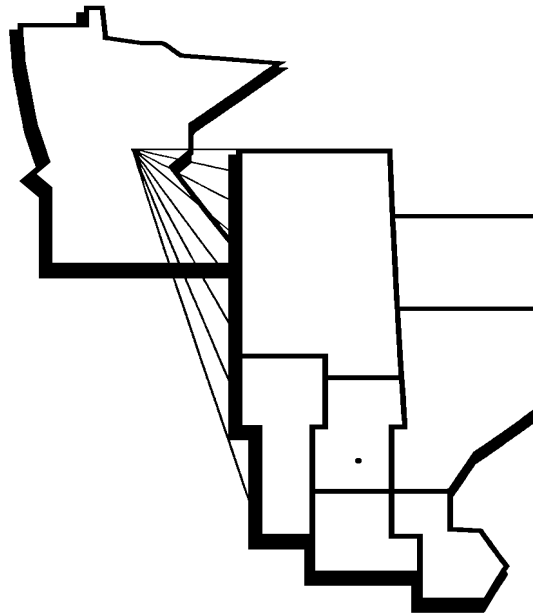


2022

COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT



Aitkin, Carlton, Chisago, Isanti,
Kanabec, Mille Lacs, Pine Counties



It is the mission of Lakes & Pines Community Action Council to build prosperous communities by serving local families and individuals in their pursuit of self-reliance.

Every two years Lakes and Pines Community Action Council, Inc. (Lakes and Pines) conducts a Community Needs Assessment, (CNA) of the seven (7) county service area. With 6100 square miles of area to cover, the agency uses various ways to assess the needs of the community including the use of a survey. Through a randomly computer generated list of addresses, the agency mailed out 4501 surveys to customers, partners, local business, staff and past customers. An incentive to enter a drawing for a \$50 gas card was included with the survey along with our customer satisfaction survey. The survey was placed on the Lakes and Pines website and included directions on how to enter the drawing. Staff were asked to share the opportunity to participate in the survey with their current customers. There was a 30% return on the 4501 surveys or 1372 response; however, this does not account for any surveys that were entered strictly on line. The responses on the following pages indicate how many people responded to the questions but not all questions were answered by all respondents.

There was a month period to return the survey and be entered into the drawing, however surveys came in following the final due date, and the data was entered into the survey online.

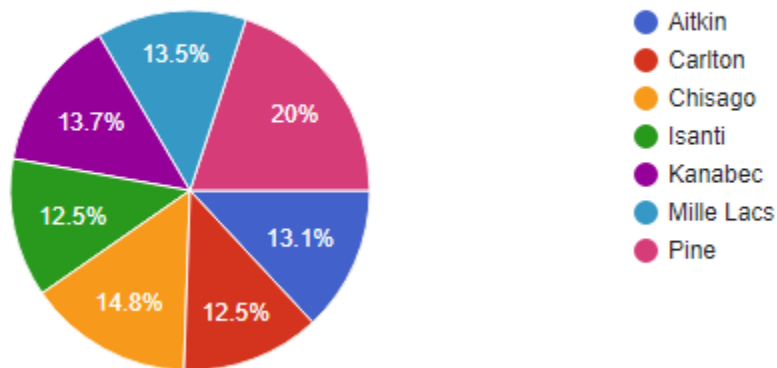
The information in the following pages is taken from the survey, along with observing various trends, looking at the current agency data and reviewing other community needs assessments from local agencies.

This report was written and analyzed by the Agency Planner, Dawn van Hees.

Response by county:

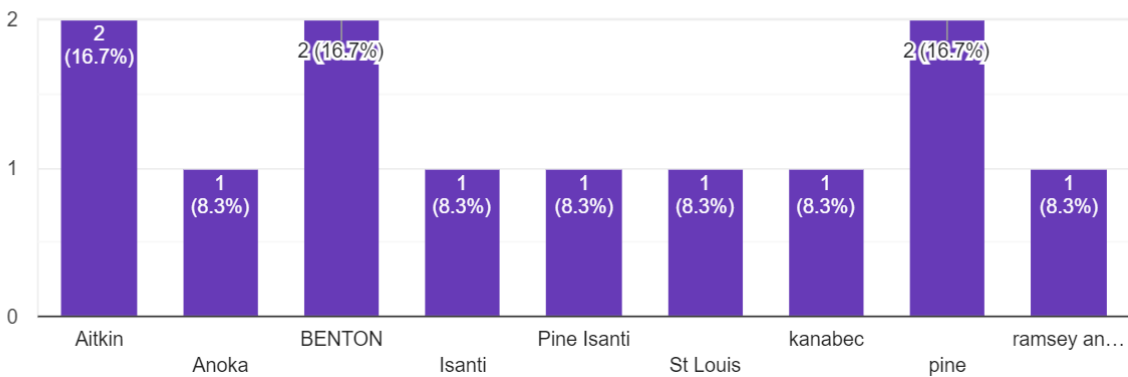
Pine County offered the largest response to the survey with 272 people responding. Chisago response were 202, Kanabec 187, Mille Lacs 184, Aitkin 178, Carlton and Isanti both 170.

1,363 responses



Counties that were checked as other: (note that some of the service area is included). Some responders entered in more than one county based on where their business is located. This is why the service area shows up in the numbers below.

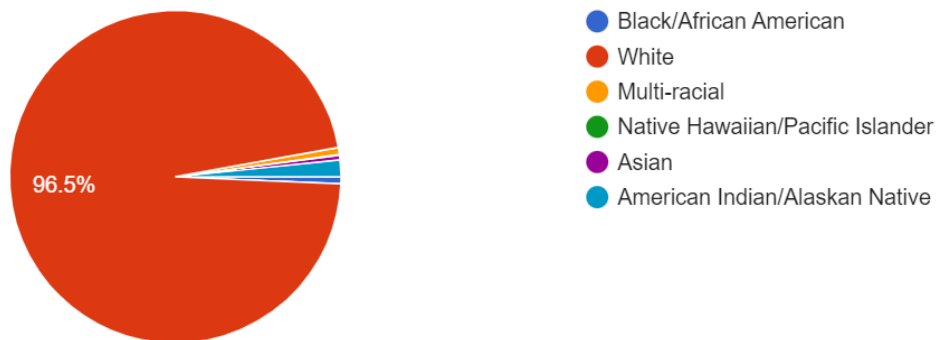
12 responses



Race/Ethnicity/Language:

Using the most recent data from the Community Action Report (CAR) FY2022, 88% of the customers served were white. The survey results indicate that 96.5% of the people who answered the survey were white. This suggests that in the future a better job of reaching all people needs to be taken into consideration. New ways of distributing and gathering information must be tried. American Indian/Alaskan Native is the second largest group. This is reflective in the CAR as well. On the question of ethnicity, 98.8% of the responders are Non-Hispanic/Latino/Spanish

1,345 responses

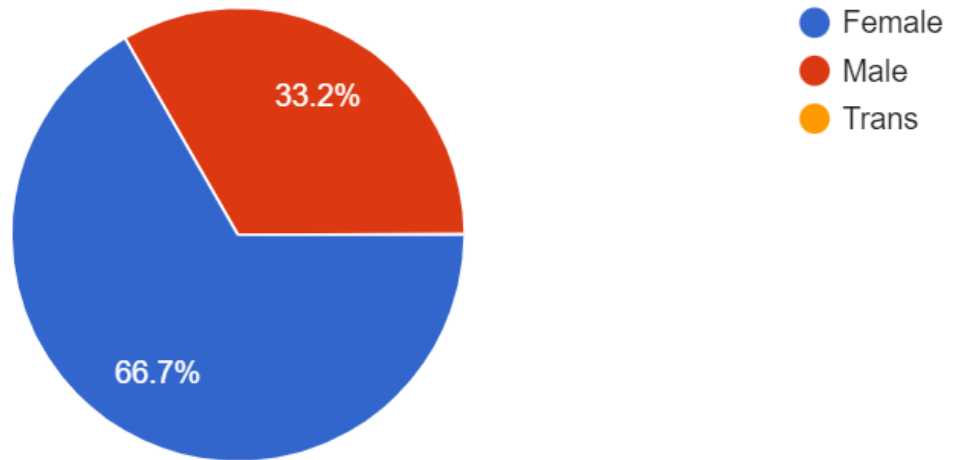


English is the predominate language spoken at home, but it is worth noting the survey was only written in English. The current CAR reflects that English is indeed the common language spoken for the customers served. Through a different lens of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), the agency will need to look at marketing and outreach to ensure that all cultures feel welcomed and honored. Some ways to do this will include revisiting documents to ensure all languages are available, that an environmental scan of the agency shares values for all cultures and barriers are removed that prohibit all customers from accessing services through Lakes and Pines. While the survey shows what the demographics of the 2020 census shows, Community Action is charged with reaching communities not seen. For example, there are farms in the area that employ migrant workers or communities where Hmong farming communities exists. More outreach needs to happen in these communities so if there is ever a need, these members of our service area will feel comfortable reaching out to Lakes and Pines.

Response by gender:

Lakes and Pines serves more women than men. 55% of those served in the recent CAR were women so it is reasonable that over half of those who responded were also women. 893 women responded verse 445 men. No one who identifies as transgender responded. Lakes and Pines will need to do more to ensure transgender customers feel accepted. For our next CNA, on the survey transgender will be spelled out, not left as trans.

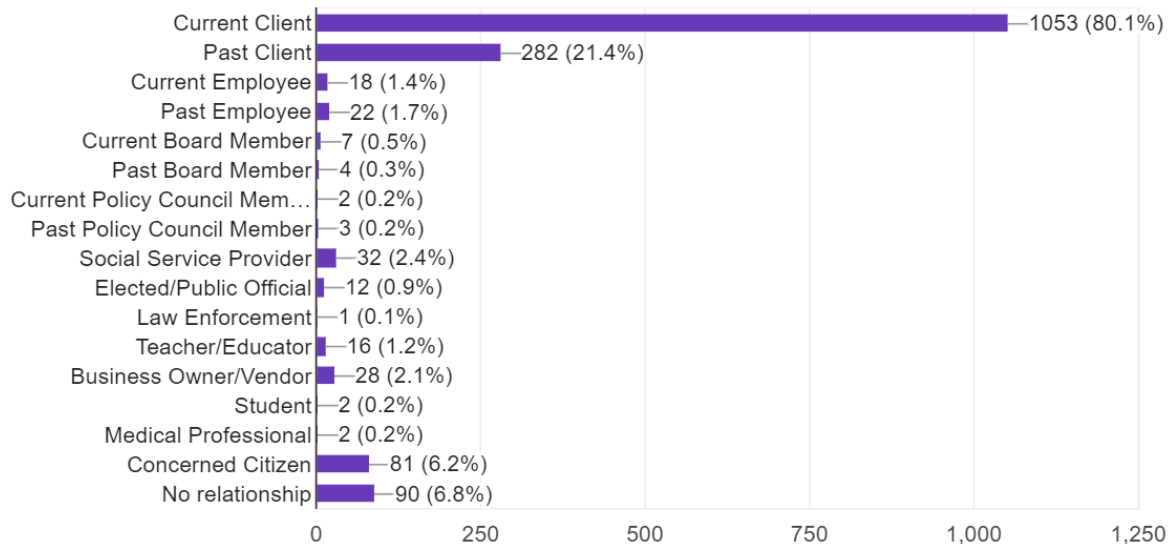
1,339 responses



Relationship with Lakes and Pines:

80% of people who responded to the survey are current customers. This is a bedrock of Community Action to ensure that customers who use the services have a voice in deciding what programs are needed to assist with their goal of upward social and economic mobility.

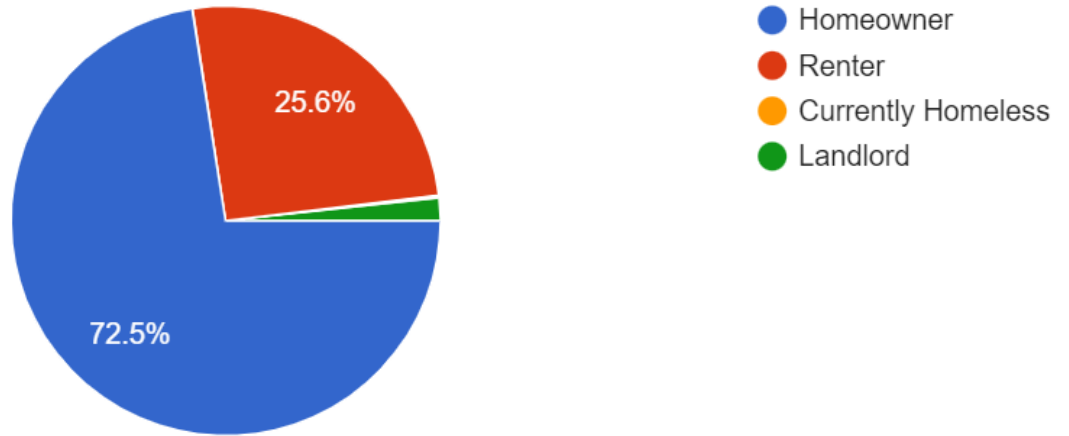
1,315 responses



Homeowner/Renter/Homeless/Landlord:

The majority of responders shared they are homeowners at 72.5% or 960 people. On the pie chart below, it shows no one responded who was homeless. That speaks to the outreach of the survey, not the lack of homelessness. Trends are showing that following the pandemic many more people are facing eviction. Lakes and Pines receives calls daily for assistance to help keep people housed and avoid eviction. In 2022, 879 households were turned away for housing assistance, most trying to stop an eviction, due to a lack of funding.

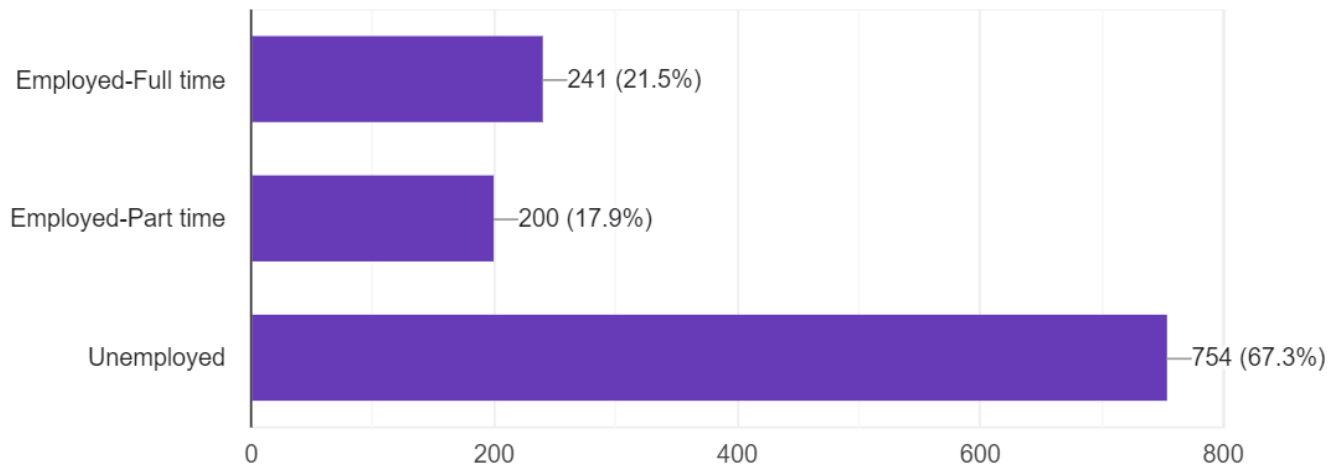
1,324 responses



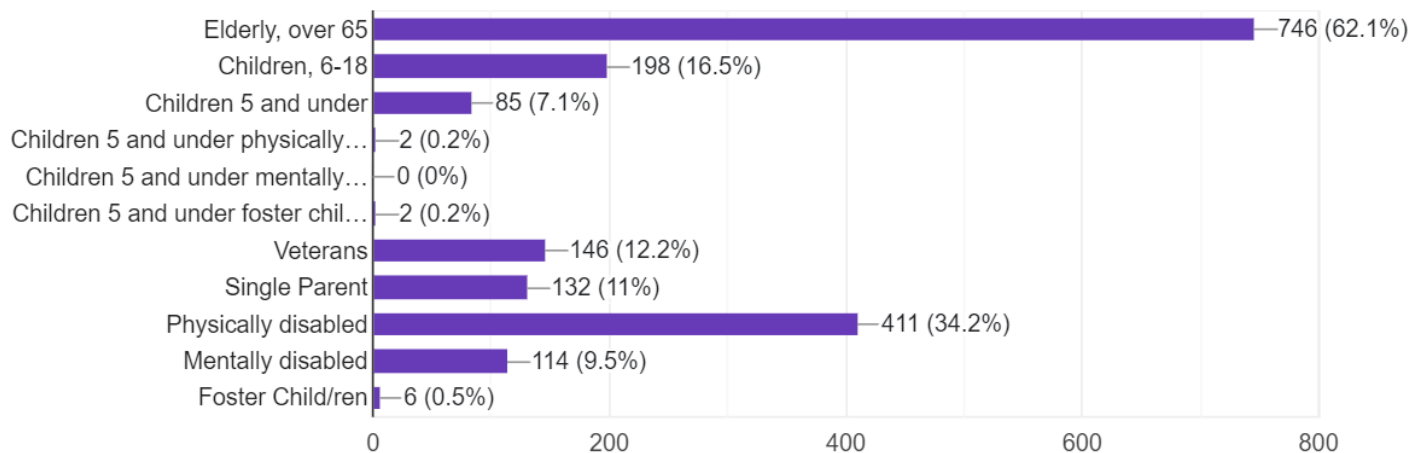
Employment status/Age:

The majority of responders are unemployed; 67.3% or 754. Part of the reason for this status is many of those who answered the survey are seniors. The largest population served is seniors with our Energy Assistance Program (EAP). That largest age group of those who are counted in our CAR that have someone accessing service are youth K-12. This is also the group where services are not offered. While other community programs exist for school age children, it is interesting that in the last CAR this age group accounted for 2,951 people and only through their parents or guardians did they receive services into their home. Through THRIVE, (Transforming, Honoring, & Respecting, Independence by Valuing Empowerment), the new initiative, the agency hopes to start working with this age group in a way that will help prepare them to be socially and economically stable upon moving on their own. This will include building partnerships in the community and connecting families to services already available. Or if gaps are present, looking for funding to offer programming to fill the gaps.

1,120 responses

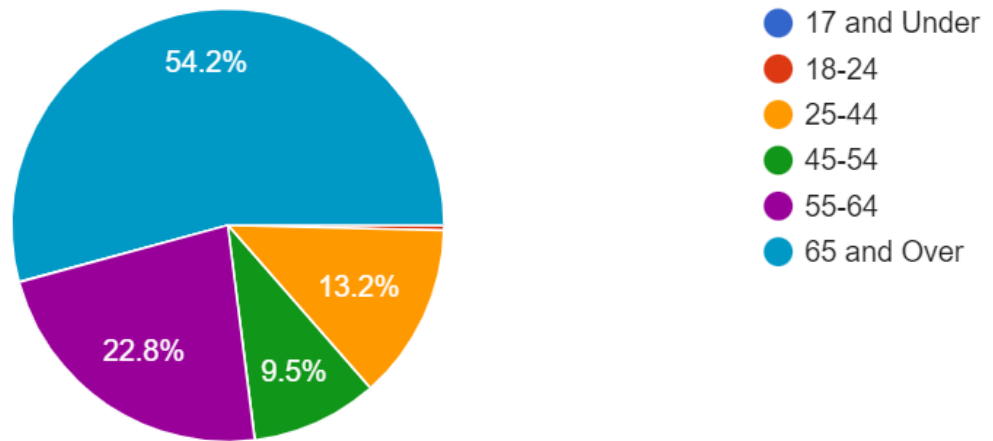


1,201 responses



Looking at the age breakout a bit further indicates that seniors ages 55 and older respond to the survey. This is significant to include as the data is analyzed to keep in mind that many of the needs for the communities will be based on what seniors see as the need. Going forward other ways to collect the data will need to be considered in order to get a rounded sample of all ages. Without input from the ages 24-younger, Lakes and Pines must fill in the gaps with data from other sources.

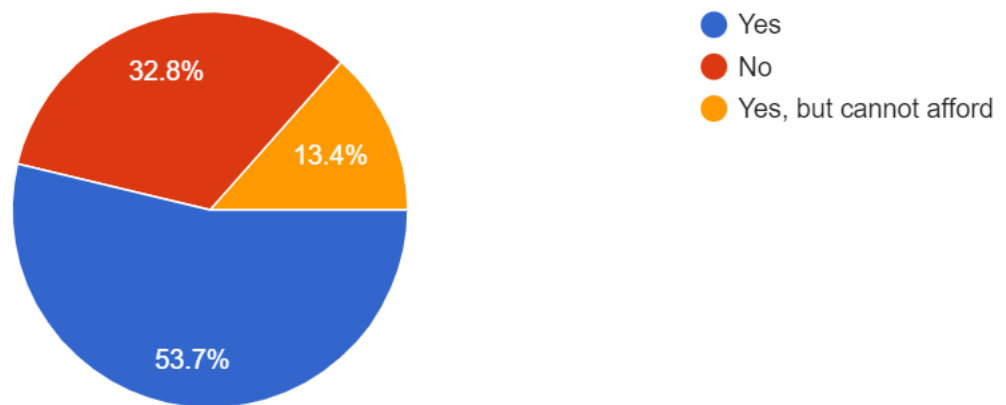
1,352 responses



Access to internet:

As Lakes and Pines looks at outreach, marketing and barriers for customers, it's important to note that almost half of those who responded either do not have access to the internet in their area, or they just can't afford it.

1,221 responses



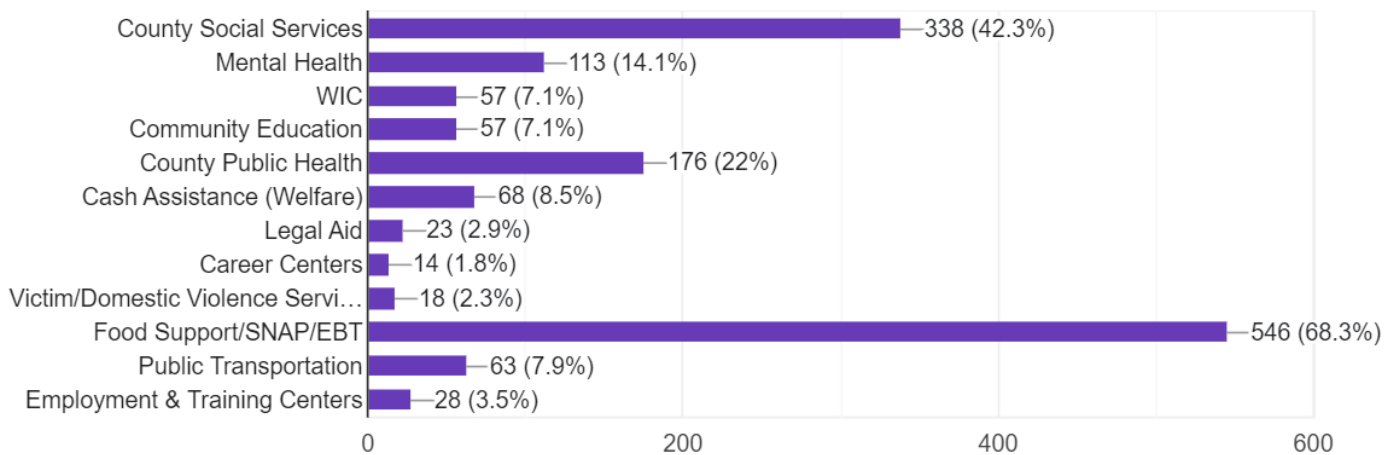
Financial stability/Resource used:

Very few members of our communities feel stable in their financial situation. This makes sense since Lakes and Pines programs typically have a low-income level that customers must meet for services. To put this in perspective, of the 1,323 people who responded to this question, only 213 people have 3-6 months of income saved. That means 1,110 people are likely one paycheck away from needing assistance. This is 84% of a random sample. If even half of the 84% would represent the Lakes and Pines service area as a whole that would mean at least 42% of the people in the 6,100 square mile service area are one paycheck away from needing assistance. Lakes and Pines does not have funding to help everyone now. Those who responded are utilizing other services in conjunction with Lakes and Pines. More partnerships will need to be developed and strengthened to ensure upward social and economic mobility. In the second bar graph, you will see the top needs for those who answered the survey.

1,323 responses



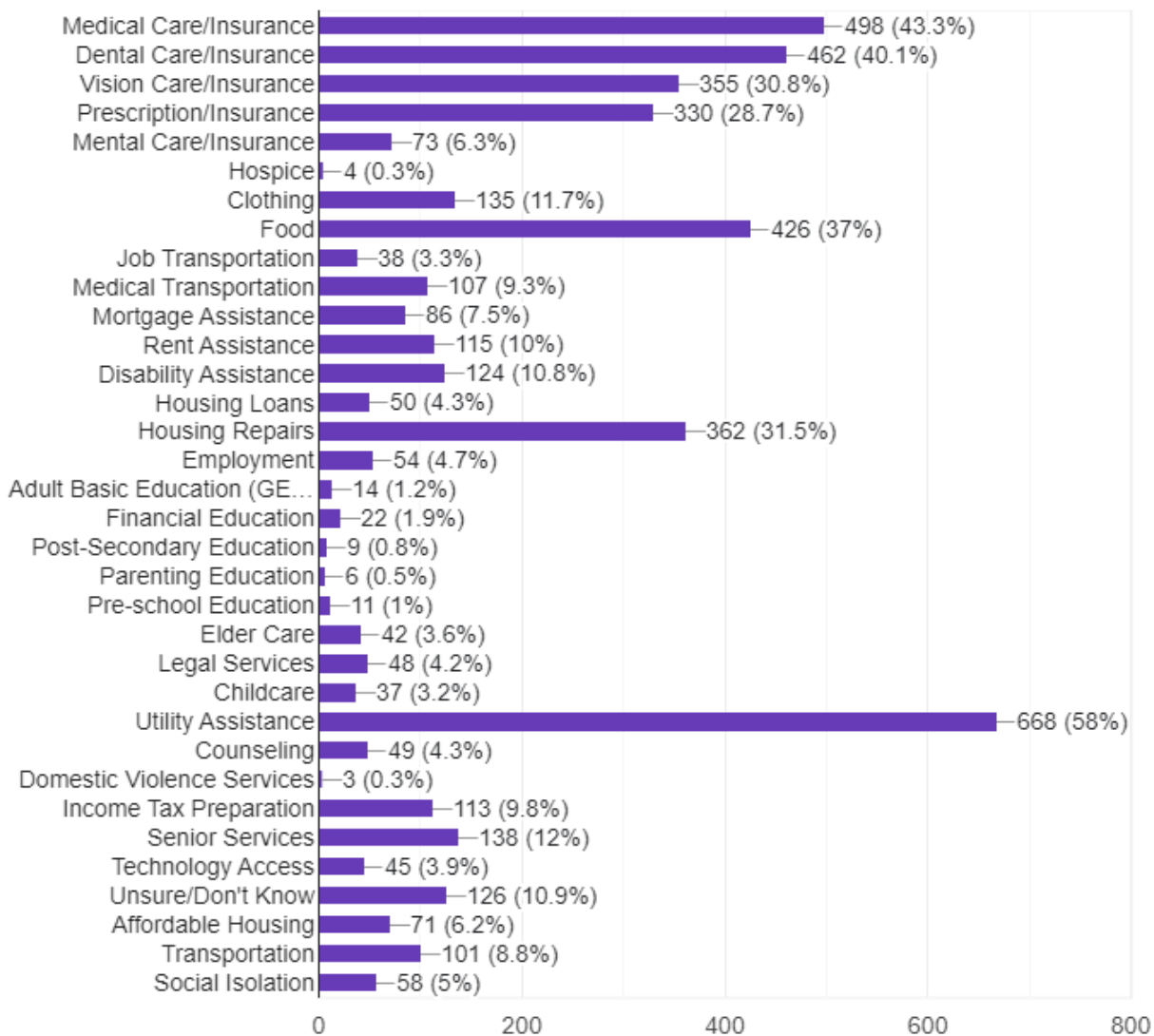
799 responses



The top 5 needs for families responding:

- 1) Utility Assistance
- 2) Medical Care/Insurance
- 3) Dental Care/Insurance
- 4) Food
- 5) Housing Repairs

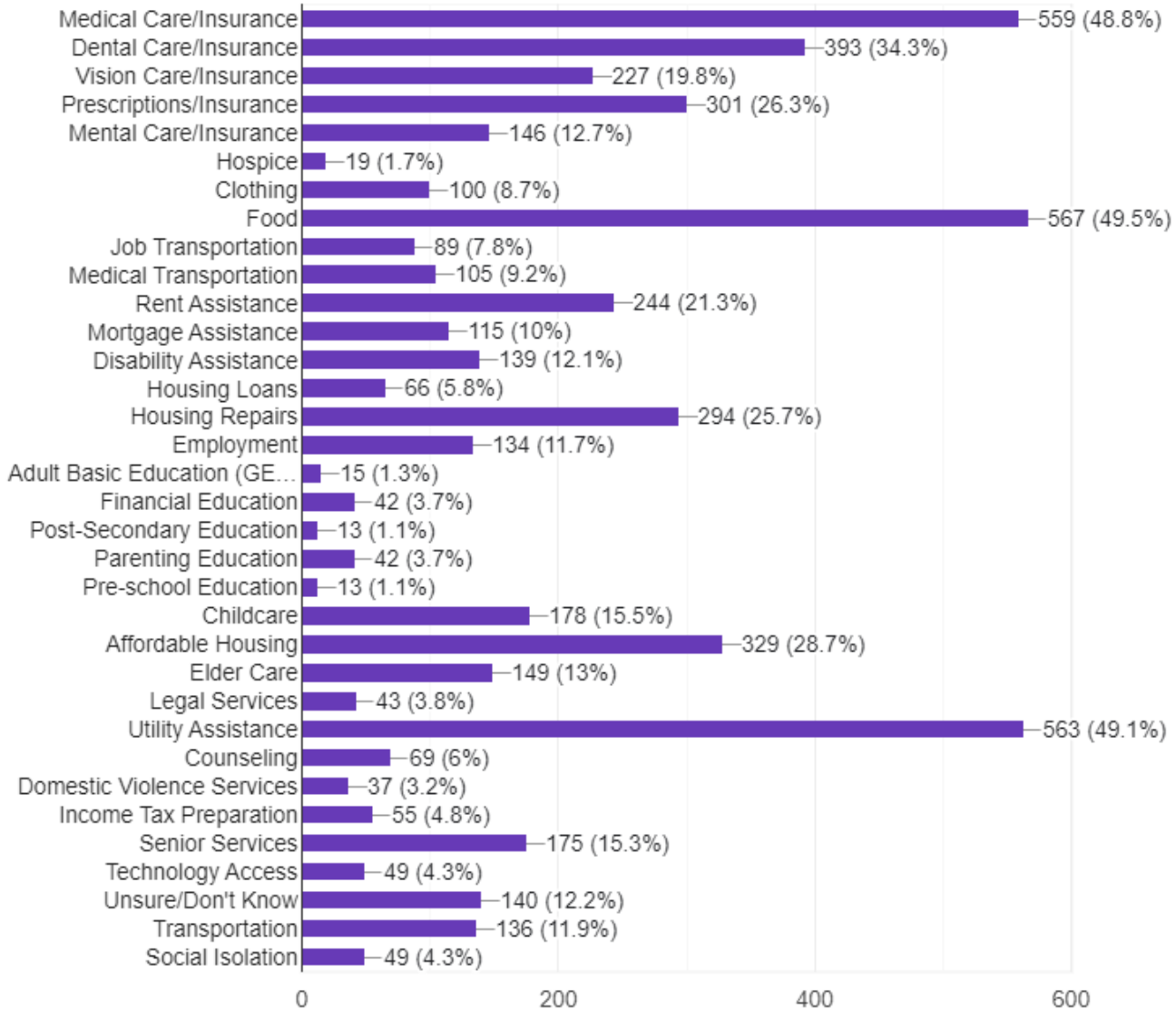
1,151 responses



The top 5 overall current needs for the community:

- 1) Food
- 2) Utility Assistance
- 3) Medical Care/Insurance
- 4) Dental Care/Insurance
- 5) Affordable housing

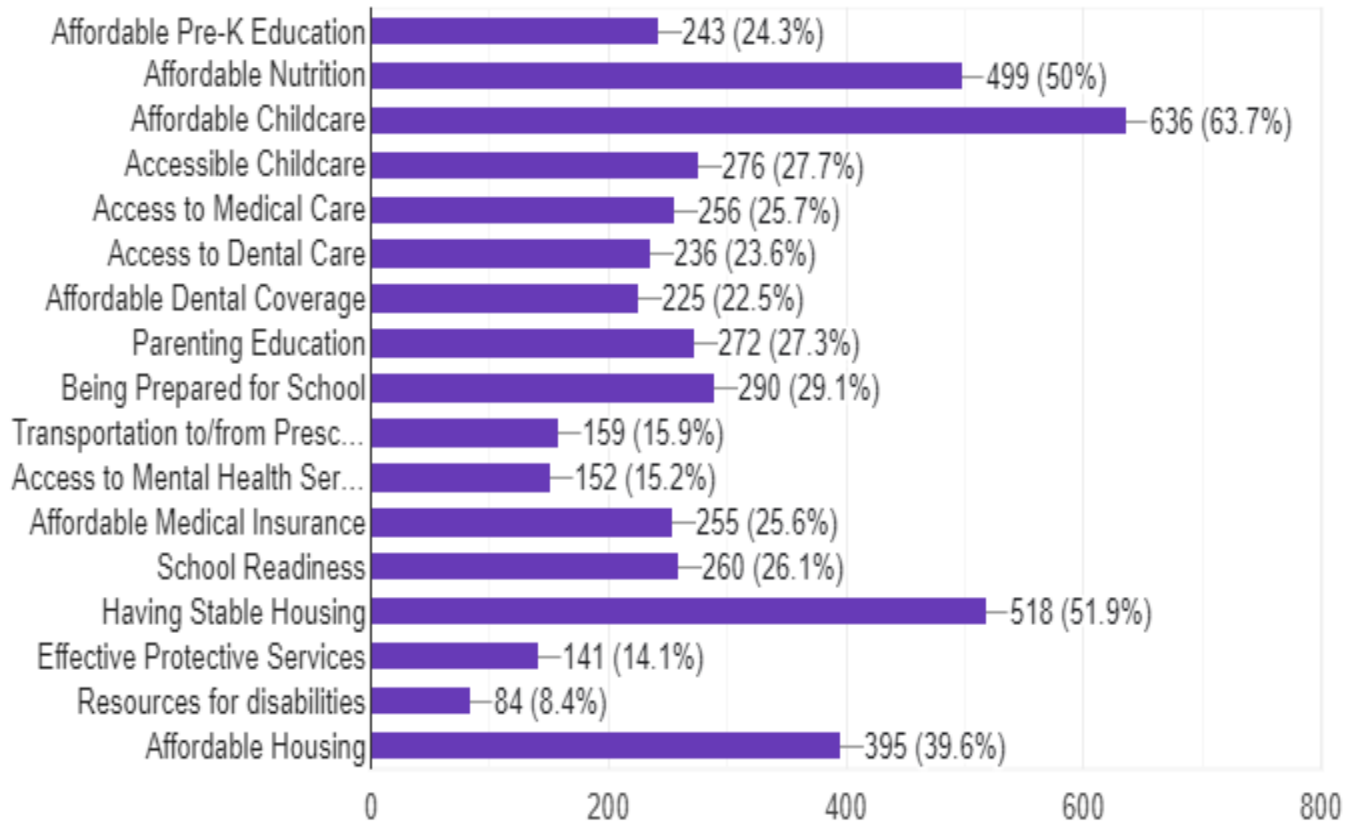
1,146 responses



The top 5 issues for children 5 and younger:

- 1) Affordable Childcare
- 2) Stable Housing
- 3) Affordable Nutrition
- 4) Affordable Housing
- 5) Being Prepared For School

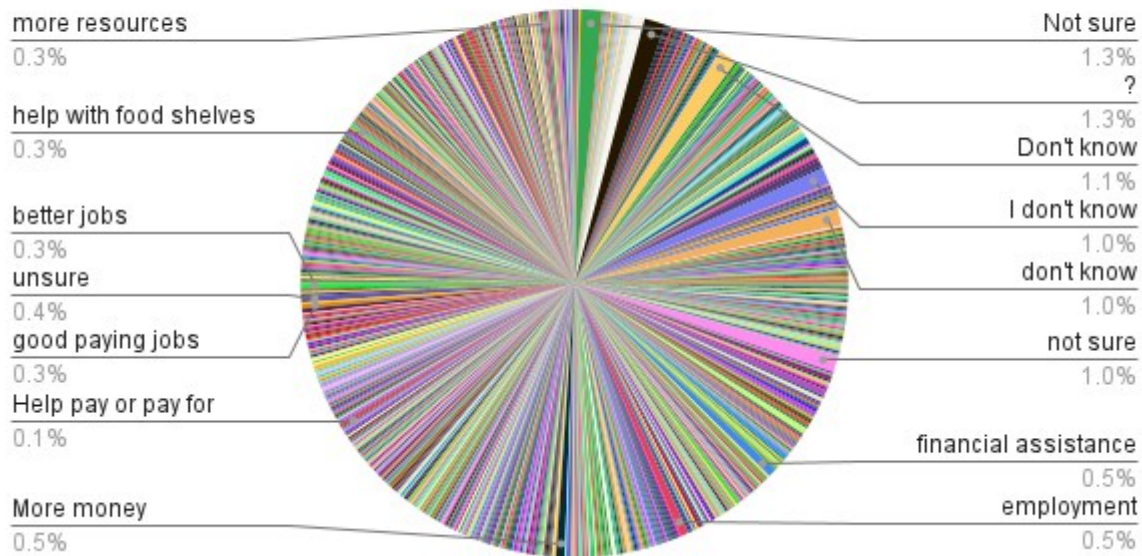
998 responses



Suggestions to help:

The chart below is a compilation of what responders said they thought would assist people who were struggling in the community. While it is a lot to look at, many responders did not have a suggestion, but others felt that more jobs or better paying jobs would be helpful. Secondary to jobs is more financial assistance and third is food.

Count of What could be a solution to help people in your community that are economically struggling?



Next Steps:

Based on trends in the communities, affordable housing continues to be an issue. Social isolation, a lack of transportation, limited food resources, services to help seniors remain in their homes, all these issues became more visible through the pandemic. Many of the issues were already a struggle, but the pandemic highlighted them more. So while the CNA shows Utility, Medical and Dental access as continuing needs, food needs have risen to the top. For many of our members, it is not unheard of to drive over 45 minutes to get groceries. For those who lack reliable transportation or transportation at all, the barriers are even larger. Seniors who may not be able to drive any longer rely on family or neighbors to help, which may only be possible infrequently. Following the pandemic, if possible, keeping seniors in their homes is a good option.

Lakes and Pines will continue to be a voice for affordable housing. Through ECHO (East Central Housing Organization) the conversation will be around finding ways to bring in affordable housing to East Central MN by bringing agencies to the table that can move this issue forward.

The agency will continue to offer MNSure Navigation as a way to help our communities find affordable health and dental care. The agency has staff who participate in the CNA's for the medical providers in many of the communities. We do this to be a voice for the low income customers and the community who needs to have access to medical and dental in their area.

The agency will continue to offer SNAP outreach and application assistance. Through community meetings, the message of food deserts will be shared. The agency will continue to work with local grocery stores to build a network of volunteers willing to pick up pre-ordered groceries for our seniors. A conversation is currently underway about the ability to use SNAP to pay for groceries over the phone or online. Customers who are homebound and have SNAP are unable to use this option at many of the smaller stores in their communities. Big box stores like Walmart offer this service, but only a certain percentage of our customers has access to these big box stores.

Lastly, the agency will continue to assess barriers within the walls of Lakes and Pines. In order to serve everyone who needs the assistance, they first must know we exist. THRIVE is a new culture that will include DEI practices, Family Centered Coaching (person centered), trauma informed care, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and more all with the goal of helping the customers of Lakes and Pines with their upward social and economic mobility.