

2025-2028

Community Needs Assessment

LANCASTER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA



**Community
Action
Partnership**

People.
Empowered.

Community Needs Assessment for Lancaster County, Pennsylvania

Prepared for Community Action Partnership by Michael McKenna, MSFS · September 2024

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OVERVIEW

A 2Gen Framework for Assessing Needs

Community Action Partnership of Lancaster County (CAP) is the largest anti-poverty organization in Lancaster County and one of the largest Community Action Agencies in the Commonwealth of PA. As part of its last strategic plan, CAP prioritized the expansion of two-generation (2Gen) principles and approaches across its constellation of programs and services. In other words, an emphasis on outcomes for the whole family. Consequently, the 2025-2028 Community Needs Assessment is organized to correspond with the six key components of 2Gen approaches, as defined by the Aspen Institute's Ascend initiative.

These six components are:

1 Economic Assets

This section of the report focuses on housing, transportation, public benefits usage, financial capacity, and opportunities for asset building.

2 Health and Mental Health

This section of the report examines key indicators on county residents' physical, mental, and behavioral health; access to care and health insurance coverage; and trauma (including ACEs).

3 Early Childhood Education

This section of the report covers the landscape of child care resources, including Head Start/ Early Head Start, center-based and home-based care, and home visiting.

4 K-12 Education

This section of the report looks at the kindergarten readiness of Lancaster County children, as well as third grade reading skills, parent engagement, and college and career readiness.

5 Postsecondary and Employment Pathways

This section of the report examines the collegiate options, training and credentialing programs, workforce partnerships, and the Lancaster County labor market more broadly.

6 Social Capital

This section of the report examines peer and family networks.



Economic Assets



Health and Mental Health



Early Childhood Education



K-12 Education



Postsecondary and Employment Pathways



Social Capital

Because these components are all interconnected, so too are the various indicators that may illustrate the conditions and opportunities for residents of Lancaster County. For ease of reading, key indicators were assigned to the 2Gen component that felt most appropriate.

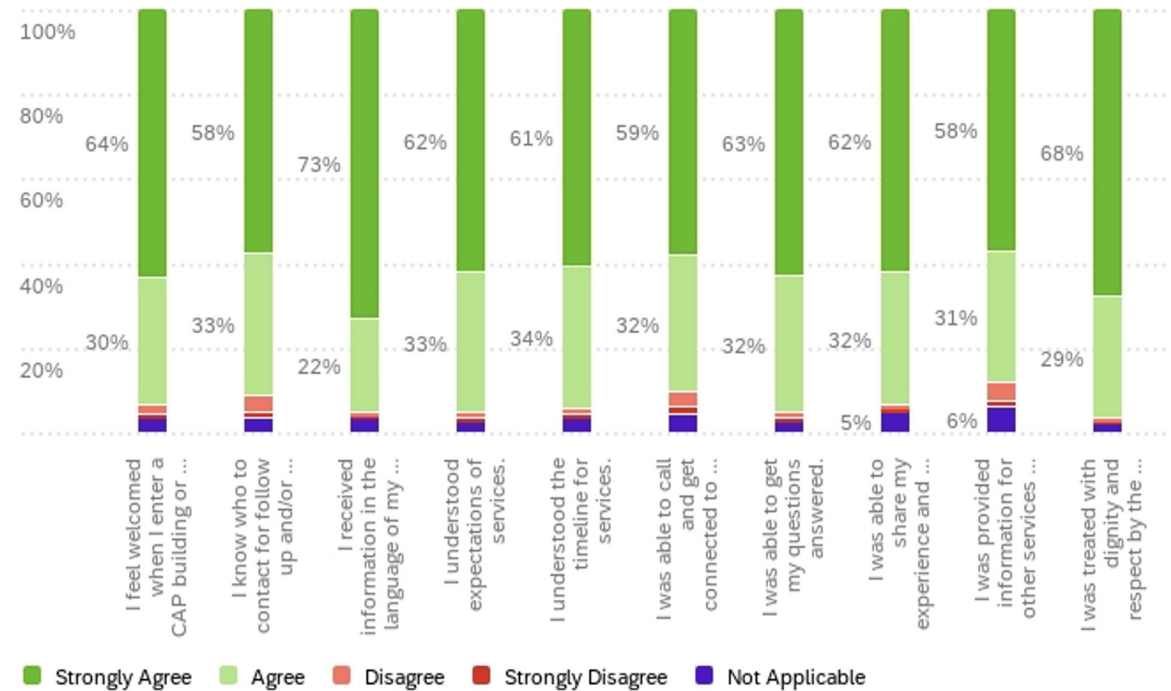
Moreover, the following 2Gen principles served as guiding principles in the data collection, reporting, and analysis as much as possible:

- 1 **Measure and account for outcomes for both children and the adults in their lives;**
- 2 **Engage and listen to the voices of families;**
- 3 **Ensure racial, gender, and economic equity;**
- 4 **Foster innovation and evidence together;**
- 5 **Align and link systems and funding streams.**

In assessing CAP’s adherence to these 2Gen principles, the following observations were noted:

- 1 **Measure and account for outcomes for both children and the adults in their lives:** CAP uses multiple client management software products, the use of which is largely dictated by state or federal contracts. CAP was the key architect of a countywide system known as Empower Lancaster (aka CaseWorthy) which is designed to capture individual and household data across services and agencies all over the county.
- 2 **Engage and listen to the voices of families:** CAP conducts annual customer satisfaction surveys and has a variety of events throughout the year that give individuals and families opportunities to provide input, as seen in Table 1. Individuals living with

TABLE 1: Overall Quality of CAP Services



low income (or representatives such as nonprofit employees who serve this population) are part of CAP’s Board of Directors, and a parent-led Policy Council provides input into Head Start policymaking and indirectly to the CAP board. Participants can submit feedback at all times through several channels (report to a caseworker, online via email or social media), and a grievance policy and process exists to investigate any claims made by program participants.



3 Ensure racial, gender, and economic equity:

CAP participated in the creation of the YWCA-led Equity Profile in 2022-2023. Key findings of that analysis are included in a subsequent section. In 2024, CAP issued a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Vision after several years of study, as seen in Figure 1.

4 Foster innovation and evidence together:

CAP has implemented many programs with a strong record of effectiveness (from local and national evaluations). CAP employees participate in regular professional development to stay current in the latest developments in their fields. CAP also tests new pilot ideas regularly, building program evaluation components into the program design and budget. Often these are coordinated with key community partners, like schools, health systems, and large employers.

5 Align and link systems and funding streams:

CAP is the largest (by number of employees and budget) nonprofit social service provider in the county. Its services include WIC, Nutrition Education, senior centers, Thrive to Five early education, Utility Assistance, Early Learning Resource Center, Domestic Violence Services, Food Distribution, Crispus Attucks Community Center, and RISE person-centered goal planning. Its organizational structure is designed to foster collaboration within and across programs and services, as well as externally with other organizations serving the same populations. CAP is a key player in multiple robust partnerships to

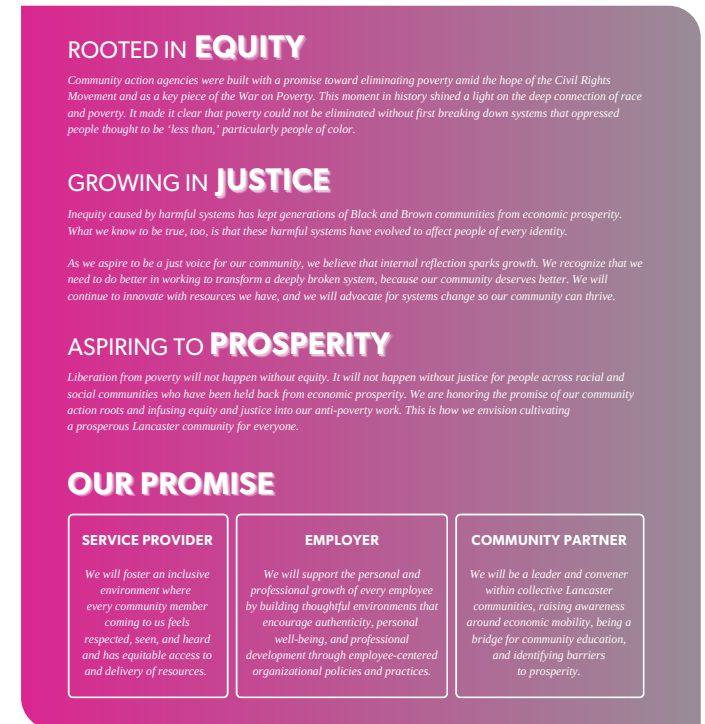
address key community challenges across the county. These include:

- **Hunger-Free Lancaster County** to promote programs to ensure no one in Lancaster County goes hungry;
- **Coalition for Sustainable Housing** to advocate for more affordable housing solutions;
- **Joining Forces for Children** to combat the opioid epidemic;
- **Lancaster County Homelessness Coalition** to ensure homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring;
- **Eviction Prevention Network** to provide resources and support to help households remain in their homes;
- **Lead-Free Families** to prevent and remediate the causes of lead poisoning in children.

In addition, CAP maintains one-on-one relationships with a number of regional, countywide, and local community service providers, including Central PA Food Bank (wholesaler to large network of food providers), Water Street Mission (homelessness), Tenfold (fair and affordable housing/homelessness), and Community Services Group (mental health). These agencies are a strong asset for the community, though their continued need and growth reinforce the picture of the socioeconomic challenges that Lancaster County families are facing.

CAP also maintains constructive relationships with

FIGURE 1:
CAP'S Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Vision



government officials on both sides of the aisle at the local, county, and state levels, as well as its Congressional legislators. CAP has routinely hosted representatives from state government at its facilities to highlight key initiatives, demonstrate how well (or not) public funding sources and policies are reaching families, and build awareness around future improvements.

Equity

As noted in the overview, Lancaster County is increasingly diverse, which is a positive development. However, in nearly all risk categories, people of color in Lancaster County are disproportionately adversely affected, rooted in the effect of persistent underinvestment and systemic racism that hindered wealth creation, including redlining in the 1930s through 1960s. In late 2022, the YWCA and a coalition of partners released an Equity Profile for the county.¹ Some key findings underscore this troubling reality:

- Child poverty rates for Black and Latinx children are three times the rate of white children (which is still high at 9%).
- Nearly 60% of Latinx (59%) and people of color (58%) are rent-burdened.
- The median wage for white workers with a bachelor's degree or higher is \$3.50/hour higher than that for workers of color with similar credentials, a pattern seen at all levels of educational attainment.
- Life expectancy for white residents of the Lancaster metro area is five years longer than that for Black residents.
- Cash bail for Black defendants tends to be set higher (\$66,000 compared to \$55,000 for white defendants), which further undermines the financial position of households living with low income.

These significant differences have ripple effects that are detrimental for all residents. The report estimates that the county sacrifices an additional \$1.9 billion in GDP in 2019 if all groups earned incomes comparable to white workers. A community in which all residents have the opportunity and supports to thrive would therefore lead to greater economic vitality for everyone.



A community in which all residents have the opportunity and supports to thrive would therefore lead to greater economic vitality for everyone.

¹https://ywcalancaster.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Lancaster_Equity-Profile_January-2023.pdf

Demographic Overview

Lancaster County is located in South Central Pennsylvania, bordered by Maryland to the South, Chester County to the East, York County to the West, and Dauphin, Lebanon, and Berks counties to the North. It is the state's sixth largest by population and eleventh largest by area. There are an estimated 558,589 residents, of which 50.9% are female and 49.1% are male (note: demographic data not available for other gender categories) according to the United States Census Bureau's July 2023 estimate.² Lancaster County has 208,988 households with an average of 2.58 people per household, slightly higher than the state's rate of 2.4 people per household.

The population in Lancaster County is comprised of 22.9% youth under the age of eighteen, 6.5% children under the age of five, and 20.2% adults 65 years and over. When compared to Pennsylvania as a whole, Lancaster County has a slightly larger percentage of youth (22.9% to 20.3%) and mirrors the state's 65+ population (20.2% to 20%). The median age is 38.4 years, fourth in the state behind only Centre, Philadelphia, and Clinton counties. This is lower than the state median age of 40.7 years.³ A youthful population is beneficial for future economic growth (workforce) and the county's capacity to support the sizable elderly population. A recent study by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania suggests that the

population will increase by 8.4% between 2020-2050, with a significant growth in the percentage of the population over the age of 65.⁴

Between July 2020 and July 2023, the population grew by one percent, whereas Pennsylvania's decreased by 0.3%. The county's population has grown 7.5% since the 2010 census. The racial and ethnic composition of the county population is increasing at a faster rate than the white population, when comparing 2008-2012 to 2018-2022. Although the white population is the largest subset, the growth rate for the Hispanic population was 37%. The Asian population grew by 27%, and the Black population grew by 21%.⁵ The county's race and ethnicity data is provided in Table 2.

Foreign-born individuals make up 5.5% of the population (2018-2022 average), lower than the state's at 7.3%, and 16.2% of the population speaks a language other than English at home, higher than the 11.2% for the state overall. The county's multilingual population is concentrated in the City of Lancaster. It has increased slowly over time.⁶

TABLE 2: Lancaster County Race and Ethnicity Data

Race and Hispanic origin	Percentage 2023
White, alone	88.6
Black, alone	5.7
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.5
Asian	2.8
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	0.1
Two or more races	2.3
Hispanic or Latino	11.7

TABLE 3: Top Five Lancaster County Municipalities by Population

Rank	Community	Population	Percent Change
1	Lancaster City	56,887	-0.46
2	Manheim Township	44,260	0.14
3	East Hempfield Township	27,264	0.98
4	Manor Township	22,197	0.41
5	Warwick	19,246	0.28

² <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/lancastercountypennsylvania/SEX255223#SEX255223>

³ https://infogram.com/median_age_for_state_counties

⁴ https://lancasteronline.com/news/local/lancaster-county-may-see-population-growth-increased-age-over-coming-decades/article_6e76c19e-e2fb-11ee-b82a-bfe919d19446.html

⁵ <https://lancasterindicators.com/demographics/population-by-race-ethnicity>

⁶ <https://lancasterindicators.com/demographics/language-diversity>

The PA Department of Health, drawing on American Community Survey data, reports that 6.17% (or more than 31,000 Lancaster residents) do not speak English very well.⁷ Spanish and German are the most commonly spoken languages other than English, though at least eight other languages have at least 1,000 speakers who speak English less than very well, as shown in Table 4. Ensuring accessibility to educational materials and services in multiple languages is therefore critically important.

The county has 17 school districts (note: technically a very small portion of West Cocalico township is served by Conrad Weiser School District in Berks County so it has not been included in subsequent analysis).⁸ There are 62 municipalities, including city, towns/boroughs, townships, etc., covering a mix of urban areas, suburban areas, and rural regions.⁹

By population, the five largest communities are clustered in the center of the county around Lancaster City and contiguous to one another.¹⁰

Five-year Census Bureau estimates put the 2023 poverty rate at 8.2%, equivalent to 44,195 Lancasterians below the poverty line. This is an improvement from the 10.1% who lived below the poverty line in the earlier reference period of 2015-2019. The

improvement over time is shown in Table 6 on the next page from the Lancaster Indicators project.¹¹

The areas with the highest concentrations of poverty (using the federal poverty line as the indicator) are Lancaster City (18.7% 2018-2022) and Columbia Borough (16.5%).¹² Single-parent households are more likely to live below the poverty line. Comparing 2008-2012 to 2018-2022, Hispanic single-parent households increased six percentage points, white single-parent households decreased by three percentage points, and African American single-parent households decreased by one percentage point. A significant percentage of households with children under 18 are single-parent households, as shown in Table 7 on the next page.

The median household income (in 2022 dollars) is \$81,458, and the per capita income is \$39,872.¹³ Median income has increased about \$10,000 comparing 2008-2012 to 2018-2022 after accounting for inflation.¹⁴ This is a stark contrast to the federal poverty line of \$13,590 for a single

TABLE 4: Languages Spoken at Home

Languages spoken at home	Population that speaks English less than very well
Spanish	35,560 (6.90%)
German or other West Germanic languages	32,225 (6.25%)
Other Indo-European languages	4,653 (0.90%)
Other and unspecified languages	2,990 (0.58%)
Russian, Polish or other Slavic languages	2,201 (0.43%)
Vietnamese	2,180 (0.42%)
Other Asian and Pacific Island languages	2,012 (0.39%)
French, Haitian or Cajun	1,319 (0.26%)
Chinese (including Mandarin and Cantonese)	1,305 (0.25%)
Arabic	1,116 (0.22%)
Tagalog (including Filipino)	678 (0.13%)
Korean	359 (0.07%)



⁷ https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/health/documents/topics/documents/health-equity/LEP_FactSheets_PerCounty_ACS_2018-2023.pdf

⁸ <https://co.lancaster.pa.us/DocumentCenter/View/208/School-Districts>

⁹ <https://co.lancaster.pa.us/517/County-Municipalities-Schools>

¹⁰ <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/pennsylvania/lancaster-county>

¹¹ <https://lancasterindicators.com/financial-security/people-living-in-poverty>

¹² <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/06000US4207115384-columbia-borough-lancaster-county-pa/>

¹³ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/lancastercountypennsylvania/INC110222>

¹⁴ <https://lancasterindicators.com/financial-security/median-household->

adult and \$27,750 for a family of four.¹⁵ Income inequality is moderate in Lancaster County, which could suggest the need for policy changes intended to improve economic fairness and mobility. One standard measure of income inequality is the Gini coefficient, which measures inequality on a scale from 0 (complete income equality) to 1. Lancaster County's Gini coefficient is 0.43.¹⁶ Data from the Federal Reserve also shows relative inequality in Lancaster County, when comparing the mean income of the top quintile with the mean income of the bottom quintile, as shown in Table 5. It has trended upward for a decade.¹⁷

TABLE 5: Income Inequality in Lancaster County, PA

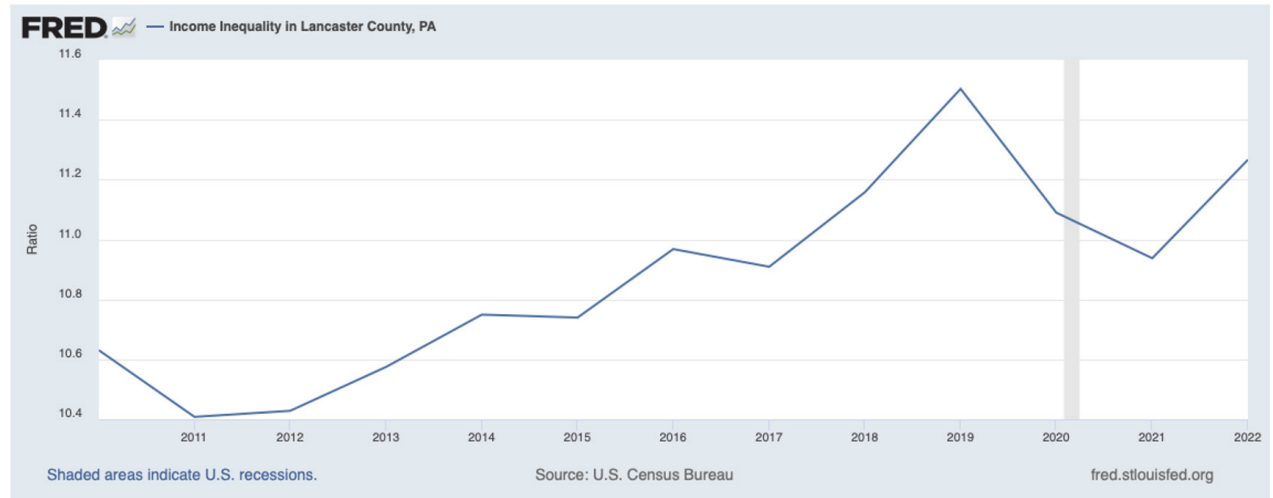


TABLE 6: People Living Below the Poverty Line

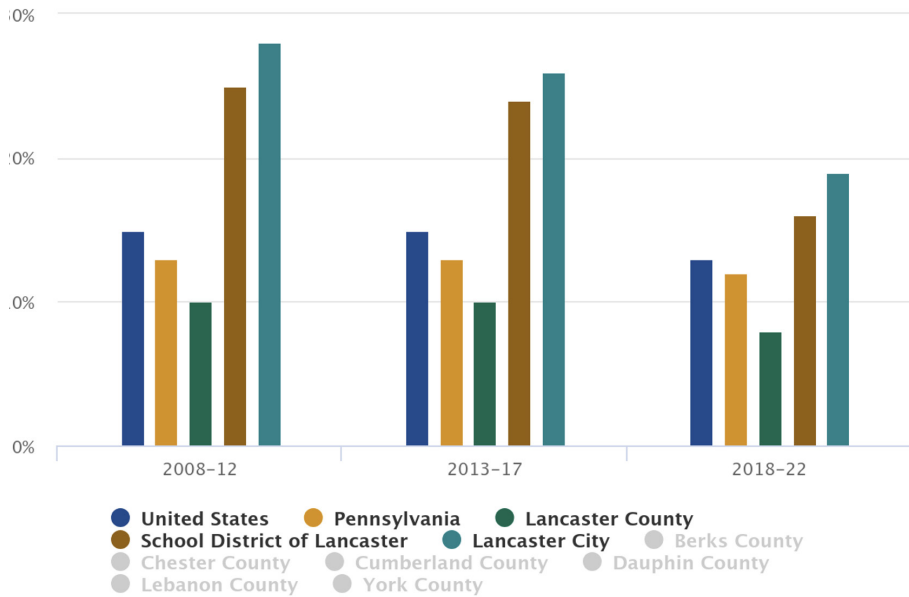
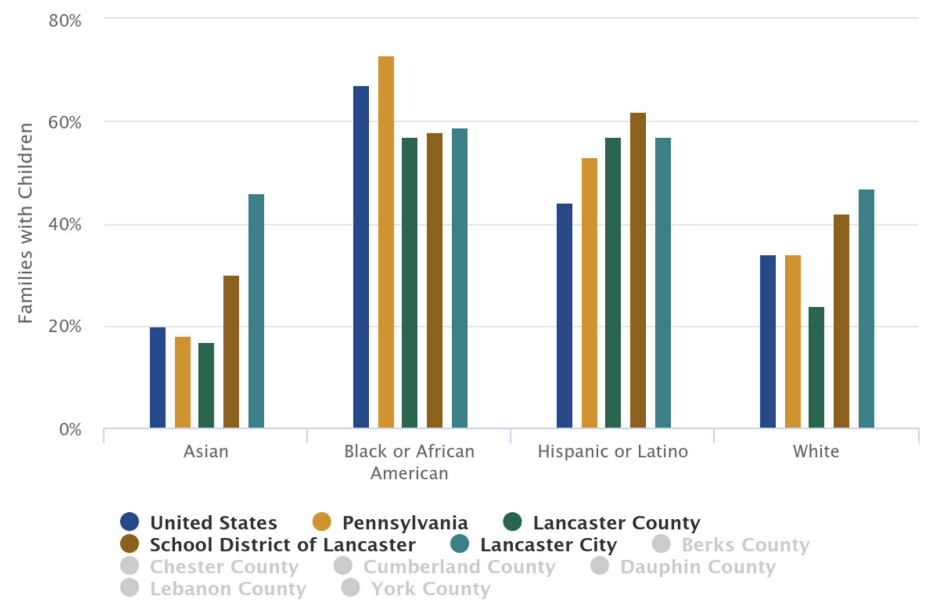


TABLE 7: Single-parent Households



¹⁵ ALICE in Lancaster County, 2024 Update.

¹⁶ <https://www.neilsberg.com/insights/lancaster-county-pa-median-household-income/>

¹⁷ <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/2020RATIO042071#>



2GEN COMPONENT 1

Economic Assets

Financial Constraint

As noted in the Demographic Overview section, the official poverty rate in Lancaster County is 8.2%. Ten percent of children live below the poverty line. While still high, this is an improvement and tracks with a similar decrease nationally.¹ There were 127,000 children ages birth to 17 in the county using 2018-2022 estimates. Of these children, 9.9%, or 12,530, live below 100% of the federal poverty line; 30.1%, or 38,290, live below 200% of the federal poverty line; and 55.5%, or 65,410, live below 300% of the federal poverty line.² Thus, the universe of children and families CAP could potentially serve is considerable.

However, the federal poverty line is an incomplete measure for tracking a household's economic condition. One supplemental indicator is the United

Way's ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained but Employed) Report. The most recent report for 2022 demonstrates that more than a third (36%) of Lancaster County's households are the "working poor" that cannot afford the essentials.³ Cost of living outpaces the household earnings, and in some cases, they earn too much to be eligible for public benefits tied to FPIG. This ALICE percentage has remained remarkably persistent since the inception of the study in 2012.

Several communities' ALICE status vastly exceeds this concerning baseline: 60% of Columbia Borough, 52% of households in an urban center like Lancaster City and a more rural area like New Holland, 50% of households in Ephrata, and 47% in Akron. Other main population centers within the county track

fairly closely with the countywide figure: 29% of Manheim Township's and Warwick Township's households, 37% of East Lampeter's households, and 27% of East Hempfield's households are below the ALICE threshold. The communities with the lowest percentage of households below the ALICE threshold are Pequea Township at 22% and East Petersburg Borough at 25%, accounting for a combined 4,168 households. Thus, we can conclude economic hardship and economic insecurity is widespread across the entire county.⁴

Reinforcing this local finding, the Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey for March 2023 showed 39.8% of Pennsylvania adults live in households where it "has been somewhat or very difficult to pay for usual household expenses in the last seven days".⁵

¹ <https://lancasterindicators.com/financial-security/children-living-in-poverty>

² <https://datacenter.aecf.org/data/tables/8347-poverty-level--population-birth-to-age-17?loc=40&loct=5#detailed/5/5414/false/2543,2454,2026,1983,1692,1691,1607,1572,1485,1376/1231,22,666,1232,1233,1234,1235,1236,1237/16937,16938>

³ <https://www.uwp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020-ALICE-REPORT-PA-County-Profiles.pdf>

⁴ <https://oneunitedlancaster.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/2024-Lancaster-County-ALICE-Report.pdf>

⁵ https://www.census.gov/data-tools/demo/hhp/#/?measures=EXPENSE&s_state=00042&periodSelector=55



Impact of COVID-19 Policy Response

In the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, tens of millions of workers lost their jobs.

Legislators quickly responded with a series of relief packages that injected trillions of dollars into the economy. Two programs in particular—the Economic Impact Payments (EIP) and the expanded Child Tax Credit (CTC)—contributed to massive reductions in child poverty. The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities reports that 3.7 million children were kept out of poverty in December 2021 thanks to the tax credit expansion, a 29% reduction that was short-lived once the credits expired. Estimates by the Urban Institute suggest that 11.7 million people were lifted above the poverty line by the EIPs, using the Census Bureau’s Supplemental Poverty Measure. All racial and ethnic groups benefited from the reduction in poverty rates.

Significantly, the assistance was designed to streamline access. For example, households were eligible to receive EIPs regardless of whether they had filed taxes. There was no minimum level of income requirement, giving especially vulnerable categories of people access to the assistance. Government agencies like Treasury, Veterans Affairs, and Social Security worked closely to identify and deliver assistance to beneficiaries without requiring

significant additional paperwork for vulnerable groups. The CTC also had an improved design, including an increased credit amount, and delivered half the credit as advanced monthly payments instead of a lump sum at tax time. The tax was fully refundable, meaning they could receive the benefit even if the household didn’t owe any tax. The Census Bureau reported that 9 in 10 families with low incomes used the CTC to pay for necessities and education.⁶

These two programs were massive economic experiments that demonstrated positive benefits of putting flexible resources directly in the hands of consumer with low incomes. On a much smaller scale, cash transfer programs are also showing encouraging results in pilots across the country. For example, the City of Richmond conducted a small pilot in 2020 providing 18 residents with \$500/month for 24 months. Research showed that savings increased and 80% of participants were able to handle a \$400 emergency at 24 months. Participants scaled back gig work to have more family time. Moreover, they pursued education while continuing to work, setting them up for more gainful future employment.⁷ Baltimore has a one-year-old guaranteed income pilot that provided

a \$1,000/month cash assistance grant to parents ages 18-24. Compared to a control group, Success Fund participants are increasing enrollment in trade schools, achieving higher levels of housing stability, and seeing significantly higher household incomes (\$26,000 compared to \$14,000 at the six-month mark). Baltimore’s pilot guaranteed assistance for two years.⁸ A similar pilot could be beneficial in Lancaster because it has the potential to positively impact all components of the 2Gen model for households.

Two programs in particular—the Economic Impact Payments (EIP) and the expanded Child Tax Credit (CTC)—contributed to massive reductions in child poverty.

⁶ Cox, Kris et al. “Stimulus Payments, Child Tax Credit Expansion were Critical Parts of Successful Covid-19 Policy Response.” Center for Budget and Policy Priorities. June 2022.

⁷ <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/64f8b31cbb263222a1487bd6/t/66510007e89cf80f9a6e29be/1716584471700/CGIR+Richmond+RRI+Final+Report.pdf>

⁸ “Success Fund Interim Brief.” Mayors for a Guaranteed Income. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/64f8b31cbb263222a1487bd6/t/667c323d79dfcd2d6b1d844d/1719415361392/baltimore-mgi-report-6.26.24.pdf>



Transportation

Lack of transportation can be a barrier for accessing employment, education, and social services. For example, 10% of respondents who receive WIC identified transportation to and from appointments as a key improvement for the program. Twenty-six percent recommended fewer in-person requirements, which could be driven in part by concerns around transportation. One respondent from the RISE program specifically asked for help in coordination of transportation to postsecondary education. A focus group of teen parents in the TEEN Elect program also highlighted transportation as a major barrier that impacted school attendance and options for getting a job or pursuing education after high school. Use of ride sharing apps was a routine and costly stopgap measure for moms who were unable to walk or use public transit due to distance or scheduling.

There are public transit options, but the routes do not cover the entire county, with the Southern End of the county particularly underserved by mass transit. PennDOT reports there were 317 mass transit buses in the county in 2023.⁹ Community college students can purchase discounted bus passes at the HACC bookstore.¹⁰ Seniors 65+ can ride free on Red Rose Transit due to subsidy from the PA Lottery. They can

ride at any time on any route as long as they have a Senior Transit ID card.¹¹ Seniors who are unable to use the fixed route system, as well as individuals with disabilities, can use a shared ride option called Red Rose Access. The vehicles are fully accessible for individuals in wheel chairs or with limited mobility.¹² PennDOT offers a service to match eligibility for various free or subsidized transportation options online for individuals who are over 65, have a disability, or use Medical Assistance.

Households without a vehicle are 10.1% of the population. According to PennDOT, there were 331,208 registered passenger vehicles in the county in 2023.¹³ The average commute time, according to the Census Bureau, is 23.8 minutes (2018-2022 ACS estimate).¹⁴ The walkability index score is 7.4, indicating a below average walkability.

Lancaster County was fourth among all Pennsylvania counties for traffic accidents (5.1% of the state total) behind only Allegheny, Philadelphia, and Montgomery counties. Lancaster was also fourth for traffic-related fatalities. On average, there were nearly six pedestrians killed by vehicles each year between 2019-2023. There were 14.4 alcohol-related fatalities on average during the same time period.¹⁵



⁹ <https://www.dot.state.pa.us/public/DVSPubsForms/BMW/Registrationpercent20Reports/ReportofRegistration2023.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.redrosetransit.com/service-information/college-services>

¹¹ <https://www.redrosetransit.com/service-information/senior-citizens-free-ride-program>

¹² <https://www.redrosetransit.com/red-rose-access/what-is-red-rose-access>

¹³ <https://www.dot.state.pa.us/public/DVSPubsForms/BMW/Registrationpercent20Reports/ReportofRegistration2023.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/lancastercountypennsylvania/POP645222>

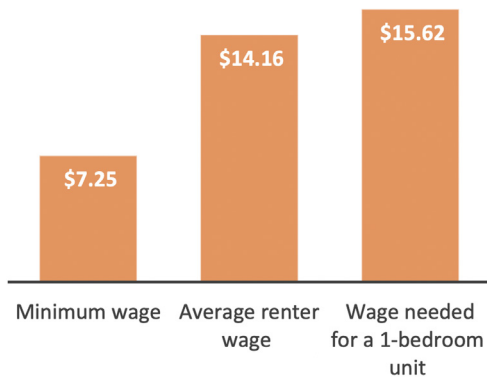
¹⁵ https://www.penndot.pa.gov/TravelInPA/Safety/Documents/2023_CFB_linked.pdf



Housing Insecurity

A constellation of housing challenges confront Lancaster County households, including low vacancy rates, high rents that outpace wages, and older housing stock that present environmental and health risks. Owner-occupied units make up 69.9% of households. The median monthly owner costs with a mortgage is \$1,718. Both of these statistics are higher in Lancaster than the state’s figure.¹⁶ Nearly one-third (28.7%) of households spend more than 30% of their income on housing. Table 1 from the National Low Income Housing Coalition’s Out of Reach Report shows that there is a gap of \$1.46 between a renter’s wages and the hourly wage needed to afford a one-bedroom.¹⁷ Note that this time period pre-dates the economic

TABLE 1: Wages vs. Housing Costs



Source: National Low Income Housing Coalition, Out of Reach (2020), Lancaster Countv. PA

fallout from the pandemic and resulting inflationary pressures.

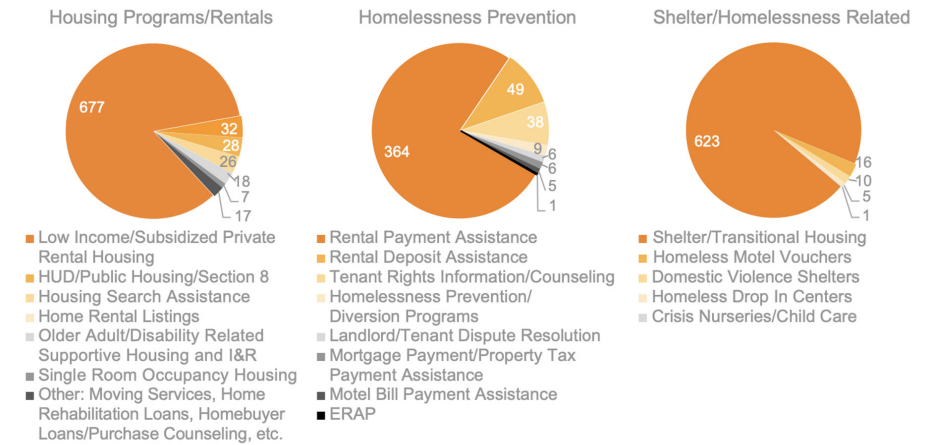
According to the Census Bureau, median gross rent from 2018-2022 was \$1,221, \$111 more than the state median. 69.9% of housing units are owner-occupied. The median value of owner-occupied housing units is \$263,600, \$37,400 more than the state’s median.

According to the 2022 LGH Health Needs Assessment, 15.2% of the county’s population experiences one or more serious housing challenge, such as being severely cost-burdened, inadequate plumbing or kitchen facilities, and overcrowding.¹⁸

PA 211 East is a referral resource for individuals seeking help for various challenges. The PA 211 East data reports consistently show housing assistance as the number one category for which people call in. During the five-month period between March and July 2024, 211 received 630.8 housing-related inquiries on average.¹⁹ The largest subset of callers

TABLE 2: PA211 East July 2024 Housing/Homelessness Services Report

What housing-related needs* do 211 inquirers have?



*Some inquirers have multiple housing concerns. Captured are the total housing needs/referrals requested.

were seeking homelessness assistance, both referrals for current conditions of homelessness (living on the street or in a place not meant for habitation) or for homelessness prevention. 211’s July 2024 Housing/Homelessness Services Report provides a clear breakdown of the types of referrals made for 679 callers, as shown in Table 2.

It should be noted that there are limited options for each category of need represented in the pie graph. For example, the Lancaster County Housing and Redevelopment Authority has 868 vouchers, and 36 households on a waiting list that was started in

¹⁶ Census Bureau, Quick Facts, Lancaster County PA.

¹⁷ https://housingalliancepa.org/wp-content/uploads/Lancaster-County-Fact-Sheet_Updated-Feb-2021.pdf

¹⁸ LGH Health Needs Assessment, 2022.

¹⁹ <https://pa211east.org/lancaster/>



2007.²⁰ The City Housing Authority manages 1,003 vouchers and is also not accepting applications at this time.²¹ Rental payment assistance is offered in limited cases, principally for people who are unhoused according to the HUD-defined homeless. Shelter beds across the county vary by season. Thus, outcomes are uncertain between the referral and securing the needed services.

Eviction

The Eviction Lab estimates eviction rates for all counties across the US. Lancaster County had 6.3 evictions filed for every 100 renters in 2018, the most recent year for which data is available.²²

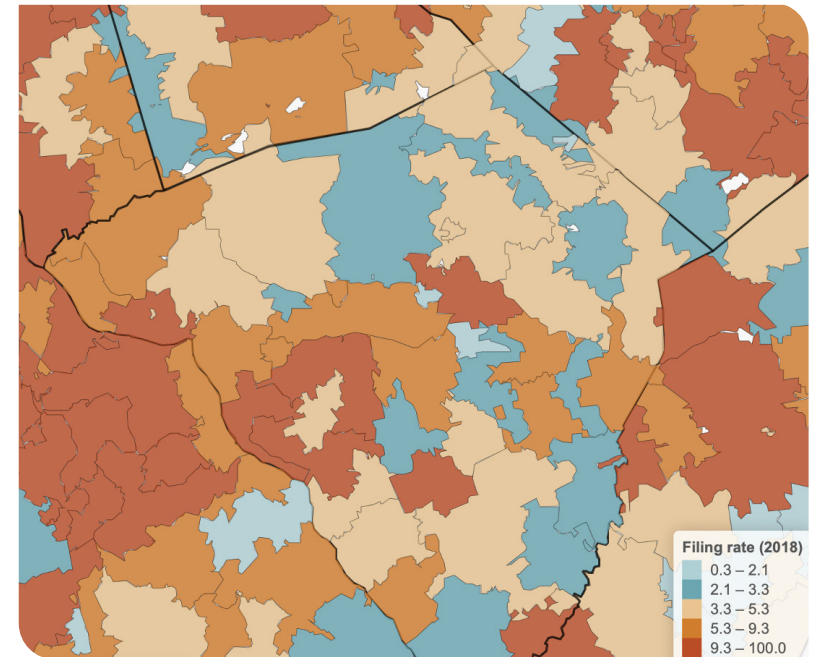
However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 6,000 Lancaster households applied for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP). As recently as July 2024, the Household Pulse Survey reported that the eviction or foreclosure likelihood in Pennsylvania was 22.3%, meaning among households already behind on payments where eviction or foreclosure in next two months is very likely or somewhat likely. It stood at 20.3% in March 2023.²³

The Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania coordinated statewide eviction prevention efforts during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Their recent report

noted that, in 2023, eviction filings had returned to 99% of pre-pandemic levels. However, presumably as a result of extensive eviction prevention tactics tied to the Pandemic Relief Fund and the ERAP, “there has been a nearly equal increase in cases withdrawn and settled as decrease in judgment for the plaintiff when compared to pre-pandemic years.”²⁴ The report found that 92% of cases were tied to nonpayment of rent; the number of tenants behind on rent by more than three months increased from 26.4% to 29.4% post-pandemic. There were 5,103 eviction filings in Lancaster County in 2023. The rates by zip code as measured per 100 renter households are shown in the heat map in Table 3.

A closer examination of the zip code—17603—with the most cases—1,254—illustrates several interesting dimensions. The eviction rate in 17603, which includes parts of Lancaster City and Lancaster Township, is 11.56 cases per 100 renter households. Fifty percent of the cases involved households who

TABLE 3: Lancaster County Eviction Filings



are people of color. Thirty-seven percent of cases involved households with income less than \$25,000 and 51% are rent-burdened. Thus, eviction functions as both a cause and symptom of poverty and can disproportionately impact communities of color.

Households also experience challenges related to utility payments. The Household Pulse Survey shows this is a consistent concern for more than 25% of

²⁰ <https://lchra.com/our-organizations/housing-authority/our-programs/housing-choice-vouchers/>

²¹ <https://lchapa.com/section-8/applicants/>

²² https://evictionlab.org/map/?m=modeled&c=p&b=efr&s=all&r=counties&y=2018&lang=en&l=42071_-76.30_40.02

²³ https://www.census.gov/data-tools/demo/hhp/?measures=EVICTFOR&s_state=00042

²⁴ <https://housingalliancepa.org/102686-2/>



Pennsylvanians. In January 2024, 25% of adults stated they were unable to pay a utility bill in the last month. That percentage stood at 26.3% in April 2024 and 26.9% in July 2024.²⁵ LIHEAP is a seasonal benefit program from the PA Department of Human Services that serves households with incomes up to 150% of the federal poverty level. In 2022, they served 5,754 households with the cash benefit program and 1,613 with crisis benefits.²⁶ CAP's utility assistance programs serving UGI and PPL customers have also experienced sustained growth, as shown in Table 4.²⁷

Innovative policy solutions are being explored at many levels for the affordable housing crisis, including record investments from the Lancaster City and County governments using American Rescue Plan Act funding.^{28,29} Zoning modifications are also helping at the township level. For example, East Lampeter Township's Board of Supervisors passed a code reform to allow Accessory Dwelling Units by right, meaning no additional approval process is needed.³⁰ This change can help households create additional units for related or unrelated individuals on their property, providing a source of income to the owner and additional options to renters.



TABLE 4: CAP's Utility Assistance Programs

Year	Number of Households Served
2020	12,334
2021	12,334
2022	13,139
2023	15,363

²⁵ https://www.census.gov/data-tools/demo/hhp/?measures=ENERGYBILL&s_state=00042&periodSelector=4&periodFilter=1,4

²⁶ https://lancasteronline.com/news/local/liheap-offers-low-income-households-help-with-heating-bills/article_71426e38-79aa-11ee-925e-33d4254ceca.html

²⁷ <https://caplanc.org/about-cap/annual-report/>

²⁸ <https://www.cityoflancasterpa.gov/arpa/>

²⁹ <https://lancastercountypa.gov/2583/American-Rescue-Plan-Act-ARPA>

³⁰ <https://ethandemme.com/2018/11/14/accessory-dwelling-units-policy-brief/>



Food Insecurity

More than 50,000 Lancasterians are experiencing food insecurity, meaning they have limited or uncertain access to adequate food.³¹ Feeding America's 2023 Map the Meal Gap study showed a childhood food insecurity rate of 12.2% (15,780 kids), up from 11.9% (15,200 kids) captured in the 2020 Meal Gap Study.³² These households need to turn to a variety of coping mechanisms such as accessing governmental nutrition assistance programs like SNAP and WIC, using food pantries, or curtailing food choices. A study by Central PA Food Bank found that nearly 50% of food pantry visitors had very low food security, meaning they were dealing with reduced food intake.

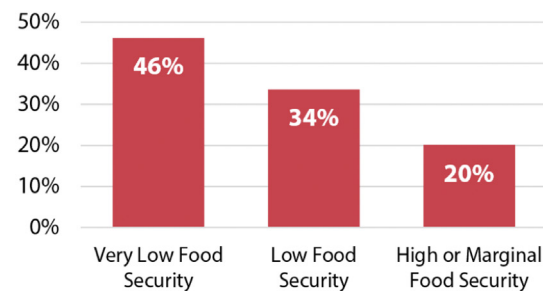
The Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey's food scarcity rate looks at those who sometimes or often do not have enough food to eat, in the past seven days. The rate in Pennsylvania was 8.5% in June 2022 but had climbed to 11.3% by March 2023. In June 2024, it had reached 12.9% before dropping to 11.1% in July 2024.³³

There is a gap between people who are eligible for SNAP benefits and people who are accessing those benefits. For example, only 50% of pantry visitors use the benefit, even though closer to 85% are likely eligible.³⁴ Before the pandemic in 2019, more than 48,700 Lancasterians received SNAP benefits. In 2021, the county had more than 52,200 beneficiaries.³⁵ Similarly, WIC had a coverage rate of 33%; only 5,063 participants out of an eligible population of 15,397. This is lower than the state participation rate of 50%.³⁶

Nineteen percent of the population lacks access to a large grocery store.³⁷



TABLE 5: Household Food Security Status for Food Pantry Visitors



³¹ <https://www.centralpafoodbank.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Lancaster-Community-Hunger-Mapping-Summary-and-Recommendations.pdf>

³² <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2022/child/pennsylvania/county/lancaster>

³³ <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2022/child/pennsylvania/county/lancaster>

³⁴ <https://www.centralpafoodbank.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Lancaster-Community-Hunger-Mapping-Summary-and-Recommendations.pdf>

³⁵ <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/CBR42071PAA647NCEN>

³⁶ <https://www.papartnerships.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Lancaster-WIC-Fact-Sheet-2022.pdf>

³⁷ U.S. News and World Report Healthiest Communities Rating



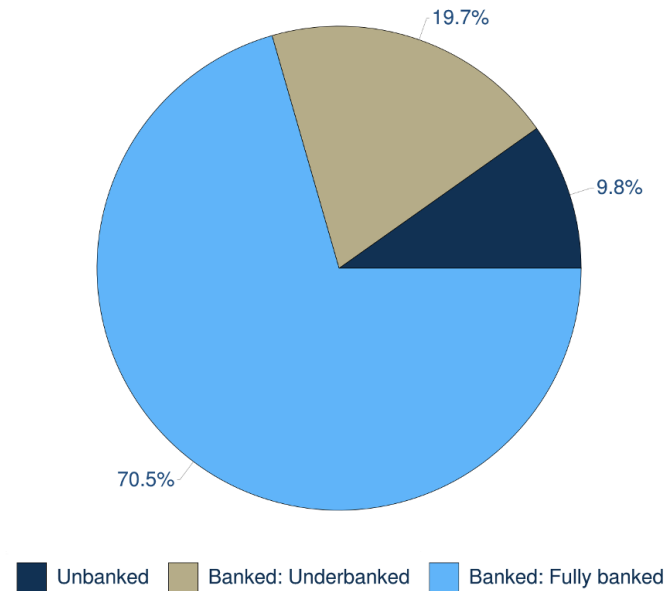
Financial Services

Access to mainstream financial services is important for helping families build credit, obtain non-predatory lending access, and secure their financial assets. However, there are households that are considered underbanked or unbanked.

In 2021, the FDIC conducted a national survey of the unbanked and underbanked households in the US. Pennsylvania households are 2.6% unbanked and 13.6% underbanked.³⁸ According to the FDIC's methodology, the underbanked definition is based on the following nonbank transaction and credit products: check cashing, money order, international remittance, payday loan, rent-to-own service, pawn shop loan, refund anticipation loan, and auto title loan. When viewed through a family income filter, the rates increase considerably, as shown in Table 6. Note that there was insufficient data to evaluate for households under \$15,000 in annual income. As a comparison, only 14.3% of households with family income over \$30,000 are unbanked and underbanked.

According to the Federal Reserve, Lancaster County has three communities that qualify as banking deserts and one community that is a potential banking desert. All of these are located in the southern end of the county. A banking desert is defined as a census tract without a physical branch within or within a certain radius of it, and

TABLE 6: Unbanked and Underbanked for Pennsylvania, 2021
(All Households, Family Income is \$15,000 to \$30,000)



● Source: 2021 FDIC National Survey of Unbanked and Underbanked Households.
● Underbanked definition is based on the following nonbank transaction and credit products: check cashing, money order, international remittance, payday loan, rent-to-own service, pawn shop loan, refund anticipation loan, and auto title loan. The underbanked rate and fully banked rate in 2021 are not directly comparable to underbanked rates and fully banked rates in previous years because of changes to the question on international remittances.

a potential banking desert means there is only a single branch.³⁹

Branch closures can significantly impair the ability of individuals to access financial services and may increase the likelihood of using alternative (and potentially predatory) services like check cashing and payday lending.

Web Access

Access to the web is critical for education, employment, and social connection. Broadband internet access at home is in 85.4% of households (Census Bureau), and 90.4% of households have a computer.

³⁸ <https://household-survey.fdic.gov/custom-chart?chartType=pchart>

³⁹ <https://fedcommunities.org/data/banking-deserts-dashboard/>



2GEN COMPONENT 2

Health and Mental Health

Lancaster General Health conducts a Health Needs Assessment (HNA) every three years. The most recent report was produced in 2022 to inform the 2023-2025 Community Health Improvement Plan.¹ According to the assessment, Lancaster County has an uninsured rate of 12.1%, five percentage points higher than the state. In 2022, adults ages 26-34 have the lowest rate of health insurance coverage at only 81.9% and adults ages 55-64 have the best overall rate at 91.5%, as shown in Table 1.

Only 83.4% of children in the county are insured, which ranks Lancaster among the lowest 25% of counties in both Pennsylvania and the U.S.² This is a slight improve from 2017 when only 80.5% of children in the county were insured.

There was an average of 110,017 individuals and 48,758 children receiving medical assistance

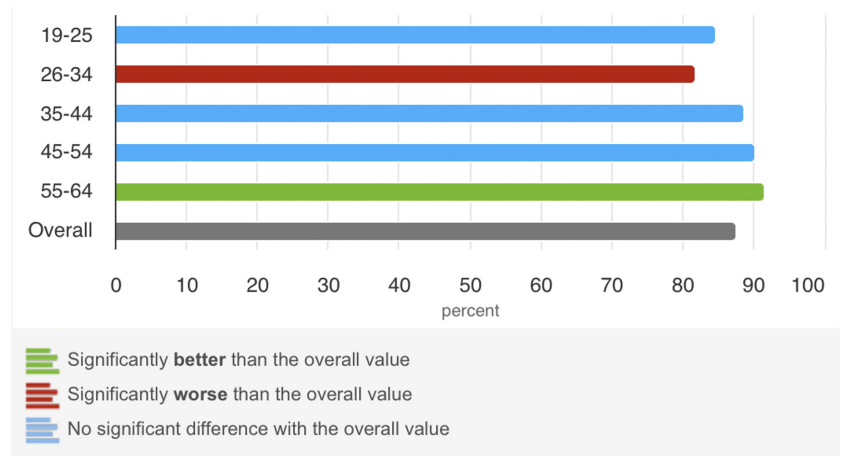
benefits in June of each year between 2020 and 2024.³

HNA survey respondents noted the need to reduce the cost of care, increase health insurance coverage, and improve navigation of healthcare services and systems. BIPOC and LGBTQ+ respondents prioritize improvement in the diversity and cultural competency of healthcare providers.

According to the HNA, leading causes of death in descending order are heart disease, cancer, accidents, cerebrovascular diseases, and chronic lower respiratory diseases. The incidence of these causes

is lower than the state except for cerebrovascular diseases.⁴ Cerebrovascular diseases are the leading cause of hospitalizations in the county. Lancaster has fewer smokers than the state average, and similar

TABLE 1: Adults with Health Insurance by Age



¹ https://www.lancastergeneralhealth.org/-/media/images/lancasterpercent20general/pdfs/aboutpercent20lancasterpercent20generalpercent20health/needspercent20assessment/2022_lancaster_county_chna.ashx?la=en

² <https://www.lancastergeneralhealth.org/about-lancaster-general-health/caring-for-our-community/community-health-data/community-improvement-dashboards>

³ https://data.pa.gov/Human-Services/Medical-Assistance-Enrollment-July-2003-Current-Mo/2ght-hfn9/data_preview

⁴ <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/HealthStatistics/VitalStatistics/CountyHealthProfiles/Documents/current/lancaster.aspx>



levels of asthma, arthritis, and obesity. Five percent of patients in Lancaster have been told they have diabetes compared to 11% statewide.

The county's ratio of providers for primary care, dentistry and mental health is higher than the Pennsylvania average. However, the ratio of population to primary care physicians is getting worse. Lancaster County has 1.5 hospital beds per 1,000 residents, less than the 2.3 beds per 1,000 statewide.⁵

7.6% of Lancastrians under the age of 65 have a disability.⁶ In December 2021, there were more than 8,000 residents who were blind or disabled and receiving Social Security Disability benefits.⁷

Lead Poisoning

Older housing stock like Lancaster's is strongly correlated with lead contamination. Lancaster County is ranked fourth in Pennsylvania in terms of the rates of childhood lead poisoning. There are an estimated 117,000 homes across the county with high lead levels.⁸ Lead is especially toxic for fetuses and young children, with potentially lifelong consequences. According to the LGH Lead Free

Families initiative, even low levels of lead in the blood can cause hyperactivity, lower IQ, slower growth, and behavioral and learning problems.⁹ Access to higher-quality child care could make it more likely that these symptoms are detected earlier, allowing for remediation and healthcare or social service supports.

Violent Crime

Violent crime (including rape, murder, robbery, and aggravated assault) is rare at the county level, at 1.1 crimes per 1,000 residents.¹⁰ Lancaster City's violent crime rate is four times higher than the county rate and higher than the US average of 3.8 crimes per 1,000 residents. Although gun deaths are holding relatively steady in Lancaster City (seven in 2022, five in both 2021 and 2020), Chief of Police Mendez reported that the frequency of juveniles carrying handguns has increased in an alarming new trend.¹¹ Exposure to violent crime has a negative impact on the quality of life and can deter people from wanting to live and work in certain areas.

Among victims of domestic violence who were killed by their partners, the primary cause of death was firearm. Guns were responsible for 67% of the intimate partner violence resulting in death.¹² In 2022,

there were three domestic violence related fatalities. CAP's Domestic Violence Services has served more than 1,100 survivors on average the past four years, with an average of 723 hotline calls in the past two years.¹³ A point-in-time survey from the National Network to End Domestic Violence found that Pennsylvania's domestic violence agencies received more than 827 requests for services that they could not meet in a 24-hour period, nearly 60% of which were related to housing.¹⁴



⁵ <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/HealthStatistics/VitalStatistics/CountyHealthProfiles/Documents/current/lancaster.aspx>

⁶ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/PA,lancastercountypennsylvania/SEX255223>

⁷ https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/ssi_sc/2021/pa.html

⁸ https://www.lancastergeneralhealth.org/-/media/images/lancasterpercent20general/pdfs/aboutpercent20lancasterpercent20generalpercent20health/needspercent20assessment/community_health_improvement_plan_fy23fy25.ashx?la=en

⁹ <https://www.lancastergeneralhealth.org/services-and-treatments/community-health/community-programs/lead-free-families/about-lead-poisoning>

¹⁰ <https://lancasterindicators.com/community/violent-crime-rate>

¹¹ https://lancasteronline.com/news/local/lancaster-gun-related-incidents-might-be-holding-steady-but-officials-see-a-trend-of-more/article_c22d40b2-f682-11ed-a008-73843b85876b.html

¹² <https://www.pcadv.org/about-abuse/domestic-violence-statistics/>

¹³ <https://caplanc.org/about-cap/annual-report/>

¹⁴ <https://nnedv.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/18th-Annual-DV-Counts-Report-PA-Summary.pdf>



Mental Health

Mental health was the primary health issue identified in the LGH Health Needs Assessment survey, selected by nearly 72% of respondents.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing trends in declining mental health and well-being. Here are some key indicators identified by the HNA:

- Deaths from suicide and drug overdose have been trending higher in Lancaster County in recent years. Drug overdose deaths have a disproportionate impact on the Black and Hispanic/Latino communities.
- More than one in three adolescents report feeling sad or depressed most days in the last year.
- Nearly one in four adults (23%) in Lancaster County have been told they have a depressive disorder, and 31% of adults have had at least one poor mental health day in the past 30 days.¹⁵

The U.S. News and World Report Healthiest Community Rating states that 15.1% of adults in Lancaster County have frequent mental distress and 18.9% of Medicare beneficiaries have depression.¹⁶

Parents are uniquely experiencing a decline in their mental health, based on national data. An August 2024 report by the U.S. Surgeon General exposes the widespread stress experienced by parents. The report states that in 2023:

- Thirty-three percent of parents report high levels of stress in the past month compared to 20% of other adults.
- Forty-eight percent of parents say that most days their stress is completely overwhelming compared to 26% among other adults.¹⁷

In addition to the standard stressors related to finances, safety, and sleep deprivation, parents are also navigating a youth mental health crisis and the widespread use of internet-connected devices. This points toward the need for family supportive policies including high-quality early childhood and out-of-school time care options, financial supports like the childhood tax credit, and maternal child health programs like WIC.

Mental health was the primary health issue identified in the LGH Health Needs Assessment survey, selected by nearly 72% of respondents.

¹⁵LGH Health Improvement Plan FY23-FY25.

¹⁶US. News and World Report Healthiest Communities Rating.

¹⁷<https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2024/08/28/us-surgeon-general-issues-advisory-mental-health-well-being-parents.html>



Trauma/ACEs

The landmark **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study** demonstrated that children who have experienced trauma early in life can experience lifelong consequences affecting health, well-being, and educational and job potential. These ACEs can include exposure to violence in the household, substance use, poor mental health, loss of or separation from a parent. Although neither county-level nor district-level data is available for the ACEs studies specifically, 54% of Pennsylvanians have experienced one or more ACEs and the exposure is increasing, with 59% of 18-29 year olds reporting some ACEs compared to 44% of adults older than 65.

Here's a closer look at county-level data for certain risk factors.

- **Incarceration:** Lancaster County Jail has capacity of 1,085 inmates. The county has decreased the number of incarcerated individuals the past few years, from 1,081 in the second quarter of 2017 to 739 people in the second quarter of 2021, according to the Vera Institute of Justice. African Americans and Latinx people are disproportionately represented in the incarcerated population, at 23% and 27%, respectively, even though they make up only 4% and 11% of the general population.

- **Mental Health:** The number one health concern for respondents to LGH's 2022 Health Needs Assessment was mental health, chosen by 71.9% of respondents.
- **Substance Use:** Deaths from suicide and drug overdose have been trending higher in Lancaster County. The Pennsylvania Department of Health reports that there were 103 overdose deaths in 2019, 143 in 2020, and 131 in 2021, more than double the 60 overdose deaths recorded in 2014. Treatment options remain limited.
- **Abuse:** The LGH 2022 Health Needs Assessment reports that the 2017-2020 period had the highest number of child abuse reports of all years available, dating back to 2004. There were 178 substantiated reports in 2020 (46.5% allegations of sexual abuse, 20% reasonable likelihood of bodily injury, 16.8% physical abuse, and 13% neglect).

Stable, supportive environments can be a protective factor for reducing the impact of ACEs.





2GEN COMPONENT 3

Early Childhood Education

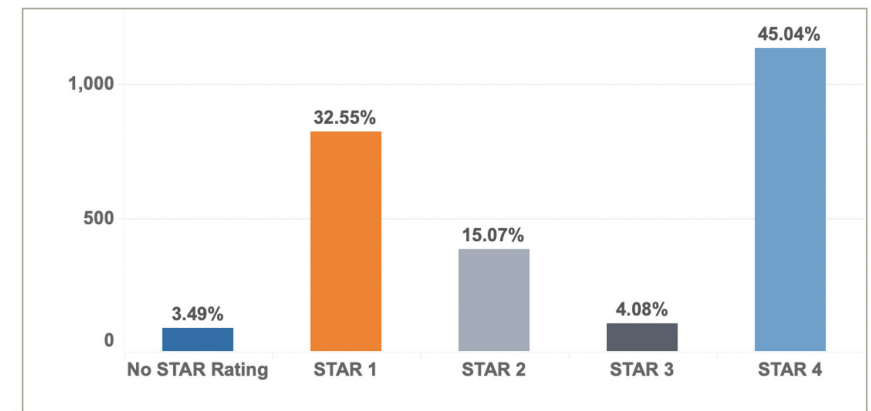
Enrollment in a high-quality preschool program is strongly correlated with many benefits for children. These benefits can last long after a child enters school, including impacts on educational attainment, health, delinquency and crime, and success in the workforce. These benefits are most strongly correlated with programs that have lower child-staff ratios and better trained caregivers. There is also some evidence to suggest more intensive programs yield more benefits.¹

As of July 2024, there are 136 regulated providers (centers, group, or family providers) with active subsidized child care enrollments and 28 relative providers with active subsidized child care enrollments. These numbers vary year to year and month to month; in July 2023, there were 146 regulated providers and 25 relative providers, and

in July 2022, there were 135 providers and 31 relative providers.² There are 41 Pre-K Counts grantees in the county for the 2023-2024 award year.

Most children receiving subsidized care in Lancaster County are attending STAR 4 centers, followed by nearly one-third attending STAR 1 centers, as shown in Table 1.³ This significant difference in quality could impact kindergarten readiness. There is no waiting list for subsidized care according to the state's dashboard. However, there are significant gaps between those eligible for child care subsidy under the age of five

TABLE 1: Children Receiving Subsidized Child Care by Keystone STARS Level



and those actually receiving it, as shown in Table 2 on the next page from the Annie E. Casey Foundation Data Center. On average, 81% of children under five are not enrolled.⁴

¹ https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB9145.html

² https://tableau.pa.gov/t/DHS-Public/views/SubsidizedChildCareDashboards/SubsidizedServiceProvision?iframeSizedToWindow=true&percent3Aembed=y&percent3AshowAppBanner=false&percent3Adisplay_count=no&percent3AshowVizHome=no&percent3Aorigin=viz_share_link

³ https://tableau.pa.gov/t/DHS-Public/views/SubsidizedChildCareDashboards/SubsidizedAccestoQuality?iframeSizedToWindow=true&percent3Aembed=y&percent3AshowAppBanner=false&percent3Adisplay_count=no&percent3AshowVizHome=no&percent3Aorigin=viz_share_link

⁴ <https://datacenter.aecf.org/data/tables/9955-child-care-subsidy-eligibility-and-enrollment-of-children-under-5-years?loc=40&loct=5#detailed/5/5414/false/2633,2552,2551,2550,2036,1753,1679/6089,6090,6091/19301,19302>

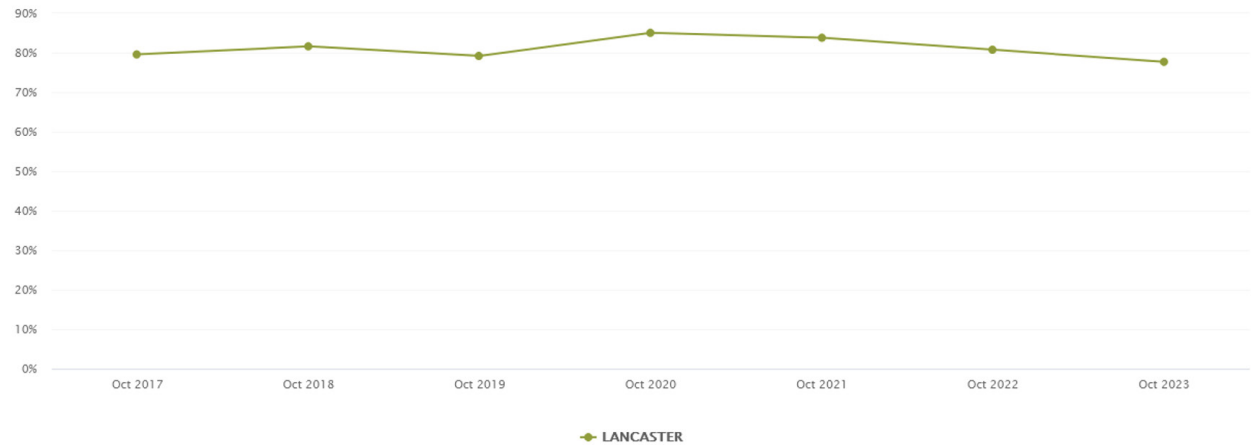


Even when a family qualifies for the subsidy, centers may have waiting lists and/or offer care at times incompatible with parents’ work schedule.

This gap persists in other programs as well. According to the Office of Child Development and Early Learning, there were 13,636 three to four year olds eligible for Pre-K Counts (PKC) (at or below 300% FPIG). Only 1,073 children, or 7.87%, participated in a PKC program in January 2024, during which there were 1,199 funded slots in Lancaster County. This is consistent with the 7.85% of eligible children served in January 2023, and an improvement from January 2021 when only 5.63% of eligible children were served through PKC.⁵ Nevertheless, more than 90% of eligible three and four year olds remain unserved by this particular high-quality option. The Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program (HSSAP) barely improves the coverage level, with only an additional 112 students served in January 2024, a mere 0.82% of those eligible for HSSAP. In January 2024, there were 119 funded HSSAP slots in Lancaster County, a figure that has remained steady for the past four years.⁶

Early childhood family support programs in Lancaster County include Parents as Teachers (PAT), Nurse Family Partnership, Incredible Years, Fathering in 15, and Moving Beyond Depression. In the 2022-2023 fiscal year, these programs had capacity to serve 805

TABLE 2: Child Care Subsidy - Eligibility and Enrollment of Children Under Five Years (Percent Unserved)



slots; 450 families and 381 children were served. Nurse Family Partnership was the largest with 265 families and 203 children served, followed by PAT with 174 families and 161 children served. In 2021-2022, 493 families and 588 children were served.

Respondents to CAP’s 2023 participant satisfaction survey showed high levels of satisfaction with the various Thrive to Five program models:

- 100% of full day program respondents;
- 98% of partial day program respondents;
- 100% of both home visiting (Head Start and Parents as Teachers) program respondents.

Moreover, CAP’s programs are contributing positive developmental outcomes for children. In 2023, 84% of students met or exceeded expectations in literacy skills.⁷

Early Intervention is another service that targets young children from birth to age five to provide supports related to developmental delay or disabilities. Services can include speech therapy, physical therapy, and family counseling. The goal is to help the child (and their caregivers) develop new skills to enhance physical development, cognitive development, communication development, social-emotional development, and adaptive development.

⁵ https://tableau.pa.gov/t/DHS-Public/views/IntegratedProgramsChildrenEligiblevsChildrenServed/HSSAPChildrenEligiblevsServed?iframeSizedToWindow=true&percent3Aembed=y&percent3AshowAppBanner=false&percent3Adisplay_count=no&percent3AshowVizHome=no&percent3Aorigin=viz_share_link
⁶ https://tableau.pa.gov/t/DHS-Public/views/IntegratedProgramsChildrenEligiblevsChildrenServed/HSSAPChildrenEligiblevsServed?iframeSizedToWindow=true&percent3Aembed=y&percent3AshowAppBanner=false&percent3Adisplay_count=no&percent3AshowVizHome=no&percent3Aorigin=viz_share_link
⁷ <https://caplanc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/2023-Year-in-Review.pdf>

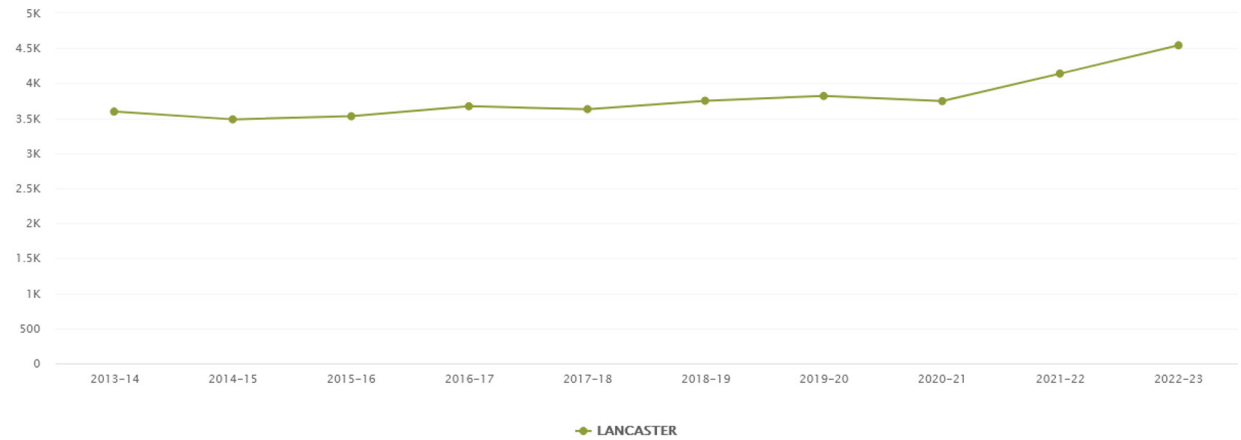


Table 3 from the Annie E. Casey Foundation Data Center shows a recent increase in the number of children receiving services after eight years of steady enrollment.⁸

Head Start has some of the strongest evidence base for early childhood interventions. By budget and personnel it is CAP’s largest program. Combined enrollment for Head Start (federal Head Start and Early Head Start and state-funded) has varied from a high of 834 between 2009-2011 to 689 in 2015-2016 to 423 in 2024-2025.^{9 10} However, enrollment fluctuates based on the program delivery model; a more intensive program in terms of hours necessitates serving a smaller number of students. Thus, there is a trade-off between the expected outcomes and the number of children served, in the absence of additional resources.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted preschool access for many young children. Researchers from Penn State noted a decline in enrollment for PKC and HSSAP during the beginning of the pandemic. The magnitude of the loss was greatest for Black and Hispanic children. The decline varied geographically with the greatest reduction in enrollment occurring in urban areas (19.5%), followed by suburban (14% reduction) and rural areas (11.5%). The study did not break out these trends by county.¹¹

TABLE 3: Early Intervention - Number of Children Receiving Services (Number)



Head Start has some of the strongest evidence base for early childhood interventions. By budget and personnel it is CAP’s largest program.

⁸ <https://datacenter.aecf.org/data/tables/2667-early-intervention--number-of-children-receiving-services?loc=40&loct=5#detailed/5/5379-5445/false/2547,2108,2051,1771,1740,1639,1600,1536,1460,1249/any/10969>

⁹ <https://datacenter.aecf.org/data/tables/5186-head-start--number-of-children-served-by-program#detailed/5/5414/false/1740,1639,1600,1536,1460,1249,1120,1024,937,809/831,1275,1276,1277/11654>

¹⁰ CAP Program Data for 2024-2025

¹¹ <https://www.education.pa.gov/Documents/Datapercent20andpercent20Statistics/Researchpercent20andpercent20Evaluation/Enrollmentpercent20inpercent20Pre-Kpercent20Countspercent20andpercent20HSS-APpercent20Beforepercent20andpercent20Duringpercent20thepercent20COVID-19percent20Pandemic.pdf>



2GEN COMPONENT 4

K-12 Education

Lancaster County's schools demonstrate considerable variability in performance yet all are experiencing increasing challenges related to economic circumstances and challenges facing students and families. The pandemic magnified many of these challenges and caused considerable learning loss that persists in 2024.

Table 1 compiles data from PA's Future Ready Index to demonstrate the percentage of students in Lancaster County school districts who face unique challenges and may require special supports.

Significantly, 100% of the county's seventeen districts have at least one-quarter of their students categorized as economically disadvantaged. In 70% of the districts, 40% or more of students are categorized as economically disadvantaged, suggesting a widespread geography of hardship. English Language Learners make up 4.5% of the student population, which we would expect with the rise in the county's percentage of foreign-born residents as well as increasing racial and ethnic diversity overall, as outlined in the Demographic Overview section on page 7. An analysis of young Dual Language Learners (DLL) by the Migration Policy Institute showed that Pennsylvania's DLL population has grown 37% since 2000, compared to the national average of 24%. Fifty-six percent of DLLs in Pennsylvania are from families living with low income.¹

TABLE 1: Unique Challenges Facing Lancaster County Students

District	Percent Economically Disadvantaged	Percent English Language Learners	Percent Special Education	Percent Homeless
Cocalico	42.5	1.9	20.1	2.4
Columbia	72.1	6.1	25.5	8.5
Conestoga Valley	48.5	5.7	17.5	3.8
Donegal	48	2.2	14.4	1.5
Elanco	46.9	3.5	20.7	2.0
Elizabethtown	38.5	2.9	16.4	1.8
Ephrata	48.9	4.1	18	2.0
Hempfield	37.5	5.0	19.8	1.8
LS	26.3	1.5	14.8	1.3
Lancaster	90	20.6	19.9	6.2
Manheim Central	40	1.8	15.5	2.8
Manheim Township	32.9	4.6	15.3	1.6
Octorara	51.6	3.7	13	1.7
Penn Manor	49	4.4	16.1	2.5
Pequea Valley	54.2	5.4	21.8	3.4
Solanco	43.6	2.4	20.8	1.9
Warwick	34.4	1.3	15.2	1.1
AVERAGE	47.35	4.5	17.9	2.7

¹ www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/DLL-FactSheet-PA-FINAL.pdf



Special Education

The percentage of students in special education is fairly consistent across all districts, with 17.9% on average. According to the State of PA Schools 2024 Report from the PA School Boards Association, the statewide population of students receiving special education services has increased 19.8% in the past 15 years. This increase puts particular pressure on school budgets, and many schools are unable to fill special education staffing vacancies.² According to the Lancaster Indicators project, drawing on data from the National Center for Education Statistics, the special education population has increased five percentage points between 2014 and 2023. Students in these services may underperform and can be at greater risk of dropping out.³

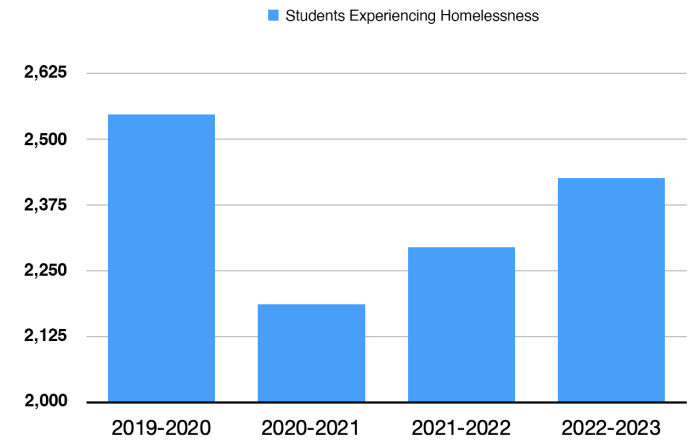
The statewide population of students receiving special education services has increased 19.9% in the past 15 years.

Student Homelessness

According to the Future Ready data, 2.7% of students are defined as homeless, on average across all districts. However, many more households likely experience rental instability, as outlined in the Housing Insecurity section. Table 2 shows the counts of students experiencing homelessness for the past four years using data from the Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness (ECYEH) program at PA Department of Education.

Statewide ECYEH data provides an interesting snapshot of these children. Most were living in doubled-up situations, followed by shelters/transitional housing, then hotels/motels, with the smallest percentage unsheltered. Twenty-six percent were identified as having a disability, and 13% were English Language Learners, thereby demonstrating the compounding effect of multiple factors. Four percent of these students dropped out in grades 7-12. Less than half had a 90% attendance rate. Twenty-five percent performed proficient or above on PSSAs for literacy and only 13% tested proficient or above in math. Thus, support for students experiencing homelessness is critical to mitigate further learning loss and connect households to additional supports.⁴

TABLE 2: Number of Students Experiencing Homelessness



² <https://www.psba.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/2024-State-of-Education-report.pdf>

³ <https://lancasterindicators.com/children-and-education/students-receiving-special-education-services>

⁴ <https://www.education.pa.gov/Documents/K-12/Homelesspercent20Education/2022-23percent20ECYEHpercent20Infographic.pdf>



Free and Reduced Meals

An alternate measure of socioeconomic status is eligibility for free and reduced meals in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). Eligibility is based on household income as a percentage of the federal poverty income guidelines (FPIG): Free meals are offered to children in households at or below 130% FPIG and reduced meals kick in at or below 185%. In context, for the 2024-2025 year, a family of four qualifies for free meals with an income of \$40,560 and for reduced meals at or below \$57,720. Looking at the meal data shows an even greater number of enrolled students could be considered to be in households that are experiencing economic challenges. Across the county's schools, the percent of enrolled students participating in free or reduced lunch is 60.7%. The participation rate varies from a low of 22.63% at Reidenbaugh Elementary in Manheim Township to a high of 100% at many schools that have qualified for the Community Eligibility Provision such as those in the School District of Lancaster.

As a historical comparison, in the 2011-2012 school year, 36.12% of the enrolled students in a sampling of districts were eligible for free and reduced lunch (per data from the PA Hunger Action Center). Eligibility has increased by nearly 39% in the decade. Table 3 demonstrates that the districts have seen persistent growth in eligibility for the NSLP, a good proxy

for persistent economic hardship. The provision of meals at school is also an important consideration for household budgets; thus, we would expect food insecurity and/or money stress to increase during out-of-school times like the winter and summer breaks.

Student Performance

Third grade reading level is strongly correlated with future success, including high school graduation,⁵ which in turn can impact future earning ability.⁶ 2023 PSSA results indicate the average language arts score proficient and above across all districts, inclusive of all student categories, was just above 54%, matching the state average.⁷ The median across all districts is 56.2%. The districts with the highest performing scores were Manheim Township at 68.2% and Ephrata Area at 67.5%. Columbia Borough had the lowest percentage of students who tested proficient and above at only 23.4%, followed by School District of Lancaster at 32.1%.

TABLE 3: Student Eligibility for the National School Lunch Program (Percent)

School District	October 2012 NSLP	October 2022	Change over time
Lancaster	27.99	37.15	32.73
Columbia	33.62	44.07	31.08
Conestoga Valley	30.79	57.2	85.77
Manheim	35.23	50.1	42.21
Ephrata	45.53	63.11	38.61
Manheim Township	42.16	47.82	13.43
District total	34.93	48.54	38.96

When the student population is segmented to look at “historically underperforming” students, performance drops further. This group includes students categorized as economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, and English Language Learners. Table 4 on the next page shows a 14 percentage point drop for this group compared to all students.⁸

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student performance must be sufficiently grasped. Nearly one-third (31%) of K-12 students in the Northeast region were behind grade level for the school year that ended in June 2024.⁹ There is a racial split on the progress toward learning recovery: In schools with more than 75% students of color, 42% of students are behind grade level compared to 22% behind grade level in schools with 25% or fewer students of color.¹⁰

⁵ <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/study-third-grade-reading-predicts-later-high-school-graduation/2011/04>

⁶ <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midwest/askarel/2018/third-grade-literacy-relationship-other-outcomes.aspx>

⁷ <https://www.education.pa.gov/DataAndReporting/Assessments/Pages/PSSA-Results.aspx>

⁸ <https://lancasterindicators.com/children-and-education/student-performance-on-grade-3-english>

⁹ https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/spp/results.asp?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newsletter_axiosam&stream=top#learning-strategies-jun24-chart-1

¹⁰ https://www.axios.com/2024/09/02/students-behind-grade-level?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newsletter_axiosam&stream=top



Research from Harvard’s Education Recovery Project notes that pandemic relief funds targeted at underserved schools were effective in improving the rate of recovery in those schools.¹¹ However, most components of pandemic relief ended this past year, jeopardizing the rate of recovery for schools with few alternative sources of revenue.

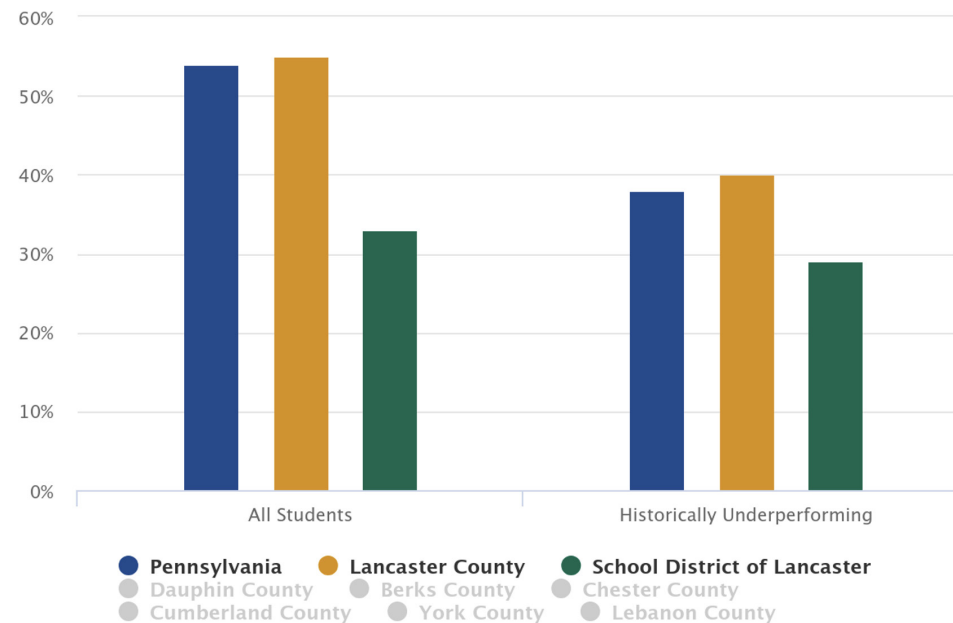
This excerpt from a report by Dr. Jeremy Raff at the School District of Lancaster helps drive home the magnitude of the impact locally:

The percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced on the PSSA English Language Arts (ELA) and Keystone Literature assessments increased by three percentage points from 2022 to 2023. Growth was strongest with high school students for Keystone Literature (11%) followed by elementary school (3%) and middle school (2%). 32% of district test takers are identified as Proficient or Advanced, an improvement over the most recent COVID-19 impacted test years of 2021 (25%) and 2022 (29%). This indicates an encouraging rise of eight percentage points since 2021’s low. That said, performance still has not yet returned to pre-COVID-19 levels in 2019 where 39% of students scored Proficient or Advanced. While district rates have not returned, high school rates of proficiency (46%) nearly match 2019 performance (49%).¹²

The achievement gap demonstrated by the variance in PSSA scores across districts, and the different rates of recoveries from pandemic learning loss, will likely contribute to lingering differences in future household income potential and inequality across zip codes in the county. This suggests that future readiness could be negatively impacted

by the adverse experiences affecting students in the early years of elementary school. Moreover, intensive supports are warranted in general but most especially in the schools with low performance among students categorized as economically disadvantaged.

TABLE 4: Percentage of Students Scoring Proficient or Above on PSSA



¹¹ https://educationrecoverycorecard.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/CEPR_PressRelease_06242024.pdf

¹² <https://sdlancaster.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Accountability-Analysis-2023-Final-Report.pdf>



2GEN COMPONENT 5

Postsecondary and Employment Pathways

Among individuals 25+ years of age, 87% have a high school diploma or higher and 30.5% have a bachelor's degree or higher.¹ Lancaster County ranks lower than the state in both of these education indicators; in Pennsylvania, 91.7% of residents 25+ have at least a high school credential and 33.8% have a bachelor's degree or higher. In 2023, the countywide high school graduation rate was 89%.²

Economic and Workforce Trends

Lancaster County has a strong economy, with an unemployment rate at 2.8%, below the state's of 3.4%, per the State Department of Labor and Industry (as of October 2023).³ This ties Centre County for the second lowest unemployment rate in the Commonwealth. The rate has held steady or

ticked downward steadily (for example the rate was 3% in March 2023). The economic data is reinforced by a steadily optimistic consumer sentiment, as measured by EDC Lancaster County's Center for Regional Analysis. As an example, the March 2024 poll showed an index score of 102.9, indicating optimism about current and future economic conditions compared to a national score of 76.5 for that same time period. This was also up 56% from March 2023, suggesting a correlation with the improvement in inflation and the sustained low unemployment rate.⁴ However, this is an online poll and it's unclear how representative the sample is.

Employment is well-diversified with a large basis in — in descending order for average employment in Q1 2024 — healthcare (43,136 employees), manufacturing (37,187), retail (28,867), accommodation and food service (19,317),

TABLE 1: Lancaster County Wages by Sector

Sector	Average Weekly Wage (Q1 2024)
Manufacturing	\$1,418
Construction	\$1,412
Healthcare	\$1,172
Transportation & Warehousing	\$1,094
Retail	\$705
Accommodation & Food Service	\$454

construction (18,158), and transportation and warehousing (14,174). However, when considered from the perspective of the average highest weekly wage, the order skews considerably, as shown in Table 1.⁵

¹ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/PA,lancastercountypennsylvania/SEX255223>

² <https://lancasterindicators.com/dashboards/>

³ <https://www.workstats.dli.pa.gov/dashboards/Pages/Labor-Stats.aspx>

⁴ <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/624f5177cc5f4066231601be/t/6687fdbe05a50762091ca126/1720188350801/Lancaster-County-Consumer-Sentiment-03-29-2024.pdf>

⁵ <https://paworkstats.geosolinc.com/vosnet/analyzer/resultsNew.aspx?enc=SofO4t487vJRlZRPJuBq/cRvWrYgBQ1Tv3MNmIHUAW=>



This suggests that a sizable percentage of the workforce is earning wages well below the self-sufficiency standard and/or living wage, which is backed up by other data like the United Way's ALICE study, discussed in the Economic Assets section on page 10.

Pennsylvania has identified High Priority Occupations (HPO) to better align workforce development initiatives with in-demand, higher-skilled jobs that are more likely to offer family-sustaining wages. Using data from the HPO list, Table 2 shows the interplay of the volume of employer demand with the entry wage and educational level required for the job.

One key takeaway the data suggests is that healthcare is an optimal field, as multiple positions are projected to have high annual demand, there are multiple entry points in terms of education, and annual entry wage is relatively high (well above the federal poverty line and the ALICE threshold).



TABLE 2: High Priority Occupation Comparisons

Field	Educational Level	Annual Demand	Entry Wage
Tractor Trailer Drivers	Postsecondary Training	567	\$43,430
Nursing Assistants	Postsecondary Training	479	\$34,780
Carpenters	Long-term Training on the Job	377	\$39,490
Registered Nurses	Bachelor's Degree	331	\$67,430
Sales Representatives	Moderate-term Training on the Job	328	\$42,130
Maintenance/Repair Workers	Moderate-term Training on the Job	315	\$31,770
Financial Managers	Bachelor's Degree+	85	\$85,410
Medical & Health Services Managers	Bachelor's Degree+	60	\$73,520
Dental Hygienists	Associate Degree	40	\$67,010
Mechanical Engineers	Bachelor's Degree	54	\$62,880
Industrial Truck & Tractor Operators	Short-Term Training on the Job	253	\$40,330
Welders, Cutters, Solderers & Brazers	Moderate-term Training on the Job	156	\$40,420
Packaging & Filling Machine Operators/Tenders	Moderate-term Training on the Job	147	\$35,460
Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers & Weighers	Moderate-term Training on the Job	124	\$36,300



Job Training

In 2023, the Department of Labor & Industry contracted KPMG to evaluate the broad range of business services offered through the state and local workforce development systems. The evaluation identified significant gaps in coordination and suggested many recommendations to improve the reach and effectiveness of these programs.⁶

In Lancaster County, there are a number of education and training options for individuals with and without high school diplomas to pursue. Here are a few examples:



- **TecCentro, an initiative of SACA, offers a range of job training programs in the healthcare, culinary arts, and mechanical/technical fields.** These are relatively short-term trainings in high-demand fields, that range in duration from 10 weeks to become a certified nurse aid up to 24 weeks for HVAC technician to 27 weeks to become a dental assistant.⁷ SACA reports an 84% placement rate after training with an average starting hourly wage of \$22.15.⁸ A partnership with Harcum College also offers on-site evening instruction in the southeast neighborhood of Lancaster City toward an associate degree in select fields.
- **Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology, referenced in the Higher Education section on the next page, also offers short-term training options to help employees and job seekers skill up quickly.** Fields include welding, facility services, commercial plumbing, commercial electro-mechanical, commercial HVAC, and IT support.⁹
- **Lancaster County Career and Technology Center offers training in more than 20 fields.** It was ranked the number one trade school in PA in 2024. Four campuses (and a CDL training site in Willow Street) serve all quadrants of the

county. Students can enter programs during high school or after obtaining their diploma or high school equivalent.¹⁰

- **Employers in many industries offer on-the-job training (OJT).** In addition to the companies' investment, there is a service through CareerLink that can reimburse up to 75% of eligible employees' wages for up to six months while they participate in an OJT program.¹¹

CareerLink is a coordinated system of 14 employment, training, and social service providers. It has identified the following Performance Indicators to evaluate its impact:

- Lower unemployment rate;
- Increased number of people entering targeted jobs;
- More students enrolled in education and training programs;
- Lower dropout rate among postsecondary students;
- Lower dropout rate amount high school students;
- Higher county literacy rate;
- Lower number of people on public assistance.

⁶ <https://www.dli.pa.gov/Individuals/Workforce-Development/resources/Documents/KPMG-Business-Services-Evaluation.pdf>

⁷ <https://sacapa.org/tec-centro/workforce-programs/>

⁸ <https://sacapa.org/tec-centro/>

⁹ <https://www.stevenscollege.edu/academics/short-term-programs-workforce-economic-development-center/>

¹⁰ <https://lanasterctc.edu>

¹¹ <https://www.jobs4lanaster.com/employers/on-the-job-training/>



However, the website does not provide any reports indicating progress toward these goals.¹² One of the services provided by CareerLink is an online education tool called SkillUp PA that was launched in August of 2021. It had dual goals of increasing the skill level of Pennsylvania’s job seekers and expanding the reach of the Department of Labor & Industry with less intensive staff commitment. These courses are offered at no cost, are available 24/7, and include access to industry-recognized certifications.¹³

Libraries also play an important role in accessing information for job seekers, thanks to their convenient locations and hours, typically free meeting spaces and access to the internet, skilled staff, and ample reference resources.¹⁴ In May 2024, 35 electronic kiosks that allow users to explore career pathways, participate in open courses, browse available jobs, and take career interest assessments were distributed to public libraries and high schools.¹⁵ Individual libraries offer additional programming and/or services. For example, Lancaster Public Library has a Business Resource and Reference Center than can help individuals learn about ways to start or grow a business or nonprofit.¹⁶

TABLE 3: Lancaster County Colleges & Universities

Institution	Graduation Rate within 4 years	Graduation Rate within 6 years	Graduation Rate within 8 years	Avg Net Price	Percent Receiving Financial Aid	Avg Amount of Aid
Millersville University	36%	56%	59%	\$21,076	74%	\$5,853
Franklin & Marshall	81%	85%	86%	\$31,135	62%	\$50,919
Elizabethtown	68%	72%	73%	\$26,723	94%	\$19,576
College of Health Sciences	100%	100%	100%	\$33,047	75%	\$7,739
HACC*	4%	16%	20%	\$9,991	41%	\$5,563
Thaddeus Stevens*	52%	62%	63%	\$8,844	98%	\$7,293

* Designates institutions with shorter-term educational offerings

Higher Education

Research from Raj Chetty’s Equality of Opportunity Center has shown that income status is an inheritable trait; there is a strong correlation between the incomes of parents and their children’s incomes as adults.¹⁷ College education can function as a leveler in terms of disrupting this correlation, and shrinks the income stratification compared to the national range between parents living with low income and high income.¹⁸

Lancaster County is home to six colleges or universities: Franklin & Marshall College, Millersville University, Thaddeus Stevens College

of Technology, Elizabethtown College, The College of Health Sciences (now part of St. Joseph’s University), and Harrisburg Area Community College. These institutions draw from a wider geography than Lancaster County but students from the county are well represented among the student body. The proximity also makes it appropriate to consider for strengthening pipelines from high schools to these institutions and/or create pathways for adult learners to earn credentials there. Some key performance indicators are presented in Table 3.¹⁹

As the table suggests, financial aid is critical because students still need to take on considerable

¹² <https://www.jobs4lancaster.com/about-us/>

¹³ <https://www.rcpaconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/W21-SkillUp™-PA-A-No-Cost-Online-Learning-System-for-Rehabilitation-and-Community-Providers-PowerPoint.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://www.statelibrary.pa.gov/Libraries/Library-Programs-and-Services/Pages/Workforce-Development.aspx>

¹⁵ https://lancasteronline.com/business/local_business/new-kiosks-at-lancaster-county-schools-libraries-to-help-job-seekers-and-students/article_9239fe9a-0982-11ef-a184-23ca2ab18a30.html

¹⁶ <https://lancasterpubliclibrary.org/dsbc/>

¹⁷ <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/raj-chetty-in-14-charts-big-findings-on-opportunity-and-mobility-we-should-know/>

¹⁸ http://www.equality-of-opportunity.org/papers/coll_mrc_paper.pdf

¹⁹ <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/InstitutionList.aspx?sid=c6defff8-d899-4684-b48e-e1db97c128dd&rtid=6>



debt even after financial aid is accounted for. Thus, the Federal government's overhaul of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA, announced in 2023 was encouraging. However, the poorly executed rollout of the new FAFSA in spring 2024 left many students living with low income hardest hit. Pennsylvania institutions of higher learning saw a 14% decline in applications in May 2024 compared to May 2023.²⁰ Thus, the Department of Education's anticipated increase in Pell Grant recipients most likely did not materialize.²¹ Historically, students living with low income have had lower rates of application completion even before the technical glitches.²² An organization with high levels of trust among individuals living with low income could play an important role in boosting utilization of the FAFSA.

A number of community collaborations exist to improve workforce opportunities for students and other learners in the county. Career Ready Lancaster is a relatively new cross-sector partnership trying to increase participation in career pathways with higher earning potential.²³ It hosts events and provides matchmaking opportunities for students to experience different types of careers, as well as provides online education. The Lancaster STEM Alliance is also working on turning Lancaster into a hub for STEM literacy that will attract more jobs in the STEM fields.²⁴ They also host events and provide grants. While these appear to

be encouraging efforts, impact data was not available for either group to assess the ways in which these activities are changing outcomes.

CAP's participant satisfaction survey reinforces the need here. Fourteen percent and 16% of respondents to the 2023 and 2024 surveys, respectively, identified employment opportunities as an unmet need. Significantly, 40% of DVS participants stated employment was an unmet need in the 2023 survey. This is noteworthy because economic control can be a key lever manipulated by abusers. Current CAP programs like Parent Corps and Teen ELECT, and Crispus Attucks Community Center's Young Professionals of Color (YPOC), are providing a toehold in the workforce development space.



A number of community collaborations exist to improve workforce opportunities for students and other learners in the county.

²⁰ <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/investigations/2024/06/06/fafsa-issues-hardest-low-income-students/73784745007/>

²¹ <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-releases-new-data-highlighting-how-simplified-streamlined-and-redesigned-better-fafsa-form-will-help-deliver-maximum-pell-grants-15-million-more-students>

²² <https://blog.ed.gov/2021/04/supporting-first-generation-low-income-students-beyond-college-acceptance-letter/>

²³ <https://careerreadylancaster.com/quick-links/>

²⁴ <https://www.lancasterstem.org/workforce-2030/>



2GEN COMPONENT 6

Social Capital

Social capital as a term was defined in 1986 by anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu to refer to the types of non-material value that individuals derive from connection to one another in networks (and their relative position within those networks).¹

In Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone*, he presented the definition of social capital as "features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit."² More modern definitions emphasize the strength of one's social connections that contribute to some form of progress.³

The Harvard Social Capital Atlas study used a database of Facebook records and tax records to measure a condition that contributes to economic mobility called economic connectedness, the degree to which someone can foster friendships across socioeconomic lines. The authors conclude this ability is the strongest factor for whether or not they have

higher earning potential than their parents. Here's a compelling excerpt from the study:

If children with low-SES parents were to grow up in counties with economic connectedness comparable to that of the average child with high-SES parents, their incomes in adulthood would increase by 20% on average. Differences in economic connectedness can explain well-known relationships between upward income mobility and racial segregation, poverty rates, and inequality.⁴

Wealth Enhancement Group used data from the study to look more deeply at economic connectedness across Pennsylvania's counties. The economic connectedness score in Lancaster County is high (compared to the country as a whole) at 0.89 (as a reference point, Bucks County was the highest in PA at 1.09 and Northumberland County was the lowest at 0.8).⁵

At the county level, the Social Capital Atlas states that Lancaster County has a high degree of economic connectedness.



¹ McGee and Warms. *Anthropological Theory*, 4th Edition. McGraw-Hill, 2008. Pp. 581.

² Putnam, Robert. *Bowling Alone*. 1995. P67.

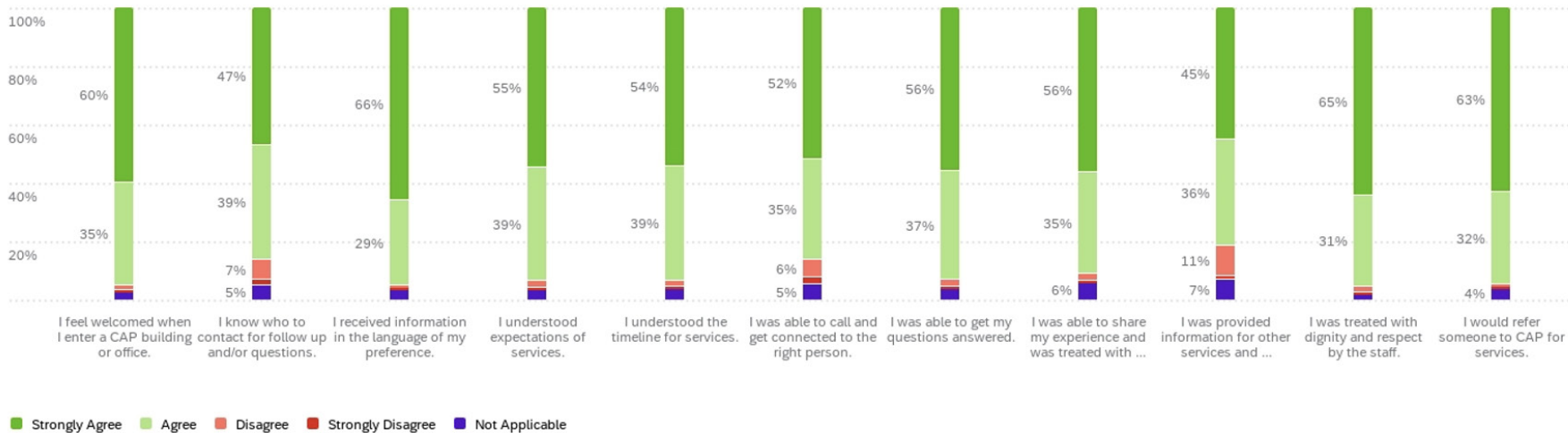
³ <https://www.socialcapitalresearch.com/current-definitions-of-social-capital/>

⁴ <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-022-04996-4#:~:text=Thepercent20sharepercent20of,20percent25percent20onpercent20average>

⁵ <https://stacker.com/pennsylvania/counties-where-children-have-best-opportunity-economic-mobility-pennsylvania>



TABLE 1: CAP's Overall Quality of Services (2024)



At the county level, the Social Capital Atlas states that Lancaster County has a high degree of economic connectedness; 44.5% of friends of individuals living with low income have a high income.⁶ This degree varies across the county, however. Looking at high school data, we see that in Manheim Township School District, 74.9% of friends have a high income, whereas in Lancaster City, only 23.9% of friends have a high income.⁷

The significance of place in economic mobility has been demonstrated by other research by economist Raj Chetty. In the study “The Effects of Exposure to

Better Neighborhoods on Children,” the researchers looked at the impact of the Moving to Opportunity housing choice vouchers. Moving to higher-opportunity areas significantly boosted the children’s earnings, though the children had to be under the age of 13 at the time of the move to see the benefit.⁸

CAP’s employees and fellow participants (depending on the program) form part of the social capital for individuals accessing services. CAP’s programs like Teen ELECT’s regular lunch-and-learns and socials, WIC’s breastfeeding support groups, and Thrive to Five’s family engagement events create



⁶ [https://www.socialcapital.org/?dimension=EconomicConnectednessIndividual&geoLevel=county&selectedId=42071&dim1=EconomicConnectednessIndividual&dim2=CohesivenessClustering&dim3=CivicEngagementVolunteeringRates&bigModalSection=outcomes&bigModalChart=scatterplot&showOutliers=false&colorBy=&state\[0\]=42](https://www.socialcapital.org/?dimension=EconomicConnectednessIndividual&geoLevel=county&selectedId=42071&dim1=EconomicConnectednessIndividual&dim2=CohesivenessClustering&dim3=CivicEngagementVolunteeringRates&bigModalSection=outcomes&bigModalChart=scatterplot&showOutliers=false&colorBy=&state[0]=42)

⁷ [https://www.socialcapital.org/?dimension=EconomicConnectednessIndividual&geoLevel=hs&selectedId=&dim1=EconomicConnectednessIndividual&dim2=CohesivenessClustering&dim3=CivicEngagementVolunteeringRates&bigModalSection=&bigModalChart=scatterplot&showOutliers=false&colorBy=&county\[0\]=42071](https://www.socialcapital.org/?dimension=EconomicConnectednessIndividual&geoLevel=hs&selectedId=&dim1=EconomicConnectednessIndividual&dim2=CohesivenessClustering&dim3=CivicEngagementVolunteeringRates&bigModalSection=&bigModalChart=scatterplot&showOutliers=false&colorBy=&county[0]=42071)

⁸ <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/raj-chetty-in-14-charts-big-findings-on-opportunity-and-mobility-we-should-know/>



opportunities for individuals to connect and build relationships for both caregivers and children. Ninety-eight percent of respondents who attended family engagement events recommended them according to the 2023 participant satisfaction survey.

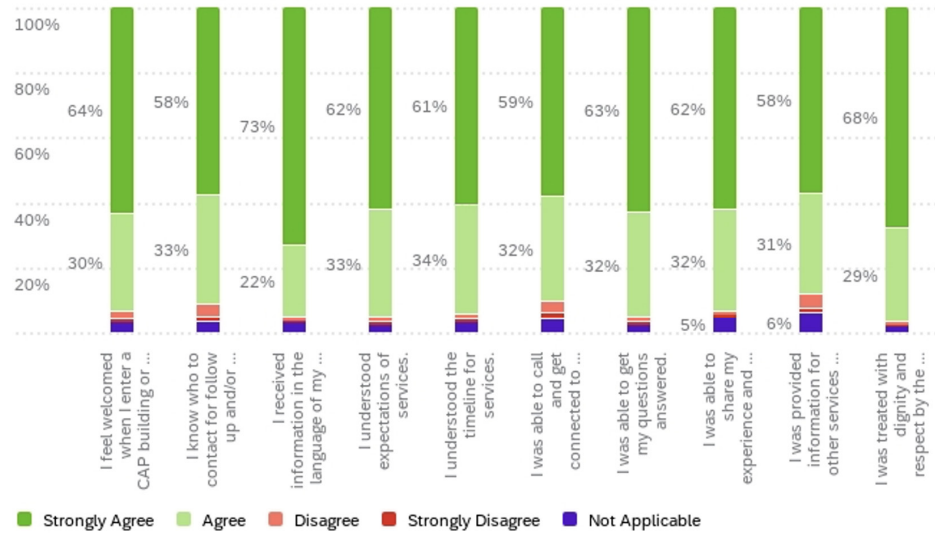
Customer satisfaction data for the past two years indicate a high degree of satisfaction with the services, as shown in Table 1 on the previous page and Table 2.

Although relatively small percentages disagree or strongly disagree, CAP may want to consider process improvements in three areas with the highest percentage of disagreement:

1. I know who to contact for follow-up and/or questions.
2. I was able to call and get connected to the right person.
3. I was provided information for other services and resources.

The first two indicate a more effective phone routing and/or referral system could help with access. Other methods of connecting like email or self-referral via the website could also be evaluated. Number three could be enhanced through greater employee training and further utilization of the referral tools in Empower Lancaster. CAP's intent to implement centralized intake would likely increase the number of respondents in future surveys who feel these three concerns are fully addressed.

TABLE 2: CAP's Overall Quality of Services (2023)



COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Conclusion

Taken together, the six 2Gen components illustrate the interplay of many factors on gaining and maintaining economic mobility. In general, Lancaster is experiencing dual economic trajectories in the aftermath of COVID-19: one characterized by growth, low unemployment, and rising prosperity, and another characterized by persistence in low-wage work, limited options for advancing credentials, and the pernicious effects of the basic costs of living outpacing income. The persistence of the ALICE data, federal poverty rate, and signals from the Census Bureau's Pulse Survey present a picture of household budgets battered by serious economic constraints. Although there has been improvement in the poverty rate and median income, far too many households remain untouched by these improvements.

These different factors compound one another, leading to limited economic mobility and generational impacts. For example, households cost-burdened by spending more than 30% of their income on housing must make tradeoffs elsewhere in their budgets, either by taking on additional work, thereby limiting available time to spend with children, or by reducing costs such as more limited and perhaps less healthy food choices, or poorer-quality child care. The constellation of supportive services provided by CAP to improve household budgets with financial assistance (like WIC, ELRC, Utility Assistance, and RISE emergency grants), create a strong foundation for learning (like Thrive to Five), and improve the

connection between education and workforce for parents (like Teen ELECT and Thrive to Five pilots) can all help serve as an antidote to these compounding factors.

Supportive, nurturing environments can also be key protective factors for mitigating the impact of ACEs. Thus, building on existing services and expanding partnerships to address gaps identified in the community needs assessment is vital, particularly around workforce pathways, housing affordability, and child care quality and affordability. An equity lens, such as that asserted through CAP's DEI Vision, is essential because all of these areas have disproportionate adverse outcomes for people of color.

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Lastly, most of CAP's current work is in the area of service provision and program delivery. CAP has played a critical role in convening collaborative efforts and raising the visibility of key issues. However, to enhance the well-being of Lancaster County households on a larger scale, and to further embody the five 2Gen guiding principles and the CAP DEI Vision, CAP may need to build greater capacity for advocacy and explore opportunities for community organizing. The significant successes of COVID-19 relief policies like Economic Impact Payments and the expanded Child Tax Credit, as well as promising pilots of cash transfer programs around the country, provide a useful basis for further policy advocacy and local innovation. Although this may be a shift in strategy, it aligns closely with the roots of Community Action.

