' experience and outcomes. Close to a third of respondents cited issues with how to access Wayne Metro services, time needed to access services, and service eligibility. Wayne Metro's *navigation and referral* services, or Connect Center, along with our *Innovation Lab*, are leading process integration to optimize service delivery and outcomes.

When designing services and staff professional development, the agency focuses on special populations, such as people with disabilities. For example, the agency continues to strengthen partnerships with agencies specializing in disability benefits and service navigation.

When designing systems, the agency continues to advance data collection and analysis for improved time, quality, and cost of service.

Close gaps through strengthening partnerships and referral systems for services not offered by Wayne Metro.

While Wayne Metro provides multiple services across a variety of departments, there are still gaps in service area needs as documented by incoming client calls in fiscal year 2025 in the

areas of Healthcare, Mental Health Services, and Transportation. Wayne Metro provides referrals and connections to alternative resources for services that the agency does not provide internally.

Two areas of need in which Wayne Metro assists families with referrals are primary healthcare providers and services for children with special needs. Wayne Metro does not have primary healthcare or mental health and disability service providers on staff so they coordinate with partners. The referral process results in 100% of children each year receiving physical and dental health services. WM has formal and informal relationships with healthcare and mental health providers. For example, the agency has MOUs to refer clients to Hegira Health and The Children's Center. Journey to Healing, another mental health provider, offers services located at our Night Shelter.

Conclusion

The 2026 Community Needs Assessment confirms that Wayne County households, particularly those living in poverty, households with disabilities, families with children, and residents of Detroit and other high-need communities, are navigating an escalating economic survival crisis.

The survey findings reflect a marked shift from empowerment-focused priorities in prior years toward immediate survival needs in 2026. Utilities, income adequacy, and housing affordability now dominate household concerns, signaling that many residents have moved from striving toward long-term advancement to managing day-to-day financial emergencies. At the same time, high rates of disability, aging housing stock, employment barriers, and service access gaps underscore that poverty in Wayne County is both structural and deeply rooted. Employment alone is not protective against instability, and traditional workforce approaches must be paired with disability supports, housing stabilization, and income supplementation strategies.

Looking ahead, the next three years will require strategic investment, strengthened partnerships, data-driven decision-making, and continued advocacy at the local, state, and federal levels. Addressing poverty in Wayne County demands systems-level change alongside direct service expansion. Wayne Metro will continue centering resident voice, advancing equitable access, and leveraging its role as a backbone organization to improve outcomes for the communities it serves.

The findings of this Community Needs Assessment are both urgent and actionable. They provide a clear roadmap: stabilize households today, strengthen systems for tomorrow, and pursue long-term structural change so that all Wayne County residents have the opportunity not merely to survive, but to thrive.

Note: Methodology

Wayne Metro conducts a formal CNA every three years by collecting pertinent data to explore community needs, gain insight into the experiences of community members, and identify gaps in current service offerings. This CNA will guide current and new initiatives and the strategic direction of the organization. The Head Start program needs assessment was separately conducted alongside the CNA, and these methodologies were used for the CNA assessments.

The data collection period for this assessment (October 7 - November 17, 2025) occurred during a period of heightened economic anxiety, as community members faced uncertainty regarding federal budget negotiations and potential government shutdowns. Concerns about possible cuts to supplemental nutrition programs, utility assistance, and other safety net services were prevalent throughout the surveyed population. This context is important for interpreting the findings, as expressed needs and priorities may have been influenced by both current economic pressures and anxieties about future program availability.

Information for Wayne Metro's 2025 CNA was gathered using a variety of methods, and the results of the CNA are a compilation of findings from the following sources:

Publicly Available Community-Level Data Sources:

Data sources include the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Feeding America, and other federal, state, and local sources. These secondary data sources provide context for survey findings and demonstrate broader community trends in poverty, employment, housing, food security, health, and education.

Community Survey:

To gain insight from a broader group of Wayne Metro stakeholders, the organization fielded a survey regarding perceptions of the community's needs from October 7 through November 17, 2025. The digital survey was developed collaboratively by Wayne Metro's internal teams, including the Data Strategy team, Development team, and Program leads, and was reviewed by key leadership stakeholders. The survey built upon the 2023 CNA survey while incorporating improvements based on staff input and current community priorities.

The survey was hosted online and made available in English with translation capabilities to over 150 languages through Google Translate integration. The mobile-friendly survey took approximately 10-15 minutes to complete and was distributed through multiple channels, including Wayne Metro's Connect Center, text message campaigns, email, website, social

media (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn), community partners, funders, and Regional Advisory Council (RAC) members. Custom URL parameters tracked response sources to inform future outreach strategies.

The survey included 20 challenge rating questions (5-point Likert scale), priority selection questions, comprehensive demographic questions, and open-ended questions allowing respondents to describe unmet needs in their own words. A total of 1,613 responses were collected, with 1,509 valid responses from Wayne County residents and workers included in the final analysis after excluding 102 non-Wayne County responses. This exceeded the target of 1,000+ responses.

It is important to note that this is a convenience sample rather than a probability-based random sample. Respondents self-selected into the survey, and the findings represent the experiences of those engaged with Wayne Metro's programs and outreach efforts rather than a statistically representative sample of all Wayne County residents. This approach is appropriate for a Community Action Agency needs assessment as it centers the voices of those most likely to need services. Response patterns showed a notable surge following text message campaigns, which accounted for the majority of responses.

Survey data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel for initial cleaning, with quantitative analysis conducted in Python and Microsoft Power BI. Analysis included descriptive statistics, cross-tabulations by demographic variables (income, age, employment status, geography), and comparison to 2023 CNA findings where applicable. Open-ended responses were manually reviewed and coded for common themes by the Data Strategy team.

Wayne Metro Program Data:

Wayne Metro analyzed program data to gain insight into trends in programs and services that the community accesses most frequently. This included data from the Connect Center, EmpowOR, and internal tracking service utilization across programs, and Head Start Program Information Report (PIR) data on children and families served through early childhood programs. Internal program data allowed for comparison between expressed community needs (from the survey) and current service provision, helping identify gaps between need and available services.

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