

Community Needs Assessment

Detailed Needs by Category 2025/2028

Community in Action Harney and Malheur Counties



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Missions Statement: We serve low and moderate-income individuals and families by providing education and counseling, skills development, and access to community resources that help to create self-sufficiency.

Vision Statement: CinA's vision is to build inclusive, diverse, and caring communities. We envision communities where residents, regardless of their income status, have hope, optimism, and access to community resources.

Visit our web site at: www.communityinaction.info and like us on FaceBook at [Facebook.com/cinaontario/](https://www.facebook.com/cinaontario/)

Table of Contents

Introduction	Page 3
Community in Action Background	Page 3
Survey Respondents	Page 4
Survey Availability	Page 7
Process	Page 7
Community Input	Page 9
How will the Survey be Used	Page 9
About the Service Area	Page 10
Harney County	Page 10
Malheur County	Page 10
Detailed Needs by Category	Page 11
Education Supports	Page 12
Health Concerns	Page 13
Civic Engagement	Page 13
Employment Support Needs	Page 14
Housing Needs	Page 15
What Support Services/Emergency Supports	Page 16
Income/Asset Building	Page 17
What Services are the Most Critical in Your Community	Page 18
In Conclusion	Page 19
What we Learned	Page 19
CinA Strategy Moving Forward	Page 20
Informing the Strategic Plan	Page 21

INTRODUCTION

Every three years, Community in Action participates in a Community Needs Assessment. The purpose of this assessment is to gather a cross section of information from residents, community partners, non-profit entities, and other groups that can provide valuable information regarding the community needs.

After the survey is completed, it will be analyzed to determine gaps in services to determine areas that may need to be the focus for future planning. It will inform the Community in Action Strategic Plan to assist low-income residents of Harney and Malheur Counties.

The survey was developed utilizing quantitative data to inform the respondents of the facts about their community. The survey also solicited qualitative information from survey respondents to get a better picture of the information that is available during the process.

The survey will be made available to the community by posting it on the Community in Action Facebook Page, email/drop off at partner agencies, and sending it out via direct mailer to over 4,000 addresses in Harney and Malheur Counties.

Community in Action Background

Community in Action officially became the Community Action Agency that represents Harney and Malheur Counties in 2009. A non-profit 501 C 3, charitable contribution agency, was established to deliver programs and services to low-income residents who qualify for services. Main program funding is designated through Oregon Housing & Community Services, private donors, Housing & Urban Development (HUD), and foundation grants that are available to serve low-income residents.

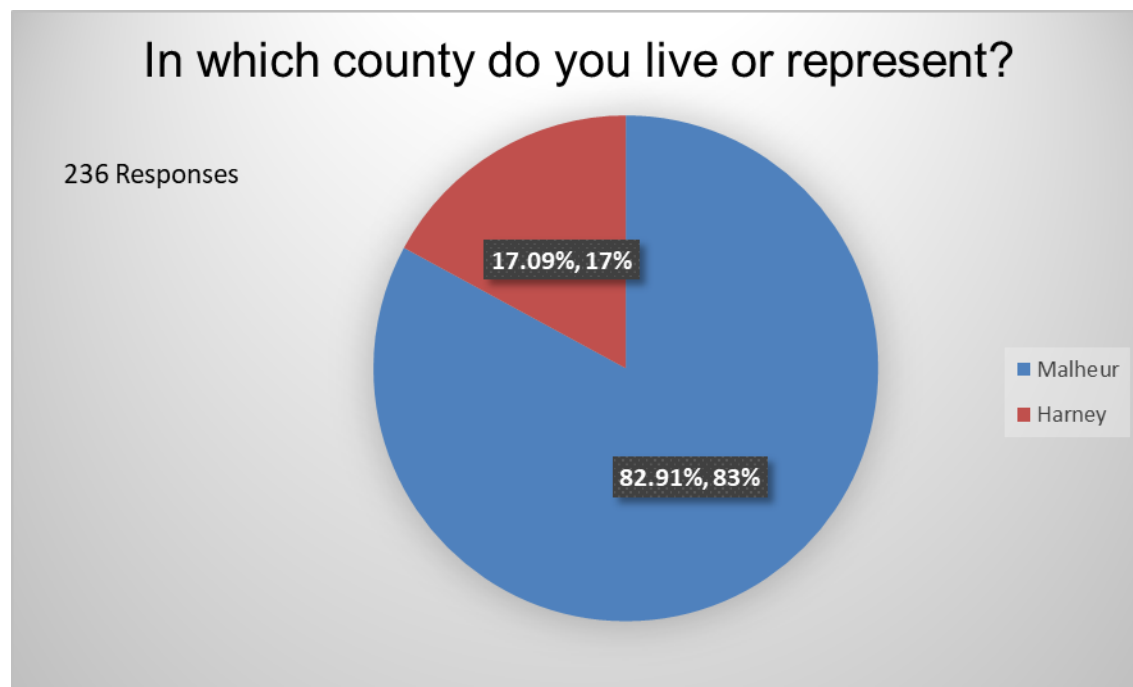
The agency has grown from approximately \$3.5M in funding has more than doubled over the past years. Funding is diversified to include state, federal, and

private funding sources. CinA remains flexible to address gaps in services and to address needs in the communities

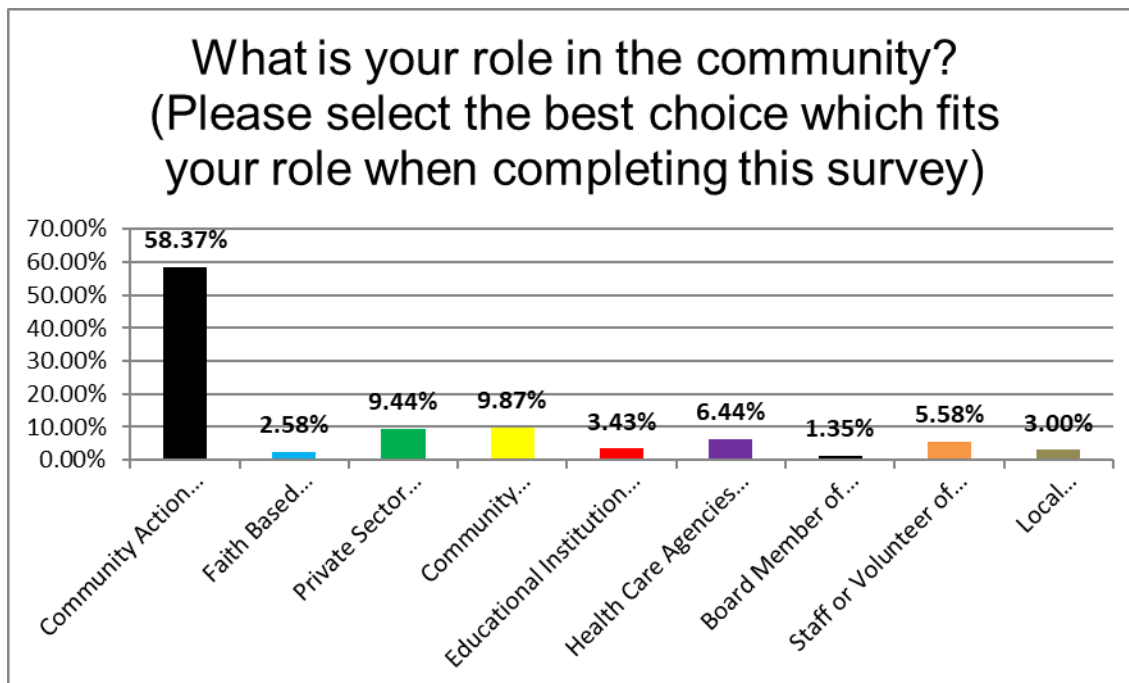
Prior to developing the survey, information was solicited from the community using multiple formats. One on one sessions were conducted with members of the community and partner organizations via phone and/or zoom. In addition to this, a pre-survey was reviewed by the CinA Board of Directors, CinA Leadership and several CinA partners and community members, to ensure proper data was being collected. The survey was advertised on the CinA Facebook page as well as several other platforms. CinA invited other agencies to post the survey on their web sites. Customers who visited the CinA Facebook page were directed to take the survey to garner additional input. Phone calls were made to key people and entities in Harney County to gather needed information and details. The information gathered was incorporated into the survey questions to get the broadest community investment possible.

Survey Respondents

The summary graph below indicates the counties where the respondents reside. The category of “other” is generally known to include those who work in one of the counties but reside outside that area. This is largely due to Ontario bordering the State of Idaho. 236 individual surveys were received, of which 40 were from Harney County and 194 were from Malheur County leaving 2 respondents from outside of these counties.



The chart below further breaks down the respondents by how they identify themselves within their community. Respondents may identify themselves as clients who receive low-income services even though they may also be a community member or a member of a non-profit organization. The largest representation of respondents is Community Action Client/Low-Income Resident with 136 responses. The second highest group consists of Community Organization/Partner (local service provider and non-profits) with 23 responses and the third were Private Sector Representative/Community Member (for profit, small business, private citizen, etc.) with 22 responses.



Answer Choices

Community Action Client/Low-Income Resident

Faith Based Organization Representative (Church/Faith Based groups, clubs, councils, associations, etc.)

Private Sector Representative/Community Member (for profit, small business, private citizen, etc.)

Community Organization/Partner (local service provider and non-profits)

Educational Institution Faculty/Staff (local adult eds, schools, college, and universities)

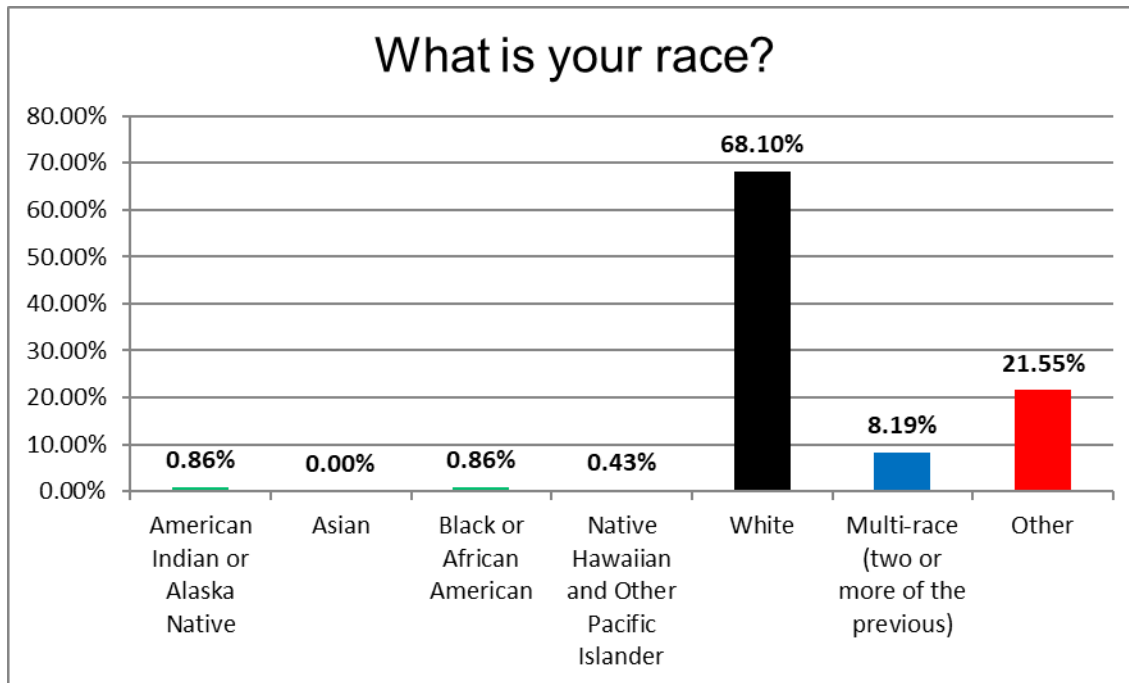
Health Care Agencies (clinics, health departments, etc.)

Board Member of Community Action Agency

Staff or Volunteer of Community Action Agency

Local Politician/Government/Public Sector Representative (non-profit, government regulated, funding sources, etc.)

The graph below indicates the best representation of the respondent's racial or ethnic heritage. As you can see, 68.1% identified as White European American, 21.55% identified as other, and 8.19% identified as "Multi Race". In addition, 33 or 6.5% of the respondents chose not to disclose their race/ethnicity.



SURVEY AVAILABILITY

The survey was made available to the community by publishing in on the Community in Action Facebook Page, by making it available in a written version in English and Spanish, and by providing a survey link to the community by utilizing partner agencies and list services and over 4,000 direct mailers were sent out. Community meetings were also attended to market the survey.

PROCESS

Survey Introduction:

The survey was accompanied by the following introduction that allowed respondents to understand more about the community that they were assessing.

“From time-to-time Community in Action assesses the needs of low and moderate-income individuals and families within its service areas by creating a survey to

determine needs, identify gaps in services, and to plan for future funding. Please take a moment to complete the survey so your expertise and information can be used to help identify the needs of low-income individuals and families. The survey will only take about five minutes to complete. Thank you.

Harney and Malheur Counties include frontier communities that typically lack infrastructure needed to compete with larger areas of the state for funding and larger scale employment opportunities. Subsequently, the communities tend to have higher poverty rates among adults and children and a high need for services designed to help low and moderate-income people meet their basic needs. Community in Action exists to serve low to moderate-income individuals and families by providing education and counseling, skills development, and access to community resources that help to create self-sufficiency.

According to the US Census, Harney County is the largest county by land mass and one of the smallest in population. It includes population estimates of 7495 residents in 2020, which is less than one person per square mile and slightly higher than during the 2018 survey. The population has changed slightly since 2020 and 27.2% of its residents are people over 65 years of age. Harney County's Race reflects predominately white with a small Hispanic and Native American population included. Foreign born in these communities represent 2.21% of the population. Owner-occupied housing is reflected at 67.2% with median gross rent reported to be \$675.00 per month. Median household income is reported at \$48,338 as compared to the statewide average of \$80,426.

According to the US Census, Malheur County is the second largest county by land mass and one of the smallest in population including population estimates of 32,044 residents, which is slightly over 3 people per square mile. The population has changed slightly and 17.1% of its residents are people over 65 years of age, which is slightly higher than the previous survey. Malheur County's Race reflects 72.8% white and 33.1% Hispanic or Latino. Foreign born in these communities represents 7.7% of the population. Owner occupied housing is 63.4% with median gross rent reported to be \$819.00 per month, which is slightly higher than reported in the previous survey. Median household income is reported at \$49,902 as compared to the statewide average of \$80,426.

The information gathered will help define the future strategic plan for Community in Action in Harney and Malheur Counties. It will help consider its sub-recipient needs and services provided, and will be used to create public reports that will be accessible on the web site at www.communityinaction.info.

Community Input

The survey was made available in many formats. In April of 2025, Community in Action (CinA) collaborated with multiple community-based partners in Harney and Malheur Counties to administer and collect the content for the survey. Both counties and multiple communities within each participated and offered insight and suggestions for the questions. Both communities indicated that there is more need than funding and there is much work to be done to take care of the most vulnerable in our communities. In addition, e-mail requests were sent to target agencies and people in the communities. The response to the survey at 236 was enough to review statistically significant data.

The intent of the survey process was to involve as many community residents as possible, community partners, faith-based entities, customers who receive services, city and county officials, and others who play key roles in the community to gain a wide spectrum of input. The survey included quantitative as well as qualitative information from the US Census related to gender, age, and race/ethnicity for our service area. That information is at the end of the survey and provided helpful insight. The survey included demographic questions, choosing a maximum number of choice questions, and open-ended questions. The survey was designed to assess both the needs and resources in the community and to produce a document that can be published for the community to access.

How will the Survey be Used

The information received will be reviewed by the Board of Directors and it will help to prepare the Strategic Plan for Community in Action. It will help Community in Action determine if additional sub-recipients may need to be added to address some of the gaps in services or specific needs, it will create a public report that will be accessible on the web site at www.communityinaction.info,

and it can be used by partner entities to help inform their planning process and better understand the needs in their communities.

About the Service Area

Harney and Malheur Counties are very rural in nature. Many of the communities are not incorporated as they only have a few people who live there. Some are incorporated but consist of very small communities. All areas lack the ability to compete for state and federal funding due to the lack of infrastructure as compared to larger communities. This is important because rural Oregon needs to be competitive and able to apply for funding for infrastructure projects.

You may already know that many of our areas have high adult and childhood poverty rates and the need for services far outpaces the funding that is available for assistance and support.

Harney County

According to the US Census, Harney County's population includes 19.7% under the age of 18 and 27.2% over the age of 65. The population of males and females is close to 50% for each gender. The ethnicity is predominantly White with almost 85.4% identifying in this category and only 2.2% are foreign born. There are 3,726 housing units that include 60% owner occupied, which is down nearly 12% in recent years. Median home values are \$196,565 and the median monthly owner cost for a mortgage is \$1,221. Median gross rent for 2019-2023 is \$675. High school graduates include 91.8%, which is up from the previous report and bachelor's degree or higher is 15.6%, which is .9% lower than the previous report. There are 41 youth experiencing homelessness, which is 2 additional youth as compared to the previous report, based on the 20-21 Statewide Report Card from Oregon Public Schools.

Malheur County

According to the US Census, Malheur County's population includes 25.7% of residents who are under the age of 18 and 17.1% are over the age of 65. The population of males and females is close to 50% for each gender. Malheur County residents consist of 60% identifying as White, 34.5% identifying themselves as

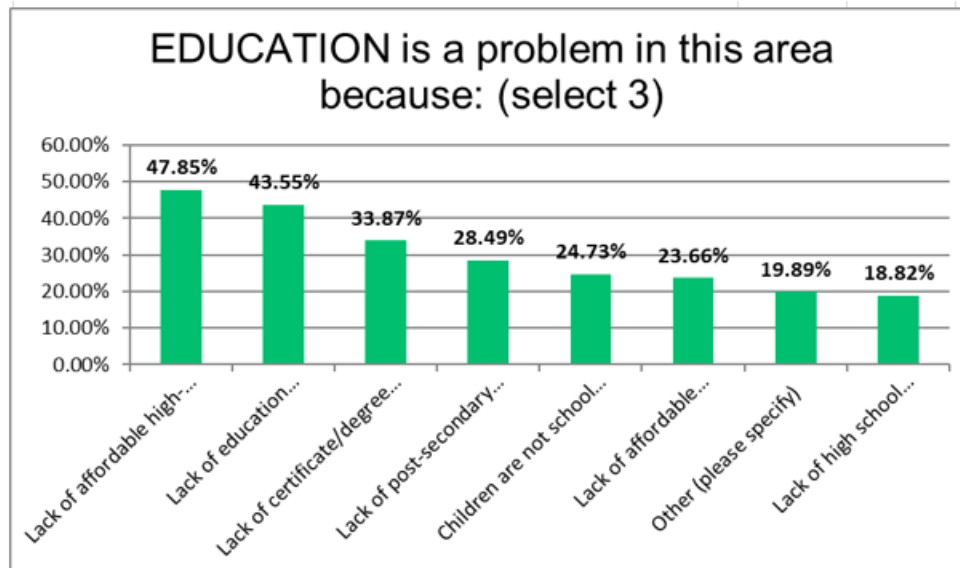
Hispanic/Latino, and 7.7% of residents identified as foreign born. There are 11,808 housing units available, with an owner occupancy rate of 63.4% and a home value of \$221,300. The median gross rent is \$819. The high school graduation rate is slightly up at 83.8% and 15.5% of the population has achieved a bachelor's degree or higher. There are 260 students experiencing homelessness according to the 20-21 Statewide Report Card from Oregon Public Schools.

Detailed Needs by Category:

EDUCATION SUPPORTS

The graph below illustrates the Education Supports needed in the Community. The highest critical need in this category is Lack of affordable high-quality childcare and Lack of education resources in the community. These two areas indicate that parents are drastically reduced when looking for work and continuing education opportunities. The options that are available are often too expensive or lacking in quality.

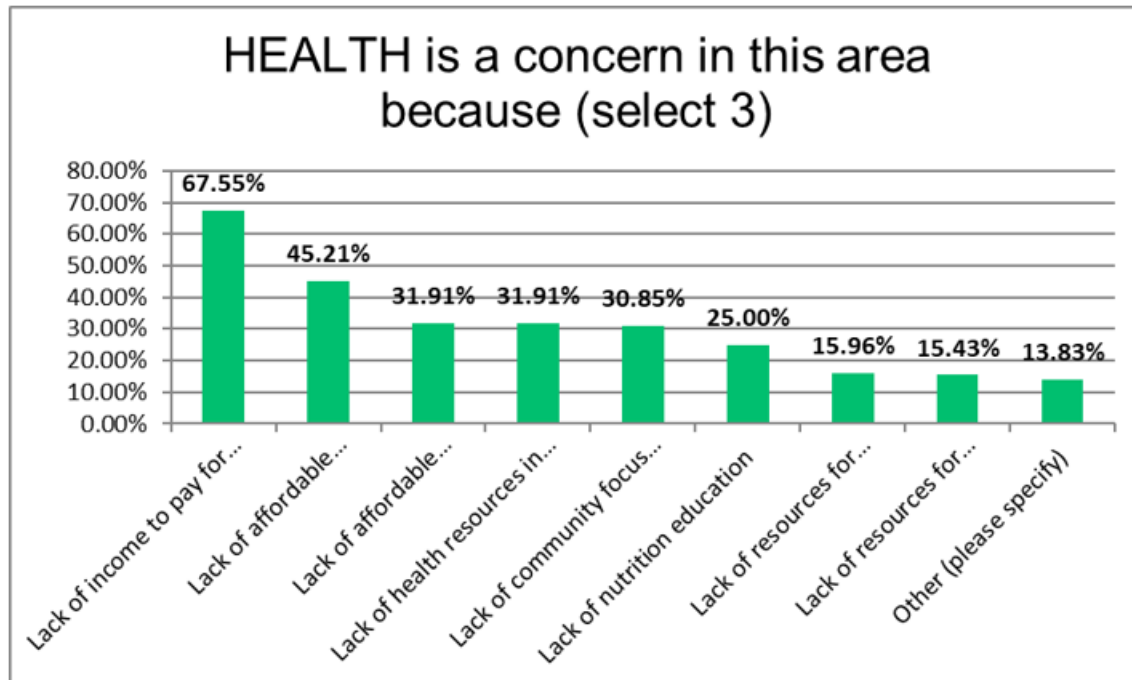
Another concern among survey respondents is that children aren't ready for school. This is the base building block for all things education, which studies have shown to lead to a decrease in people receiving high school diplomas / GED's.



Lack of affordable high-quality childcare
 Lack of education resources in the community
 Lack of certificate/degree programs offered locally
 Lack of post-secondary education (vocational skills/college education)
 Children are not school ready
 Lack of affordable transportation to and from school
 Other (please specify)
 Lack of high school diploma/GED

Health Concerns

The two most common answers to the question Health were a concern in this area because were, lack of income to pay for adult dental, hearing and/or vision services at 67.55% respondents and lack of affordable comprehensive (or primary) health care services at 45.21% respondents. These numbers are attributed often by poor employee benefit packages (which is supported in our later graph for employment), high healthcare services and low wages. Below is the graph illustrating our findings.

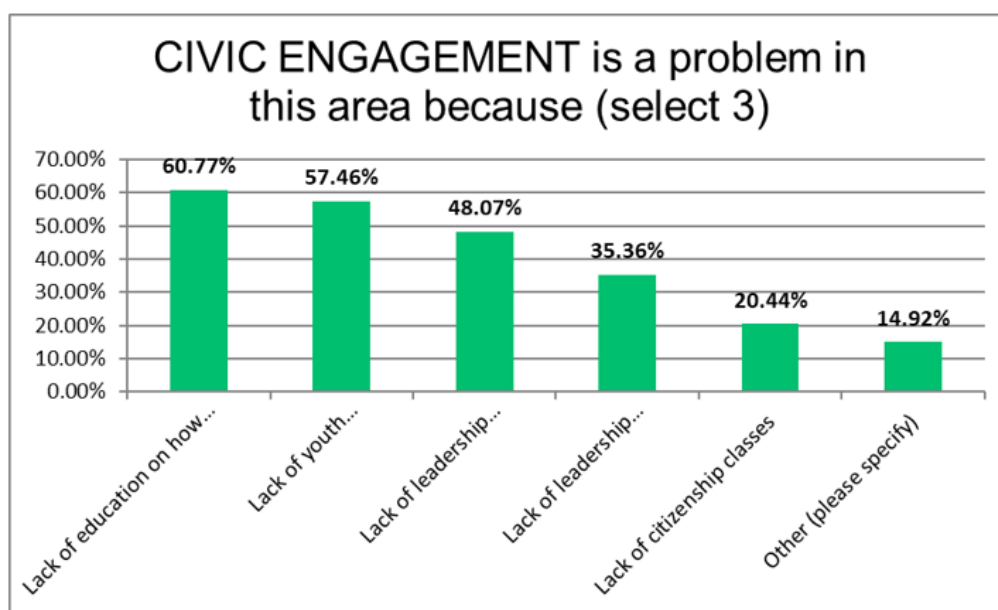


- Lack of income to pay for adult dental, hearing and/or vision services
- Lack of affordable comprehensive (or primary) health care services
- Lack of affordable transportation for health care services, grocery, and/or food pantries.
- Lack of health resources in the community
- Lack of community focus on preventative Healthcare
- Lack of nutrition education
- Lack of resources for victims of domestic violence
- Lack of resources for victims of elderly abuse
- Other (please specify)

Civic Engagement

The two most common answers to the question CIVIC ENGAGEMENT are a problem in this area because there is a lack of education on how to join neighborhood associations, community boards, advisory groups or similar organizations at 67.55% and lack of youth programs/activities at 45.21%. Residents would be much more able to raise awareness of their concerns if they had better access to joining or being heard by associations, boards and advisory groups. This would help agencies and local leadership bring to light these issues and continue or begin addressing them. It would also increase awareness in the community regarding pre-existing programs. Youth programs and activities continues to be an area of concern. If this area continues to be an area of concern

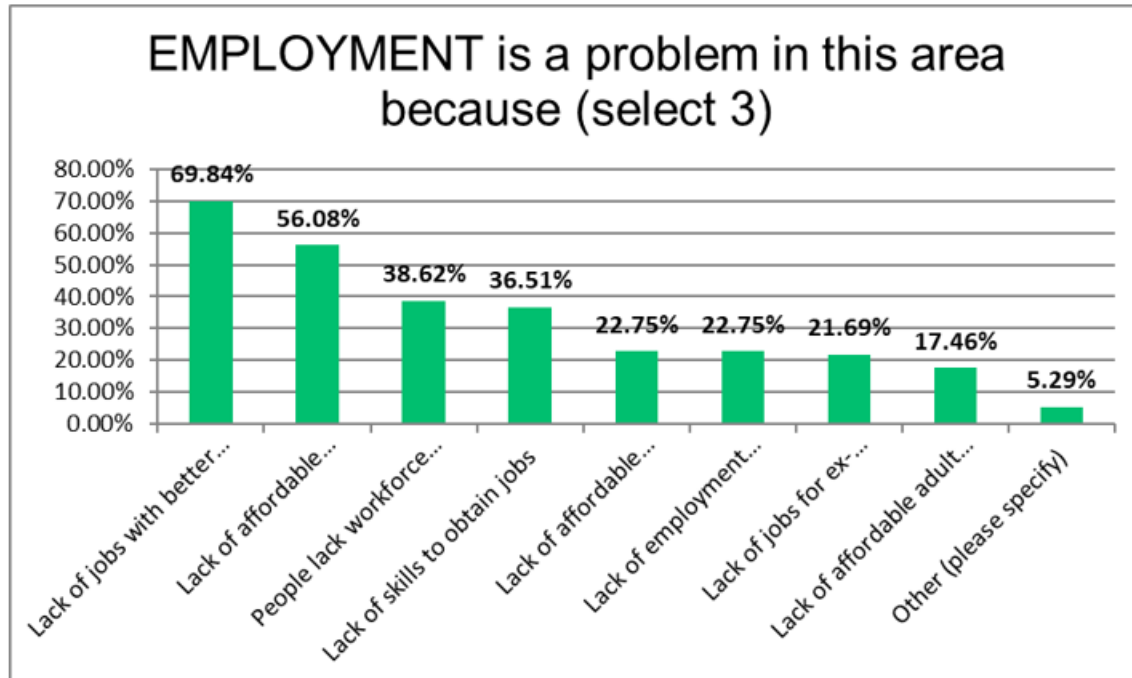
our community could face reduced knowledge and values among young adults as our youth become adults. We could also see in our youths a lack of understanding of the importance in community engagement which could directly reduce our community's future growth.



Lack of education on how to join neighborhood associations, community boards, advisory groups or similar organizations
Lack of youth programs/activities
Lack of leadership development for volunteer and civic engagement activities for youth
Lack of leadership development for volunteer and civic engagement activities for seniors
Lack of citizenship classes
Other (please specify)

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT NEEDS

The two most common answers to the question were the lack of jobs with better pay and benefits at 69.84% and the lack of affordable childcare during work hours at 56.08%. Both areas continue to be primary points of concern throughout this Needs Assessment. Our community members will be faced with very difficult situations to navigate if these two concerns aren't improved let alone deteriorate any further. It is very likely that debt will increase, also poverty will most likely increase as well. While this is happening our community members face a decrease in health due to a lack of affordability and an increase in the homeless population.

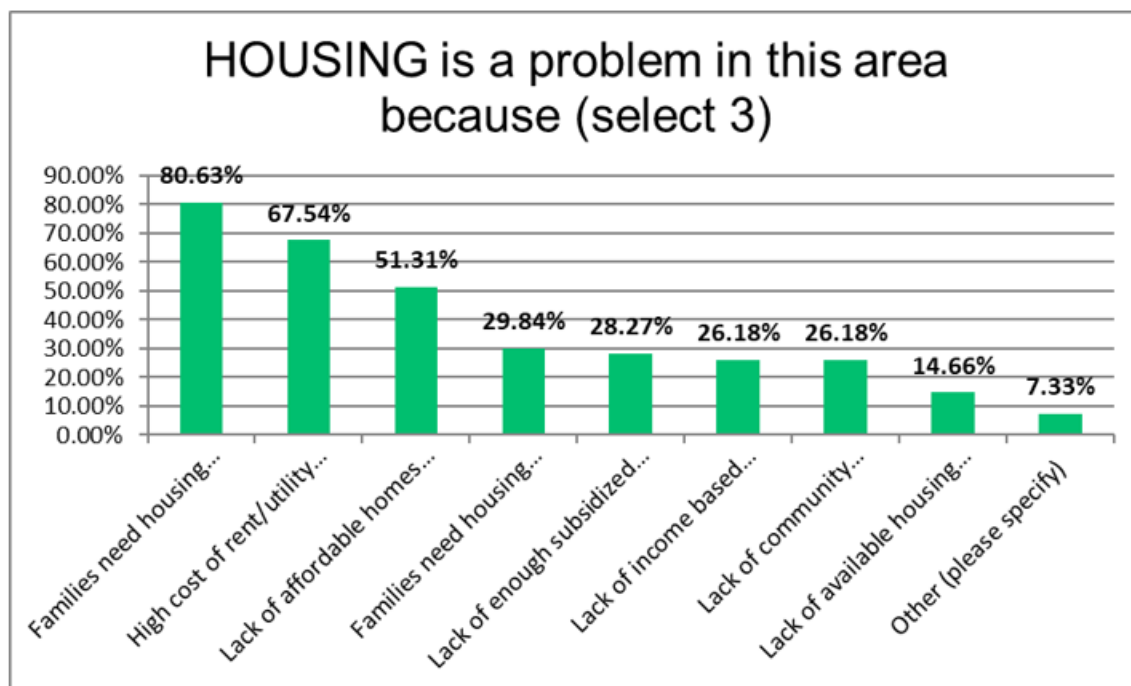


Lack of jobs with better pay and benefits
 Lack of affordable childcare during work hours
 People lack workforce values and readiness skills
 Lack of skills to obtain jobs
 Lack of affordable transportation to and from job
 Lack of employment resources in the community
 Lack of jobs for ex-offenders reentering the workforce
 Lack of affordable adult daycare during work hours
 Other (please specify)

HOUSING NEEDS

The two most common answers to the question were families need housing they can afford/lack of affordable housing at 80.63% and high cost of rent/utility deposits at 67.54%. These 2 factors have undoubtedly led to a higher rate of eviction and homelessness. One thing that potentially compounds these 2 issues is the 3rd biggest problem according to this survey question is lack of affordable homes for homeownership at 51.33%. This means homes sit on the market longer and less housed purchase homes, meaning our service area has more renters.

With this increase in renters there are less available rentals for homeless to be housed in.

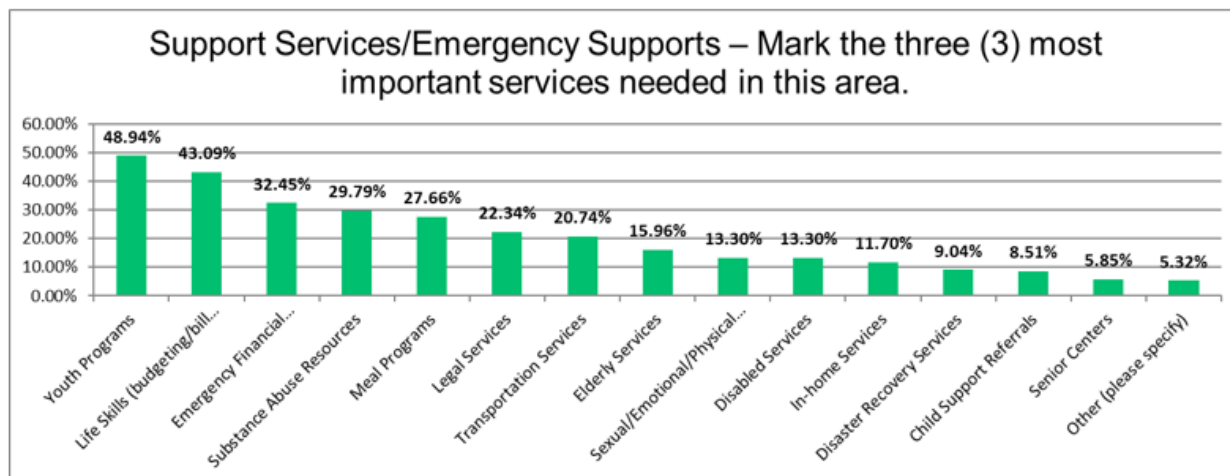


Families need housing they can afford/lack of affordable housing
High cost of rent/utility deposits
Lack of affordable homes for homeownership
Families need housing repairs that reduce energy cost
Lack of enough subsidized housing
Lack of income based rental housing for disabled and seniors
Lack of community supports for homeless families
Lack of available housing for ex-offenders
Other (please specify)

What Support Services/Emergency Supports

The two most common answers to the question were youth programs at 48.94% and life skills (budgeting/bill paying) at 43.09%. Again, we see youth programs/services appear again in this survey as areas of concern from our

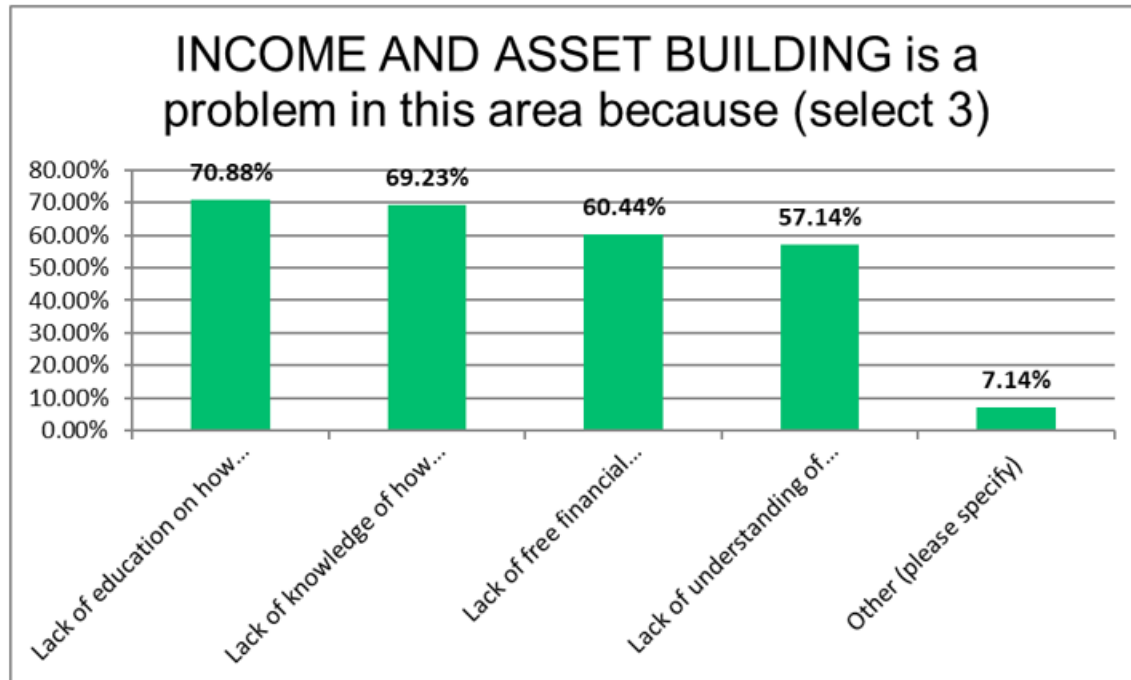
respondents. With poor budgeting and bill paying skills our clients face a critical risk of high debt, poverty and homelessness to name a few.



Youth Programs
 Life Skills (budgeting/bill paying)
 Emergency Financial Assistance Services
 Substance Abuse Resources
 Meal Programs
 Legal Services
 Transportation Services
 Elderly Services
 Sexual/Emotional/Physical Abuse Services
 Disabled Services
 In-home Services
 Disaster Recovery Services
 Child Support Referrals
 Senior Centers
 Other (please specify)

Income/Asset Building

The two most common answers to the question were lack of education on how to budget at 70.88% and lack of knowledge of how to reduce debt 69.23%. It is imperative that these issues be addressed. To this point we've determined that many of our community members have low paying jobs, healthcare plans that aren't affordable, and they have limited understanding of how to properly budget or pay down debt.

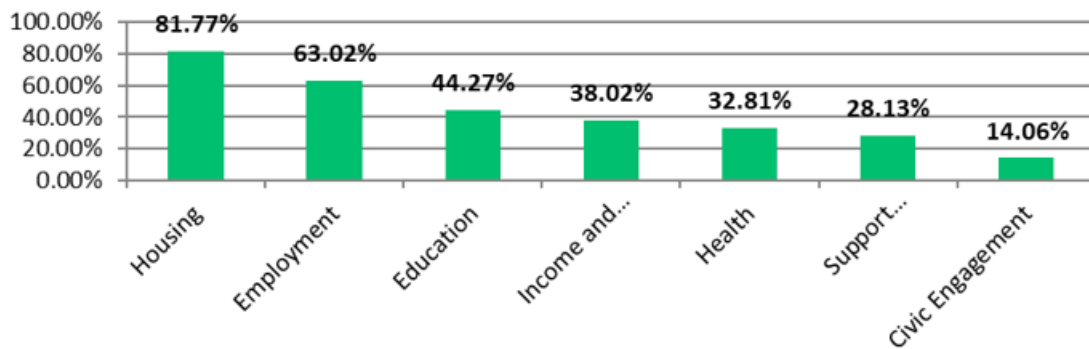


Lack of education on how to budget
 Lack of knowledge of how to reduce debt
 Lack of free financial counseling resources/services
 Lack of understanding of how to invest
 Other (please specify)

What are the most critical issues to the community

The two most common answers to the question were Housing 81.77% and Employment 63.02%. Housing is the most basic human need and according to our Community Needs Survey it is one of the most critical issues in Malheur and Harney Counties. Employment is a very impactful issue and is one of the leading causes of poverty. It leads to increased homelessness and lower education. If needs like this continue to plague our service area the difficult situation many of our community members find themselves in will grow and the health of our community will continue to suffer.

Based on the items you selected above;
please mark the TOP THREE (3) MAIN
CATERGORIES you feel are the biggest
problems/concerns in your
community/county.



Housing
Employment
Education
Income and Asset Building
Health
Support Services/Emergency Supports or Services
Civic Engagement

IN CONCLUSION

WHAT WE LEARNED: We know that there are multiple programs and services offered in Harney and Malheur Counties, however, there are major issues that remain.

Citizens, businesses, non-profits, state agencies, local elected officials, people who work in programs, and customers of services offered answers the survey. We are pleased by the response and deem the survey to be valid.

We learned that many of the issues of the past continue to be issues today and that we need to do more to address the needs in the communities. Specifically, around the lack of affordable/attainable housing, the high cost of rental housing, and the lack of affordable homes for homeownership.

We also learned that the needle is moving positively around youth /childhood poverty as well as lack of programs and it is very important to see this continue to decline in each service area.

We learned that the work done in the last Strategic Plan is helping to provide the pathway to education, resources, and other supports for low-income people in our communities. We also learned that more needs to be done in adding affordable and attainable housing.

We also learned that even through a very difficult time the people in our communities care enough to respond to a survey.

COMMUNITY IN ACTION STRATEGY MOVING FORWARD: Community in Action will analyze the results of the survey and apply that knowledge to programs and services offered.

Examples of this may include:

- Continuing to push for additional housing that is safe and affordable for our citizens and strive to meet the goal from the last survey is to add an additional 500 safe and affordable housing units to our service areas. This goal may be expanded and CinA will continue to work with Oregon Housing & Community Services, construction managers, and others who are interested in expanding housing in our areas.
- Continue to support crime prevention and gain strategies that are designed to help youth overcome gang affiliation and violence.
- Continuing to advocate for language services and services that reach the most vulnerable in our communities. This is important to create inclusive programs and services that reach all who are in need.
- Continuing to provide ways that youth can participate in work readiness programs that will help them find and keep meaningful employment opportunities.

- Continue to push for additional mental health services and appropriate healthcare services to meet the needs of our communities.

INFORMING THE STRATEGIC PLAN: The Community in Action board will continue to meet regularly to help address the needs of the community. The board supports the addition of safe and affordable housing, support for youth who are homeless or in need of housing and education support, and we will continue to fight for higher wage jobs as well as other needed support for families.

CinA will continue to participate in asset building programs that include Individual Development Accounts, Down Payment Assistance and more. We will continue to invest in programs that offer education and services that help to meet the needs of the residents in our communities.

Community in Action is well positioned to help address the effects of poverty and realize a community that thrives by helping to reduce the burdens on families who struggle to meet their basic needs.

Stay tuned for the next Strategic Plan that will incorporate this survey as we analyze it and determine the next steps.

Thank you for your participation in this important survey.