

Community Needs Assessment

Macomb Community Action

June 2023



Macomb
Community
Action



Macomb
Community
Action



**PUBLIC SECTOR
CONSULTANTS**

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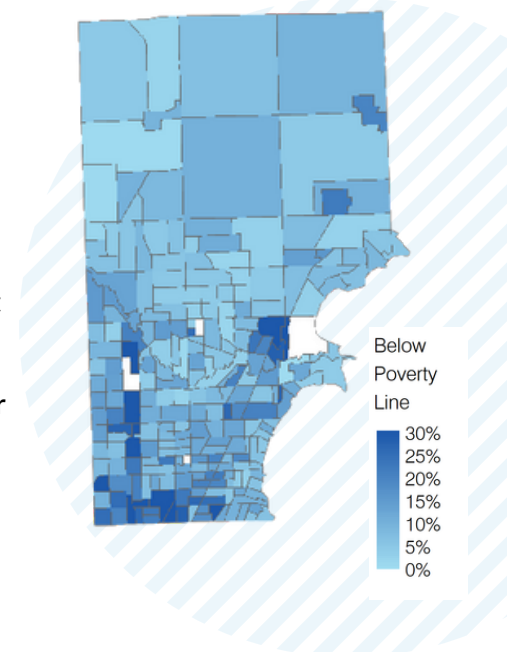
Macomb Community Action 2023 Community Needs Assessment Executive Summary

PURPOSE

Macomb Community Action (MCA) completes a needs assessment every three years to understand community needs and identify actions to help the county's most vulnerable populations.

BY THE NUMBERS

- 90,000** Number of Macomb residents living in poverty, with higher rates among racial minorities and other specific communities (see map).
- 48%** Percentage of Macomb residents' household income that is being spent on housing and transportation.
- 45%** Percentage of community members surveyed who reported recent financial challenges (e.g., unable to save, high credit card debt).
- 60%** Percentage of providers who said lack of awareness is a key barrier to residents accessing services—more than any other barrier.
- 4x** How much greater the average income of the wealthiest areas of the county are compared to other parts of the community.



THE PROCESS

MCA hired Public Sector Consultants (PSC) to help conduct the community needs assessment. To do so, PSC:

- 1** Collected county, state, and national data
- 2** Surveyed more than 600 community members and 50 social service providers
- 3** Facilitated virtual and in-person community forums

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on input from community members, service providers, the advisory committee, and other research:

- **Bridge the outreach gap** to increase awareness of and access to services
- **Address root causes** driving poverty in Macomb county
- **Invest in early childhood education programming** to set children up for success
- **Consider race and place** to address disparities

See page 58 of the community needs assessment for more details on each of these recommendations.



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Who Are We?



Macomb Community Action

Macomb Community Action (MCA), part of the Macomb County government, is a community action agency developed in response to the federal Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, which established a variety of social programs to aid in the areas of education, health, employment, and general welfare for Americans living in poverty. As part of this project, MCA will undergo a strategic planning process, which could result in their vision, mission, values and benefits, services, and oversight structure evolving to respond to the needs of the community. This process will leverage findings from in this needs assessment process along with additional conversations with staff, partners, and community members.

Vision

All customers achieve their fullest potential and maintain personal stability and security.

Mission

Persistent action to diminish poverty and promote independence.

Values and Beliefs

MCA uses the following values and beliefs to guide its services and interaction with the community:

People | We will treat all persons with dignity and respect.

Diversity and inclusion | We embrace diversity and ensure inclusion to strengthen and enrich our community.

Person-centered services | We encourage maximum feasible participation.

Accessibility, equity, and parity | Barriers to independence exist in our community. Persistent action is required to ensure all persons have opportunities to work toward reaching their fullest potential.

Advocacy | To meet our mission, we encourage collaboration, we inform policy, we impact change.

Services

MCA offers a wide range of programs and services, including the following, to address the needs of the community:

Children and Family Services

- Early Head Start
- Head Start
- Macomb Food Program

Community Services

- Action Centers
- Transportation
- Housing Services
- Weatherization Assistance

Advisory Board

MCA is advised by the Macomb Community Action Advisory Board (MCAAB). MCAAB members are representatives from the public, consumer, and private sectors.

Representatives from the Public Sector

Joan Flynn, City of Warren
Julie Matuzak, Clinton Township Board of Trustees
Mark Hackel, Macomb County Executive, Ex Officio
Honorable William Hackel III, 42nd District Court—Division II, New Baltimore
Matthew Wallace, Clinton Township
Matthew Micinski, Community member

Representatives from the Consumer Sector

April L. Fidler, CEO, Macomb County Rotating Emergency Shelter Team (MCREST)
Monica Bihar-Natzke, Community member
Michael Bruci, Community member
Shana Romancheck, Community member, Head Start Policy Council Chair
Robert Combs, Macomb Food Program Pantry Network

Representatives from the Private Sector

Justin Al-Igoe, Macomb St. Clair Workforce Development Board
Tanya Blatz, U.S. Army Garrison, Detroit Arsenal
Carmen Bordea, Office of Global Michigan
Esperanza Cantu, United Way for Southeastern Michigan
Krista Willette, R.N., M.S.A., Macomb County Health Department

Public Sector Consultants

MCA hired Public Sector Consultants (PSC), a Lansing-based nonpartisan policy research firm, to collect and analyze data on the community, distribute and evaluate surveys of community members and service providers, and facilitate community forums. PSC summarized the results of these activities and this report in accordance with the Community Action Partnership Organizational Standards.

What Is a Community Needs Assessment?



Purpose

As a community action agency that receives Community Services Block Grant funding, MCA is required to complete a community needs assessment every three years. The purpose of these assessments are to identify the community's greatest strengths, biggest needs, and the community resources available to meet the needs of its most vulnerable populations. They also guide strategic planning and the development of services to support a stronger community.

Process

To ensure the community needs assessment is conducted in a way that empowers MCA to continue providing high-quality, impactful, relevant services to vulnerable populations in Macomb County and to meet funding requirements, MCA contracted with PSC to conduct its community needs assessment. This needs assessment process included the following main activities:

- Convening an advisory committee
- Collecting and analyzing county, state, and national data
- Collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data through surveys and forums

Convening an Advisory Committee

PSC and MCA co-facilitated an advisory committee that participated in the planning and development of the community and provider surveys, community forums, and action planning phases of the community needs assessment. Members represented social service and community member voices. The members of the advisory committee were:

Linda Azar, MCA
Joseph Cooke, MCA
Maria Swiatkowski, Macomb County Department of Health
Mary Frontiero, MCA
Sarah Bissa, MCA, Head Start
Shana Romancheck, MCAAB, Head Start Policy Council Chair
Michael Bruci, MCAAB
Jennifer Putney, formerly with MCA

The committee met twice; at the outset of the assessment, they met to share feedback on existing services, potential community partners, and ideas for outreach activities. MCA asked committee members to support outreach efforts and encourage participation in the surveys and community forums. At the second advisory committee meeting, PSC presented key findings from the data collection and facilitated discussion of recommendations to address gaps in service and to prioritize needs.

Collecting and Analyzing County, State, and National Data

PSC collected national, state, and county data to develop the community profile section of this assessment and inform the facilitation of the advisory committee and community forums. Data sources included, but were not limited to:

- U.S. Census Bureau

- Feeding America
- Annie E. Case Foundation
- Macomb County Community Action
- United for ALICE
- St. Clair Shores, Warren/Macomb Continuum of Care
- Housing and Transportation Affordability Index
- Macomb County Health Department

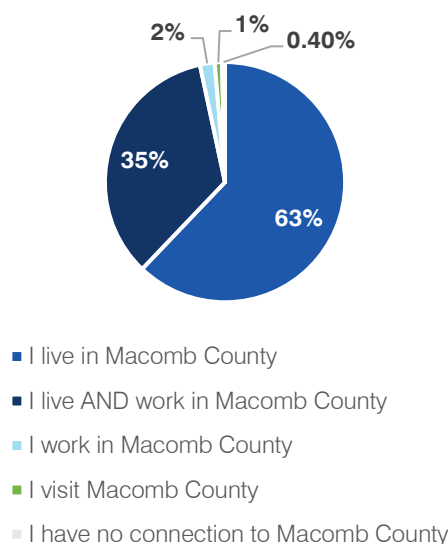
Quantitative and Qualitative Data Collection

Community Survey

MCA and PSC worked together to create and distribute a community survey that was open to people who live, work, and spend time in Macomb County. The survey was open from March 13–April 16 in English, Spanish, and Arabic and was available electronically and on paper at local community centers. As an incentive for taking the survey, individuals could choose to enter a weekly raffle for a \$25 gift card. The community survey received 586 total responses, most of which were completed by people who live and work in Macomb County. The advisory committee helped identify other partners who could share the survey with the community they serve.

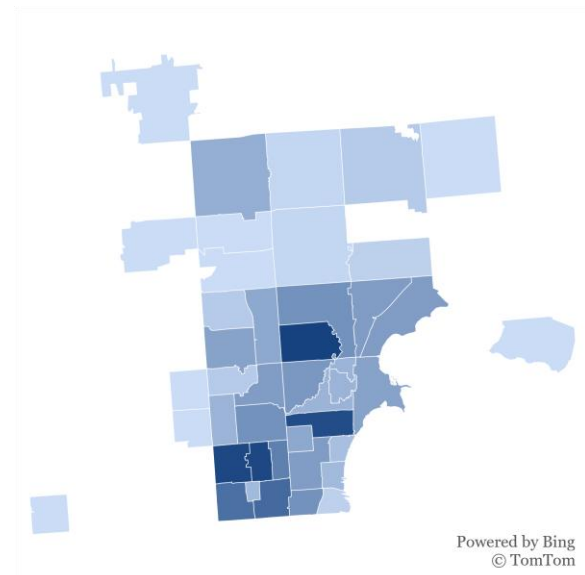
Almost all respondents (98 percent) reported living in Macomb County, with many of those reporting living and working in Macomb County (Exhibit 1). Respondents represented almost every zip code in the county, as well as some non-Macomb County zip codes of individuals who may only work in or visit Macomb County (Exhibit 2).

EXHIBIT 1. Survey Respondents' Connection to Macomb County



Source: MCA Community Needs Assessment Community Survey 2023

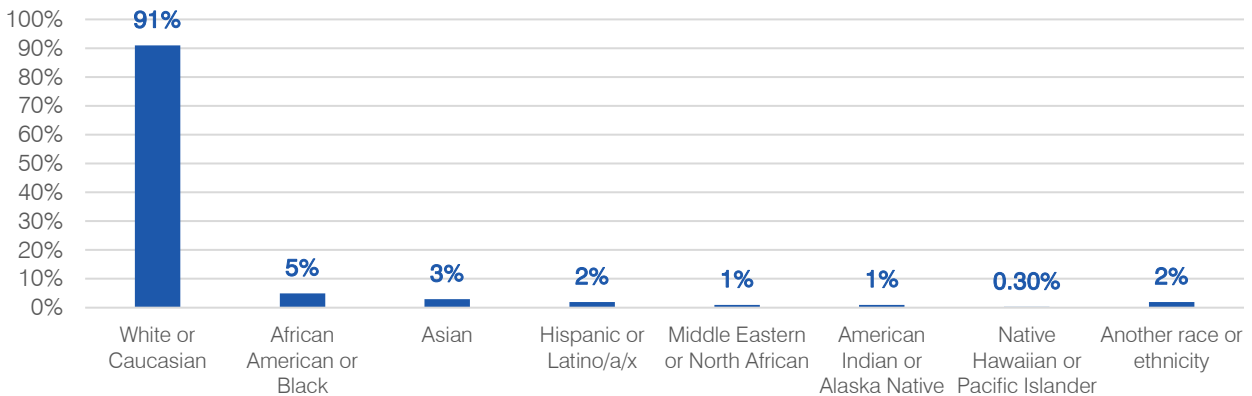
EXHIBIT 2. Survey Respondents' Zip Code



Source: MCA Community Needs Assessment Community Survey 2023

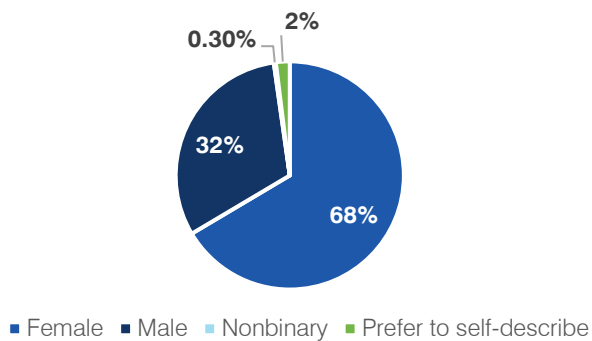
Survey respondents skewed white or Caucasian and female compared to the general Macomb County population (Exhibits 3 and 4).

EXHIBIT 3. Survey Respondents' Race and Ethnicity



N = 405
Source: MCA Community Needs Assessment Community Survey 2023

EXHIBIT 4. Survey Respondents' Gender



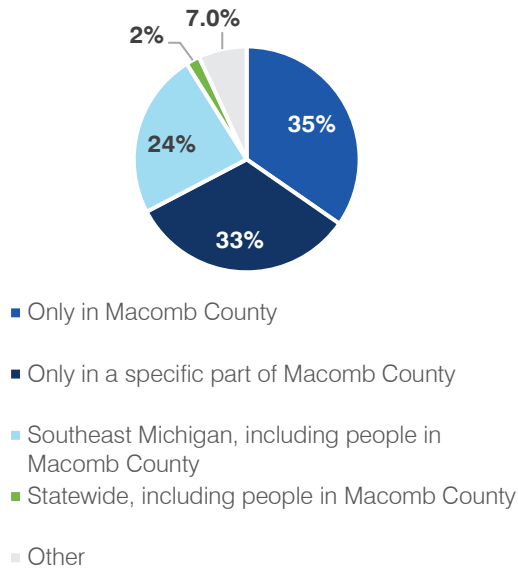
N = 390
Source: MCA Community Needs Assessment Community Survey 2023

Provider Survey

Macomb County community service providers were asked to complete a survey to help MCA gather information to help them better understand the current provider landscape in Macomb County. The survey was completed by 58 providers representing 51 organizations, among them were many food pantries and churches. The survey was primarily distributed through direct outreach to MCA's network of partner organizations.

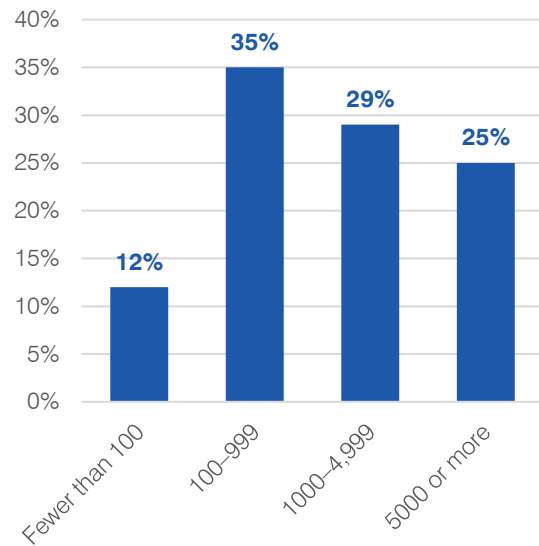
About two-thirds of providers that responded serve only Macomb County or specific parts of the county. Other providers reported that they serve Southeast Michigan or statewide, including people in Macomb County (Exhibit 5). Survey respondents provided services to a range of customers, with most providers serving at least 100 customers a year, and some serving over 5,000 customers every year (Exhibit 6).

EXHIBIT 5. Service Area of Provider Respondents



N = 55
Source: MCA Community Needs Assessment Provider Survey 2023

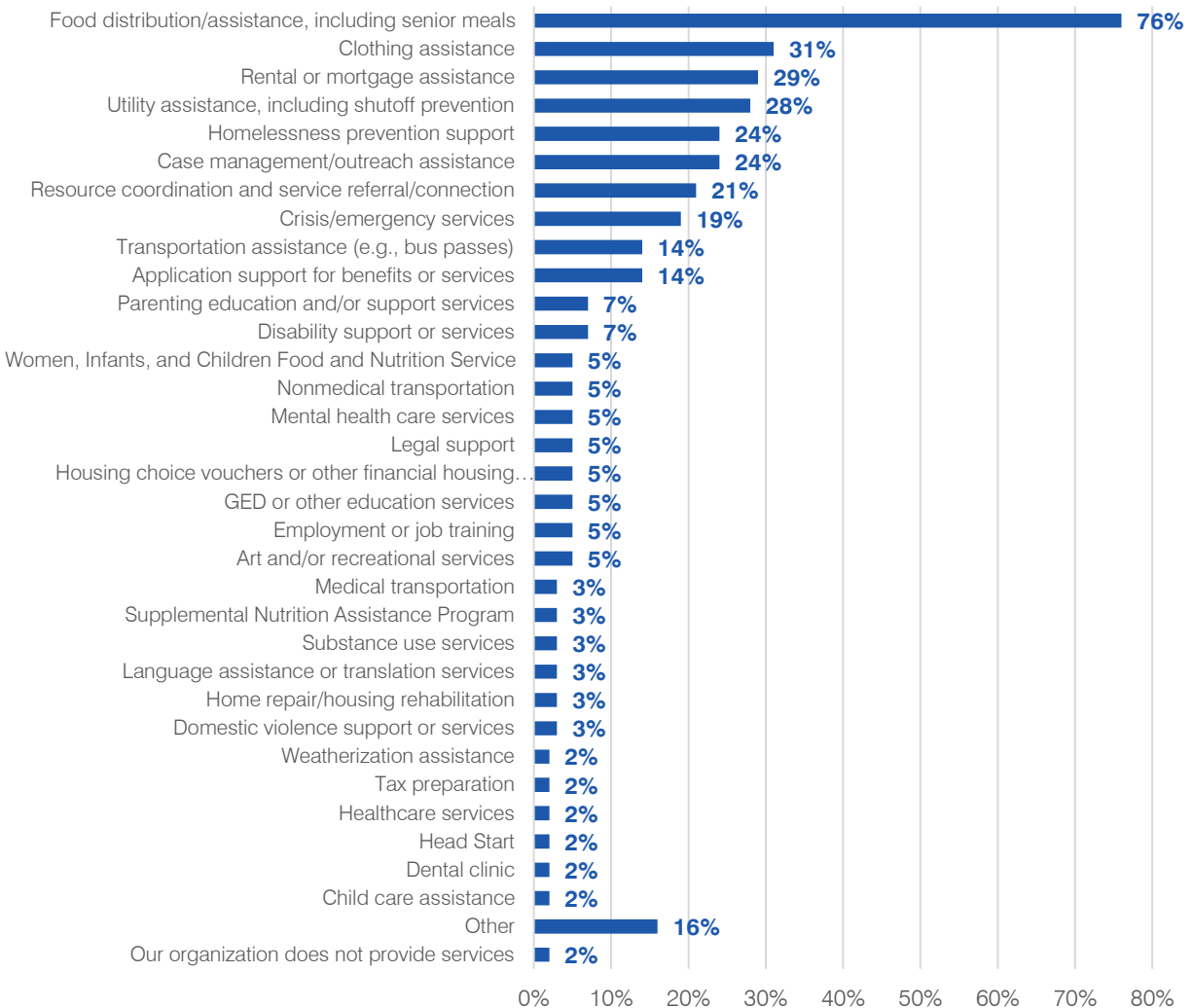
EXHIBIT 6. Number of People Served by Responding Providers



N = 58
Source: MCA Community Needs Assessment Provider Survey 2023

Finally, the top six services provided by survey respondents' organizations were food assistance and distribution, clothing assistance, rental or mortgage assistance, utility assistance, homelessness prevention, and case management and outreach (Exhibit 7). The data may not reflect the top six services actually provided to Macomb County residents, as not all provider organizations responded, or the large proportion of religious-affiliated organizations could overrepresent the number of food distribution services and underrepresent other services, such as healthcare.

EXHIBIT 7. Types of Services Provided by Respondents



N = 58

Source: MCA Community Needs Assessment Provider Survey 2023

Community Forums

MCA and PSC co-facilitated three community forums to gather additional input from community members and service providers. Two in-person community forums were held on March 15, 2023, at the Thompson Center and the VerKuilen Center at 2:00 PM and 5:00 PM, respectively. An additional session was held virtually via Zoom on March 21, 2023, at 5:00 PM. Participants were eligible to win a raffle for a \$25 gas card or \$25 Visa gift card for their attendance. Five to ten people attended each in-person forum. One service provider attended the virtual forum.

PSC presented an overview of demographic statistics in Macomb County and prompted discussion on the barriers faced by Macomb County community members. Insights provided during the community forums have been integrated throughout this assessment.

Community Profile

Who Lives in Macomb County?

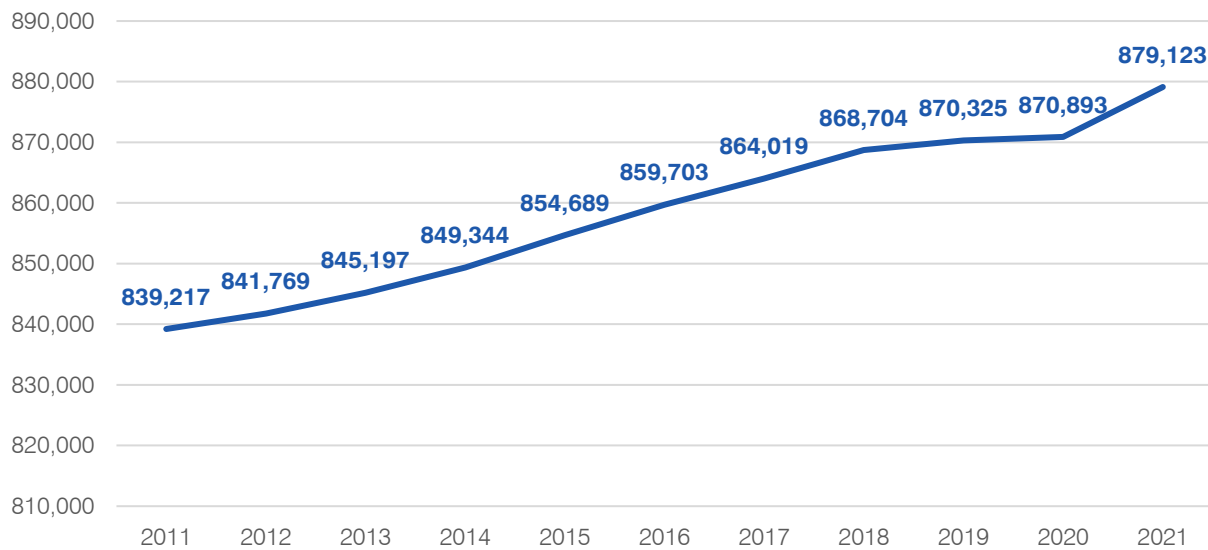


Macomb County encompasses 483 square miles and is located just north of Detroit. Adjacent counties include Wayne (to the south), Oakland (to the west), Lapeer (to the northwest), and St. Clair (to the northeast). The county is home to 27 cities, towns, and townships that, together, offer over 17,000 acres of parks, recreation, and open space. Macomb County has 32 miles of Lake St. Clair shoreline, 81 miles of the Clinton River, and two international border crossings with Canada (MCA 2023).

Population

Macomb County is Michigan’s third most populous county and was home to approximately 879,123 residents in 2021. The county has grown by nearly 5 percent from 2011 to 2021, following an almost 70-year population growth trend (Exhibit 8).

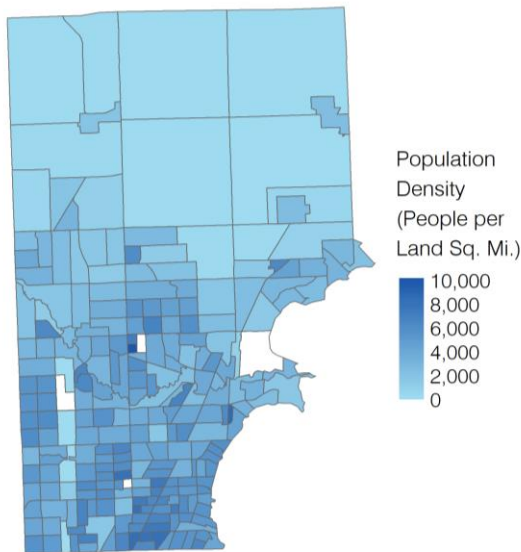
EXHIBIT 8. Population Growth in Macomb County from 2011–2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021a

Macomb County’s northern communities are rich with history and agricultural roots, while the central and southern communities are home to more suburban and urban neighborhoods. The majority of the county’s residents live in the central and southern communities (Exhibit 9).

EXHIBIT 9. Population Density by Census Tract, 2021

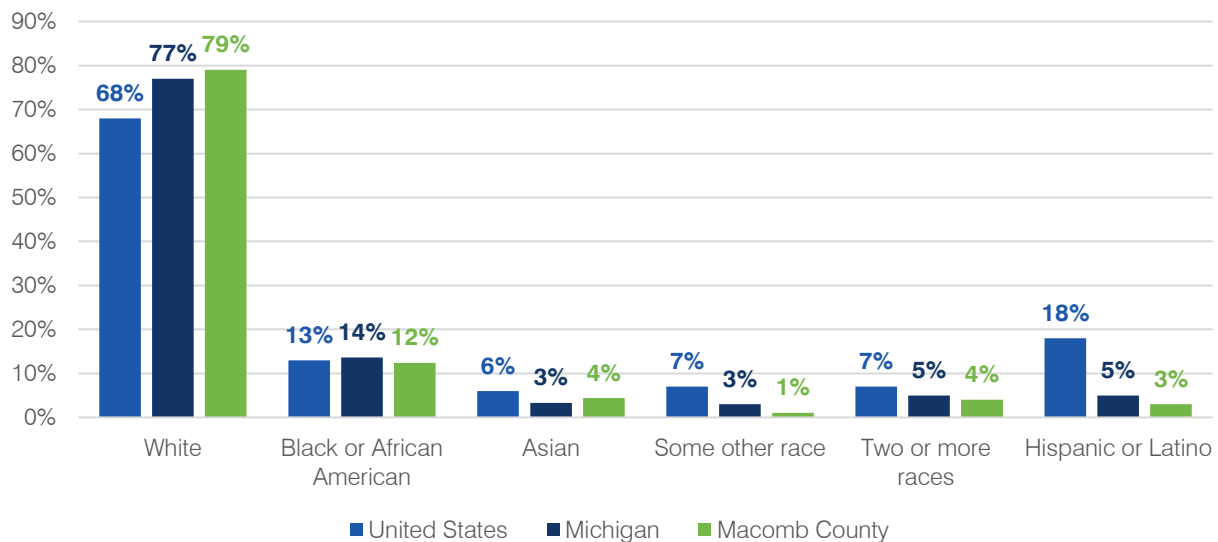


Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021a

Race and Ethnicity

Macomb County’s population has a higher percentage of white residents (79 percent) than Michigan and the United States (77 and 68 percent, respectively). The percentage of residents who are Black or African American in Macomb County (12 percent) is slightly lower than that of Michigan and the United States (14 and 13 percent, respectively). Generally, Macomb County has fewer residents of two or more races, who are Hispanic or Latino, or those who are some other race. However, the county is home to a slightly larger percentage of people who are Asian (4 percent) than in the state (3 percent) (Exhibit 10). Of note, the U.S. Census Bureau data understates the county’s diversity because Middle Eastern immigrants are classified as white. Some estimate the Middle Eastern population to be as high as 80,000 people, which would represent approximately 9 percent of Macomb County (Cook 2022).

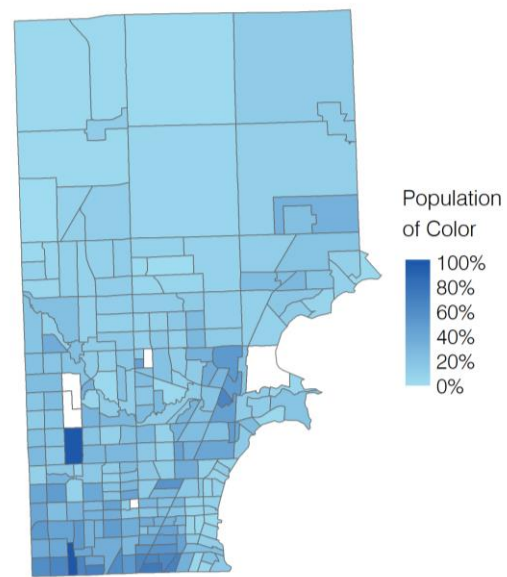
EXHIBIT 10. Race and Ethnicity by Geographic Area, 2021



Notes: Less than 1 percent of the population in all locations are American Indian and Alaska Natives or Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders and are included in “some other race” on the chart; bar heights may vary for equivalent values due to rounding; percentages total more than 100 percent because race and ethnicity are combined in the chart.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021b

While in general, Macomb County has a lower proportion of racial and ethnic minority individuals than Michigan; there are locations within Macomb County where nonwhite individuals make up more than half of the population. Most of these racially diverse locations are concentrated in Macomb’s central and southern regions that include Sterling Heights, Warren, Center Line, Mount Clemens, and Eastpointe (Exhibit 11).

EXHIBIT 11. Racial Minority Status by Census Tract, 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021b

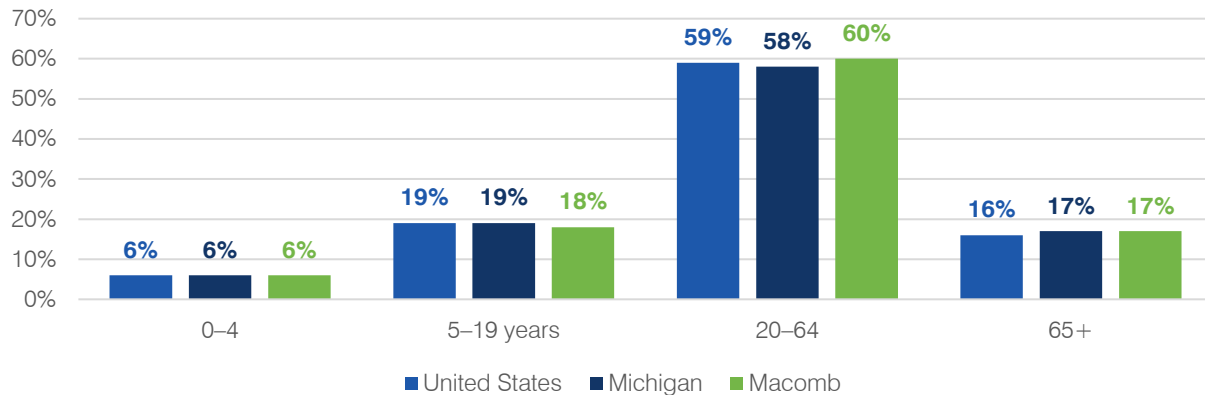
Sex

The distribution of male and female residents in Macomb County closely mirrors that of Michigan and the United States, with 51 percent female and 49 percent male (U.S. Census Bureau 2021c).

Age

Macomb County’s population is slightly older than those of Michigan and the United States, with 77 percent of its population being over the age of 20, compared to 75 percent. The majority (60 percent) of Macomb County residents are between the ages of 20 and 64 years old. Six percent of the county’s residents are between zero and four years old, 18 percent are five to 19 years old, and 17 percent are 65 and older (Exhibit 12).

EXHIBIT 12. Age by Geographic Area, 2021



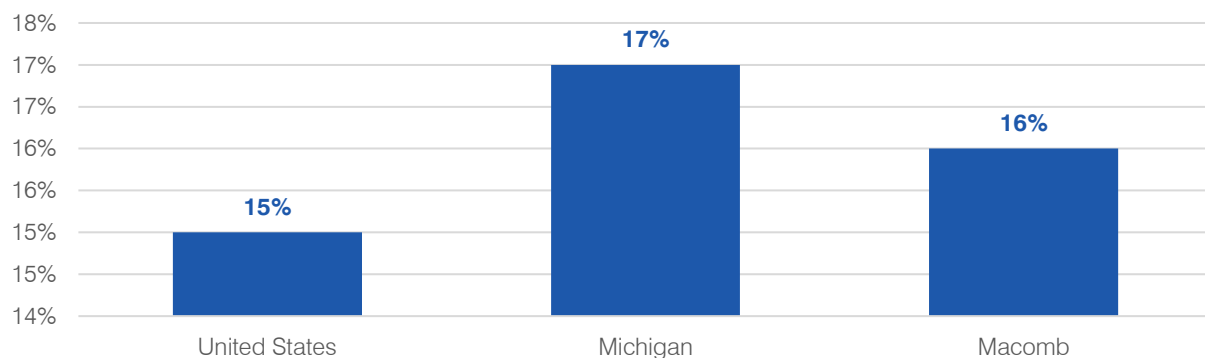
United States N = 331,893,745; Michigan N = 10,062,512; Macomb County N = 879,123
Notes: percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021d

Disability Status

Adults with Disabilities

An estimated 16 percent of adults ages 18 and older in Macomb County have a disability, compared to 17 percent of all Michigan adults, and 15 percent of adults in the United States (Exhibit 13).

EXHIBIT 13. Adults with Disabilities by Geographic Area, 2021

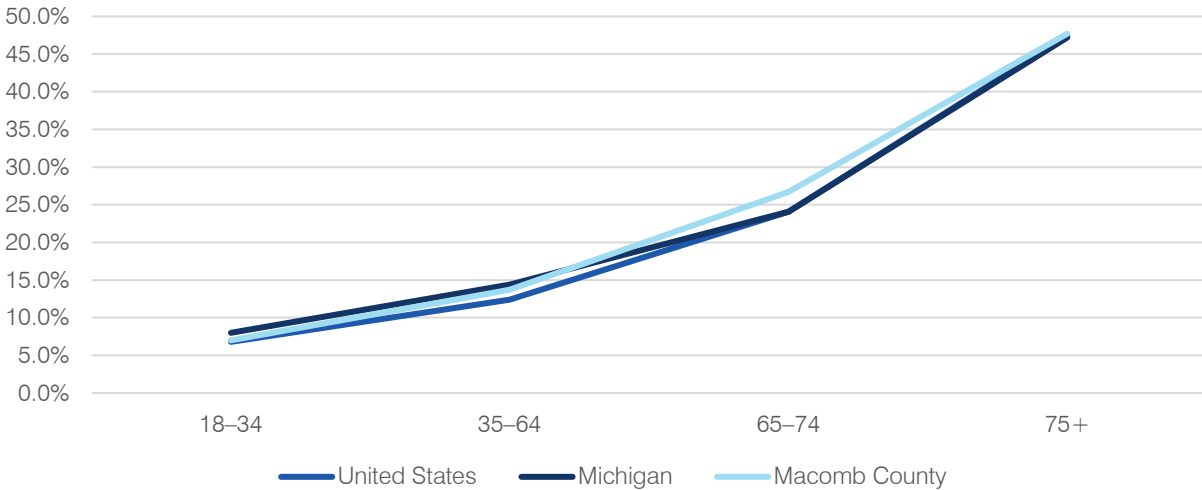


Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021e

When broken down by age group, the rate of disability increases as age increases (Exhibit 14). Across disability types, adults in Macomb County ages 18 to 64 have a higher rate of cognitive difficulties (5 percent) than other types of disabilities, adults ages 35 to 64 and those ages 65 to 74 have a higher rate of ambulatory difficulties (8 percent and 16 percent, respectively) than other types of disabilities, and adults

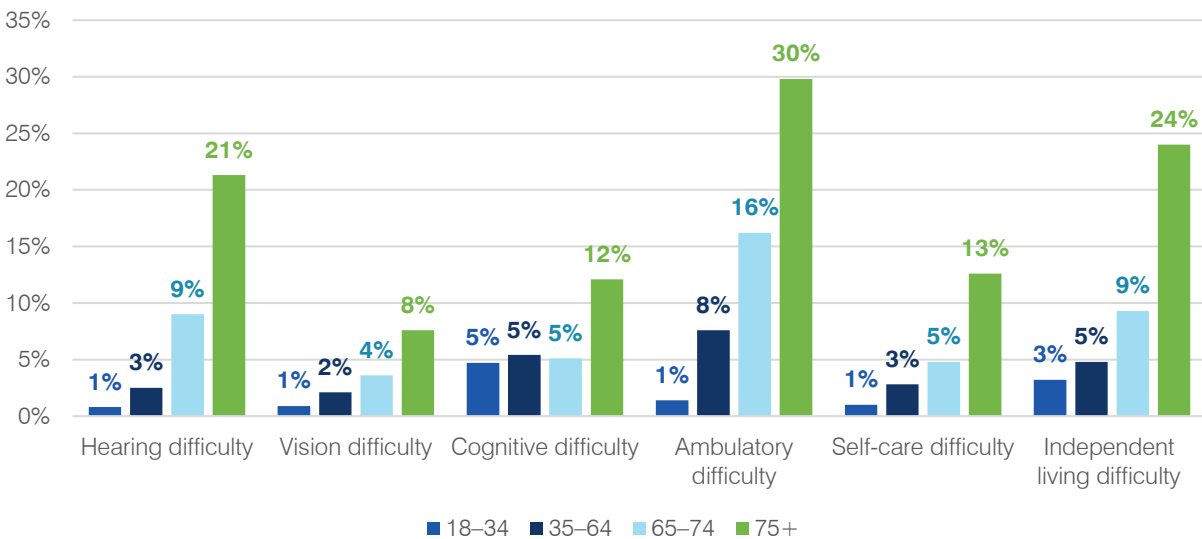
ages 75 and older have higher rates of independent-living difficulties than other types of disabilities (Exhibit 15).

EXHIBIT 14. Disability Status by Age, 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021e

EXHIBIT 15. Adults with a Disability, Disability Type, and Age in Macomb County, 2021



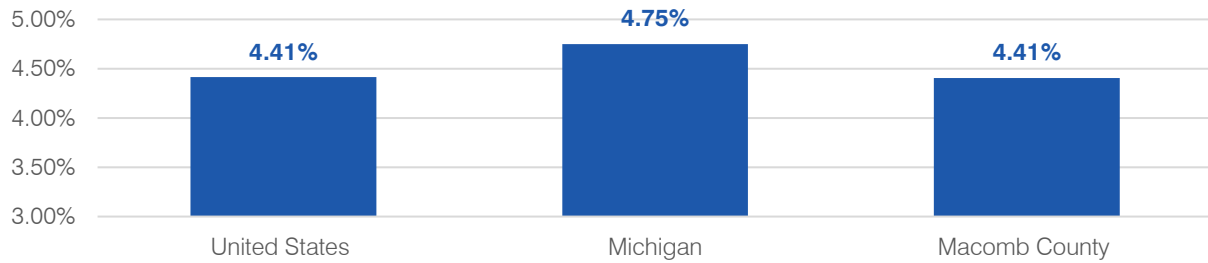
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021e

Children with Disabilities

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, just over 4 percent of Macomb County children ages birth to 17 have a disability qualified as a hearing, vision, cognitive, ambulatory, or self-care difficulty. This is slightly

lower than the Michigan average, but closely mirrors the percentage of children in United States at large (Exhibit 16).

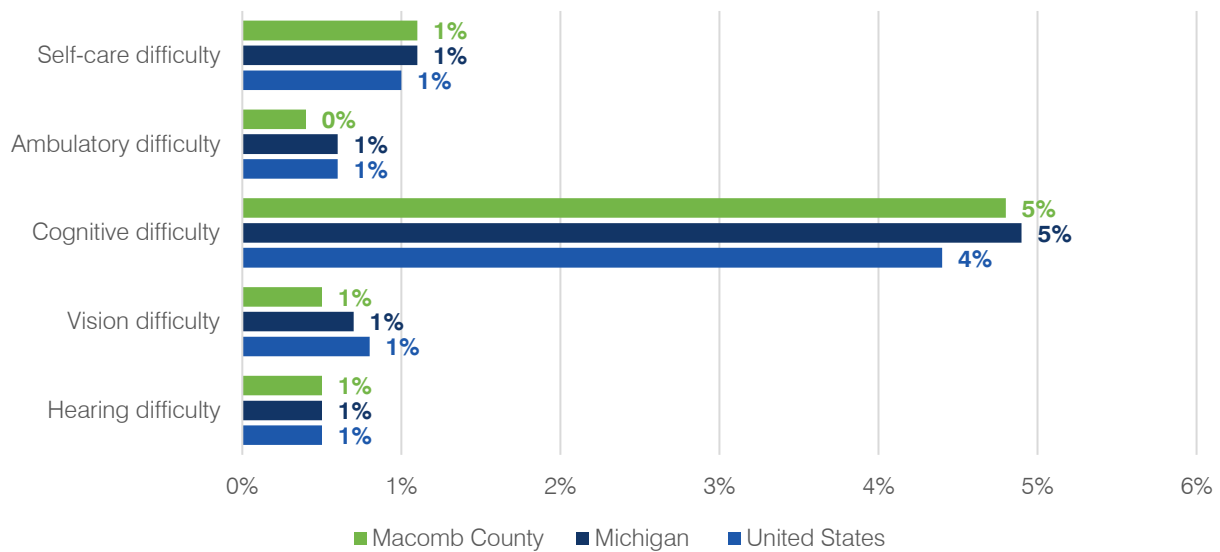
EXHIBIT 16. Children with Disabilities by Geographic Area, 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021e

The most prevalent disability type among children ages birth to 17 reported by the U.S. Census Bureau is cognitive difficulty (Exhibit 17).

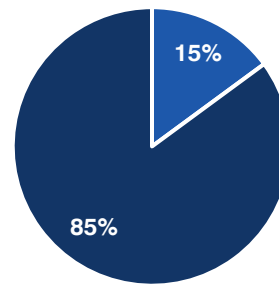
EXHIBIT 17. Children, Type of Disabilities by Geographic Area, 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021e

Based on MI School Data, the American Community Survey may underreport the number of children with disabilities. During the 2021–2022 school year, approximately 15 percent of students in the Macomb County Intermediate School District (ISD) were enrolled in special education (Exhibit 18). Of the children enrolled in special education, the most common disability type was a specific learning disability (28 percent) and a speech and language impairment (26 percent) (Exhibit 19).

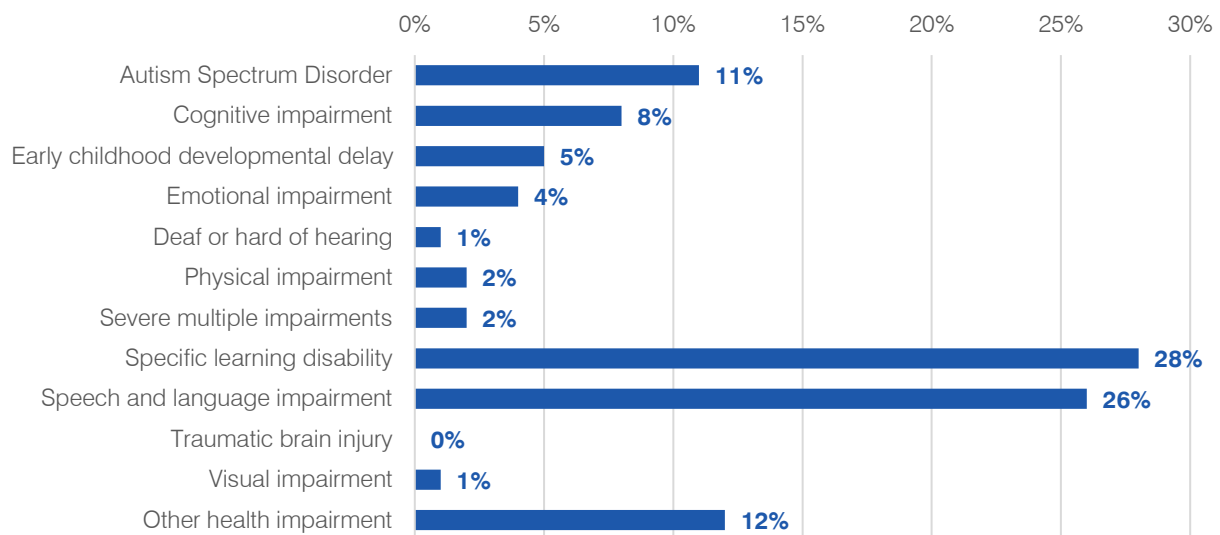
EXHIBIT 18. Percentage of Children Enrolled in Special Education in Macomb County ISD, 2021–2022 School Year



- Enrolled in special education
- Not enrolled in special education

N = 123,132
Source: MI School Data 2022a

EXHIBIT 19. Percentage of Children Enrolled in Special Education in Macomb County ISD, 2021–2022 School Year

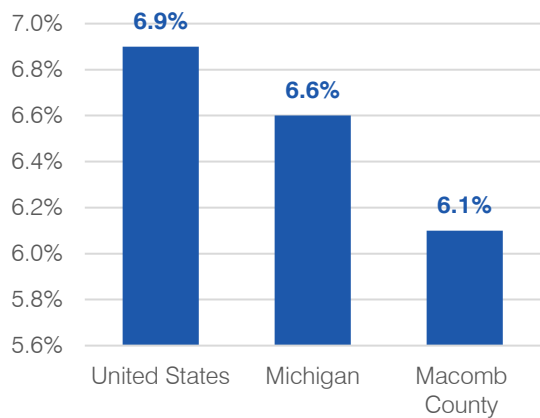


N = 18,288
Source: Source: MI School Data 2022a

Veteran Status

Macomb County has a marginally smaller percentage of veterans in its population (6 percent) compared to the United States and Michigan (7 percent) (Exhibit 20).

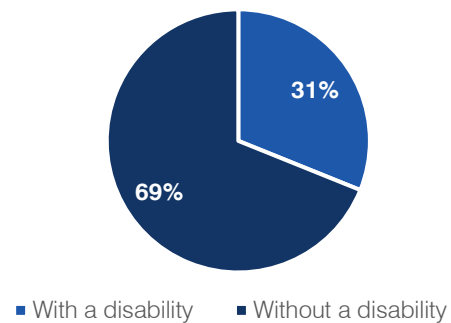
EXHIBIT 20. Percentage of Population by Veteran Status and Location, 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021f

An estimated 31 percent of veterans in Macomb County have a disability (Exhibit 21).

EXHIBIT 21. Veterans in Macomb County with a Disability, 2021



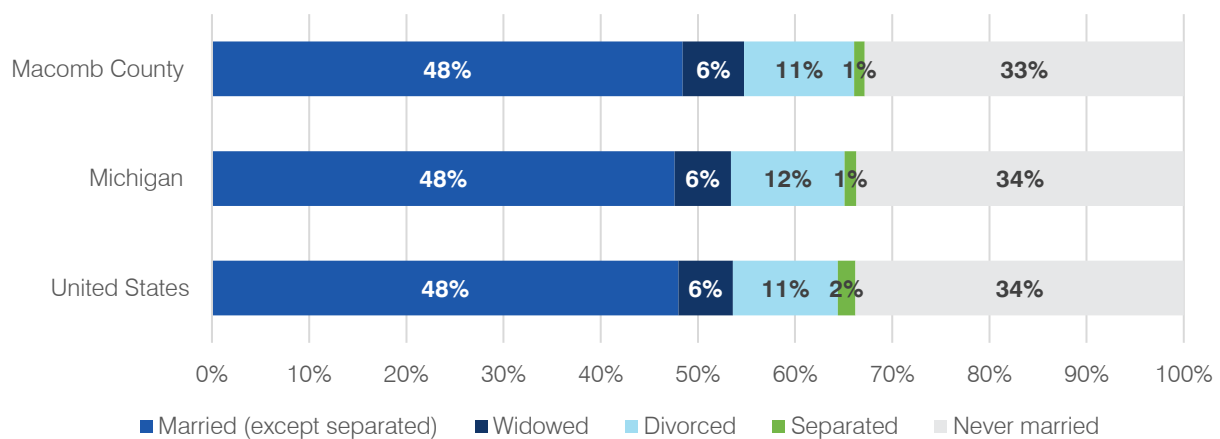
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021f

Family Structures

Marital Status

Almost half of the population ages 15 and older in the United States, Michigan, and Macomb County are married (Exhibit 22).

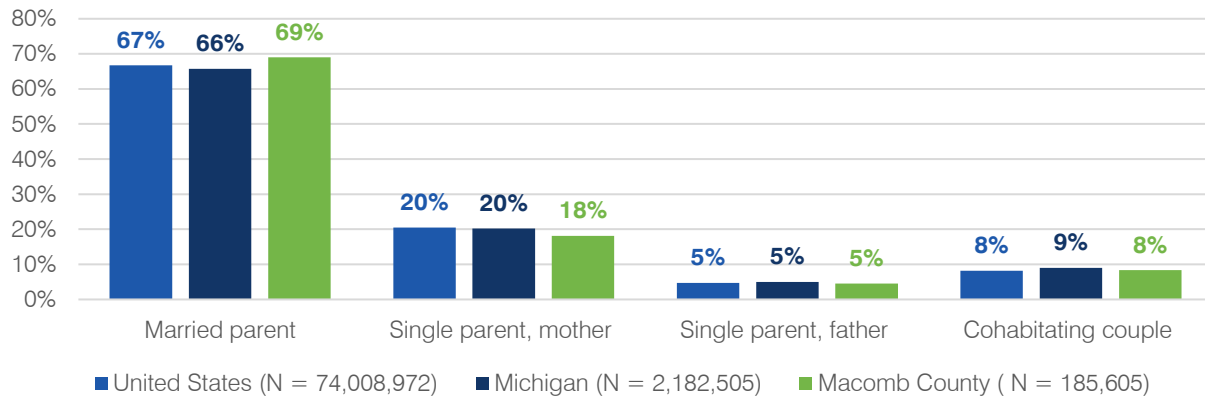
EXHIBIT 22. Households in Macomb County by Marital Status, 2021



United States N = 268,381,105; Michigan N = 8,268,583 ; Macomb County N = 727,661
 Note: Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021g

The majority (69 percent) of children under 18 years old live with parents who are married, which is slightly higher than the percentage of children who live with married parents in the United States and in Michigan. Fewer children in Macomb County live with a single mother (18 percent) than in the United States or Michigan, and 5 percent of children in all three locations live with a single father (Exhibit 23). Of note, the percentage of children who are living with a single father has gradually increased since 2008. The limitations of this data is that it does not include or consider other potential situations such as living with grandparents or other nonparental adults.

EXHIBIT 23. Children Under 18 Years Old by Parental Marital Status, 2021

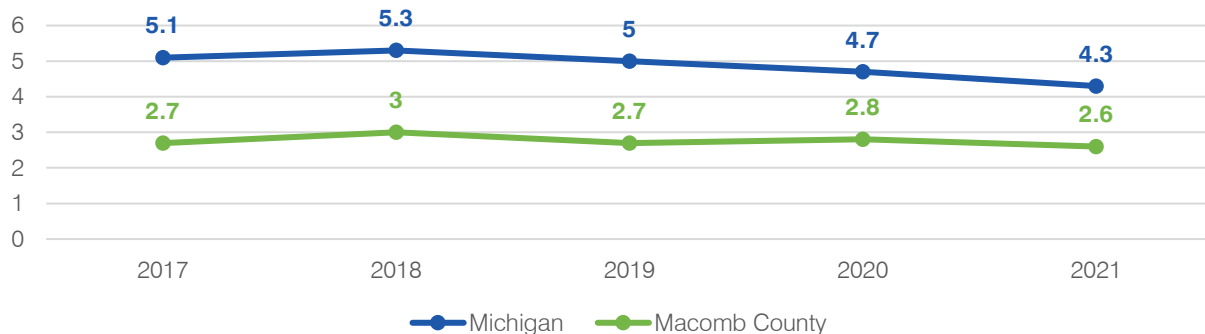


United States N = 74,008,972; Michigan N = 2,182,505; Macomb County N = 185,605
 Note: Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021g

Foster Care

In 2021, the rate at which children ages birth through 17 were placed in out-of-home care due to abuse or neglect in Macomb County was 2.6 per 1,000. This rate has remained consistent since 2017 and is lower than the state average rate of 4.3 per 1,000 (Exhibit 24).

EXHIBIT 24. Rate of Children Ages Birth to 17 Placed in Out-of-home Care Due to Abuse or Neglect, 2017–2021

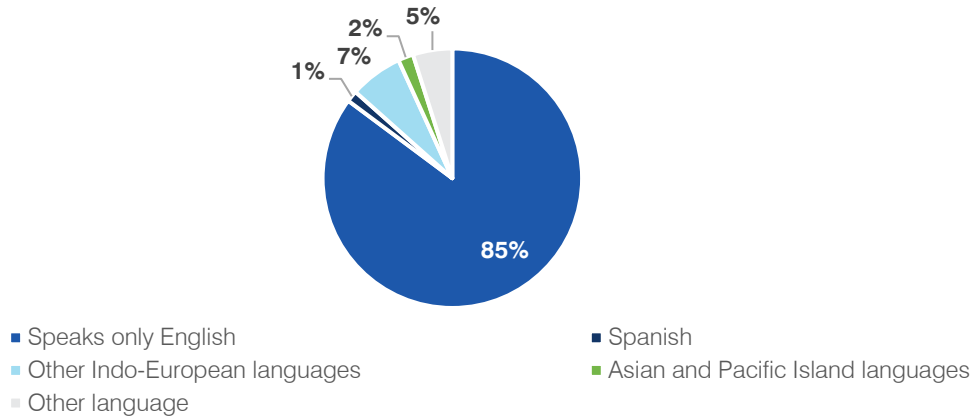


Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation n.d.a.

Primary Language

The majority (85 percent) of Macomb County residents speak English, while 15 percent speak a language other than English as their primary language (Exhibit 25).

EXHIBIT 25. Primary Language Spoken at Home, People over Five Years Old in Macomb County, 2021

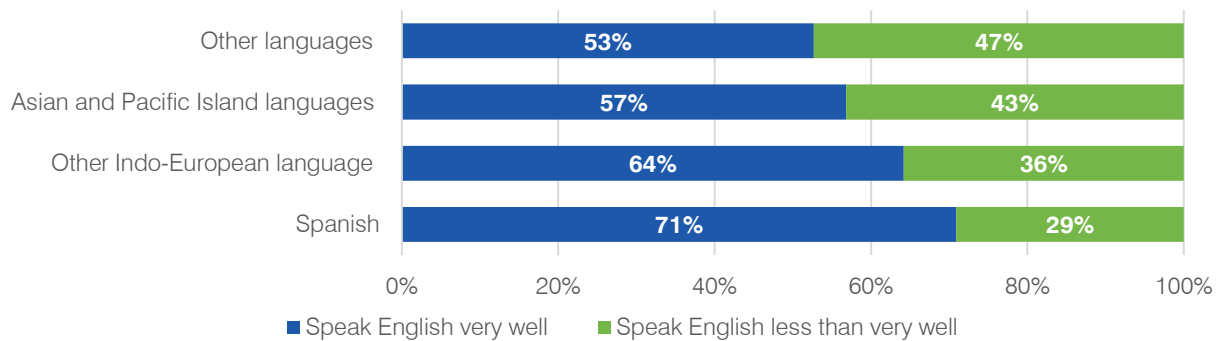


Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021i

Of the residents who speak a primary language other than English, their ability to speak English varies. People who speak languages classified as “other languages” by the U.S. Census Bureau, which include languages such as Navajo and other Native American Languages, Arabic, and many West African languages, have the lowest rates of reporting that they speak English “very well” (53 percent) (Exhibit 26) (2021).

Both of these data points are limited based on how the census collects data about individuals who identify as Arab American or Middle Eastern. Given that estimates range as high as 9.1 percent of Macomb County identifying as Arab American or Middle Eastern, it is likely that a substantial portion of these individuals’ primary language is Arabic, which would be either the second or third most commonly spoken language in Macomb County.

EXHIBIT 26. Ability to Speak English by Primary Language, Macomb County, 2021



N varies by primary language spoken.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021i

Community Profile

What Challenges Are Facing
Macomb County Residents
and Workers?

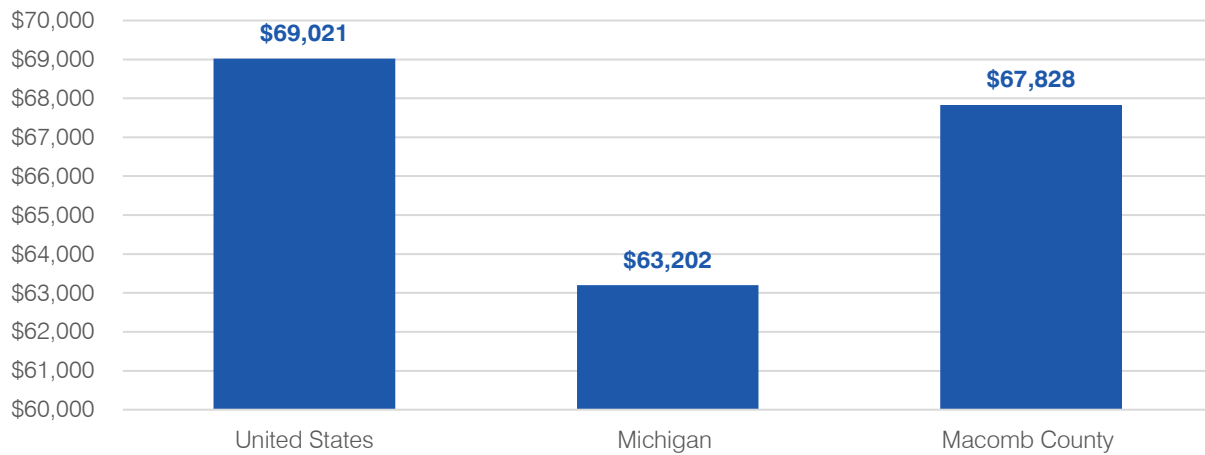


Making Ends Meet

Income

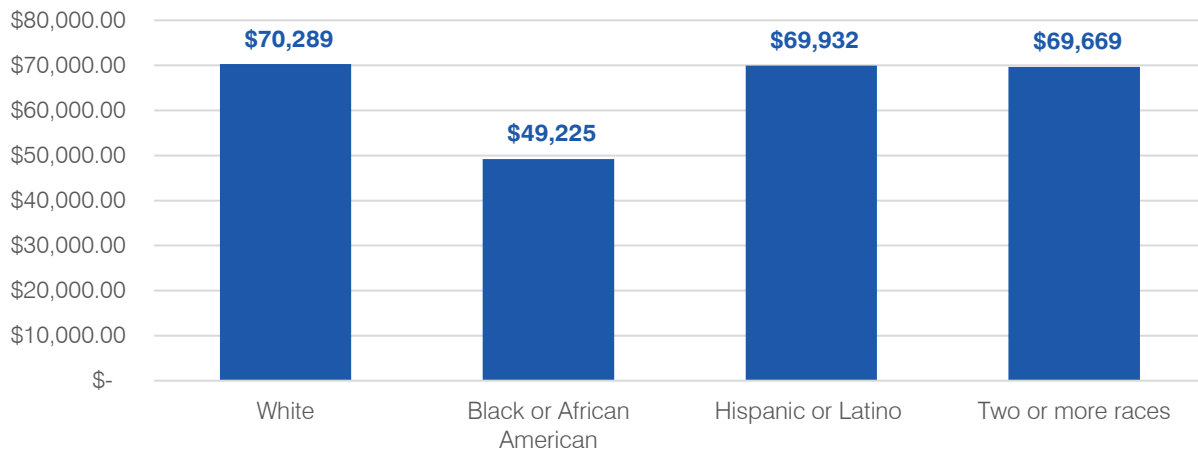
The median household income in Macomb County was \$67,828 in 2021—slightly less than the national average, but 7.3 percent higher than Michigan as a whole (Exhibit 27). While in general Macomb County households had a higher income than others in the state, there are portions of Macomb County where household income is significantly lower than the state average. Households that are Black or African American in Macomb County only make 73 percent of the county median household income, earning \$49,225 (Exhibit 28).

EXHIBIT 27. Median Household Income by Location, 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021j

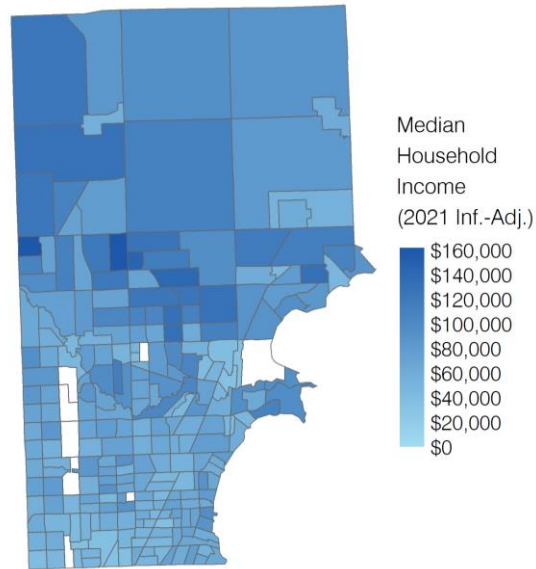
EXHIBIT 28. Median Household Income by Race in Macomb County, 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021j

Further, there is great variation in income based on where in Macomb County one lives. Some census tracts, primarily in northern parts of the county, have an average income of over \$150,000 per year, while several in the southern portion of the county have an average income closer to \$40,000 per year (Exhibit 29).

EXHIBIT 29. Median Household Income by Census Tract, 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021j

Poverty

Each year, the federal government issues federal poverty guidelines that are used to determine eligibility for a number of government assistance programs intended to address poverty, such as Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Exhibit 30 shows the weighted average annual income thresholds for 2021 based on family size.

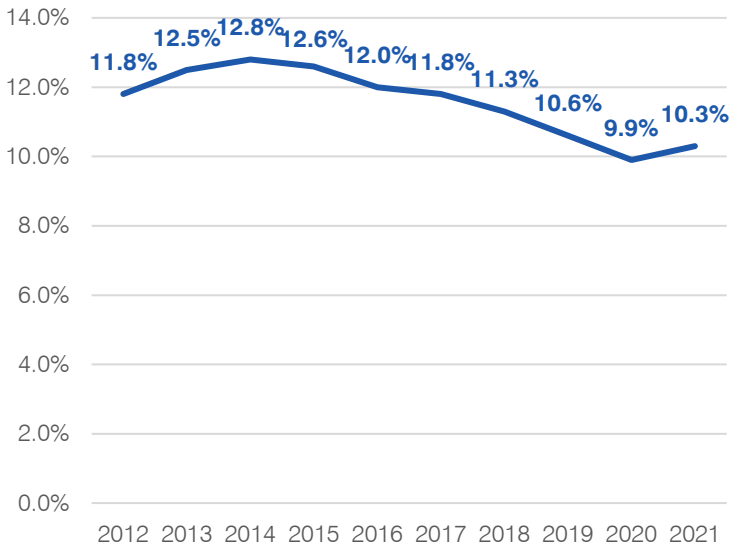
EXHIBIT 30. Federal Poverty Threshold by Family Size, 2021

Household Size	Weighted Average Threshold (Annual)
One person	\$13,788
Two people	\$17,529
Three people	\$21,559
Four people	\$27,740
Five people	\$32,865
Six people	\$37,161
Seven people	\$42,156
Eight people	\$47,093

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023

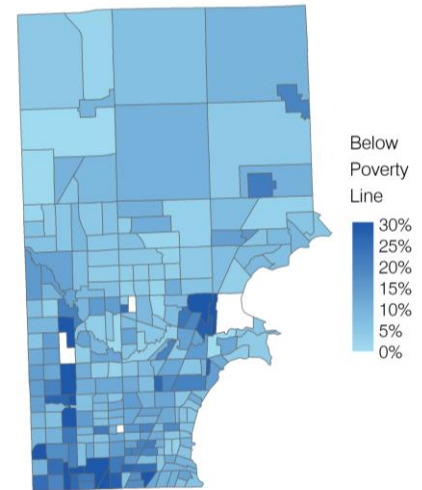
The 2021 American Community Survey Five-year Estimates shows that the poverty rate in Macomb County was 10.2 percent in 2021. This represented minimal change from the 2020 rate, after a steady decline over the previous six years (Exhibit 31). While Macomb County has a lower percentage of people in poverty than the state of Michigan (13.1 percent), there are several parts of the county where rates are above 15 percent, with some census tracts having as much as 30 percent of its population experiencing poverty (Exhibit 32).

EXHIBIT 31. Poverty over Time in Macomb County, 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021

EXHIBIT 32. Poverty by Census Tract, 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021

Poverty is deeply associated with many demographic factors, education, employment, and health. Certain groups, as explored in Exhibit 33, have higher rates of poverty than the county average.

EXHIBIT 33. Percentage of Population Below the Poverty Line by Demographic, Macomb County, 2021

	Population Below the Poverty Line
Gender	
Female	11%
Male	9%
Race and Ethnicity	
Asian	11%
Black or African American	19%
Hispanic or Latino	12%
White	9%
Two or more races	14%
Age	
Under 5 years old	18%

Population Below the Poverty Line

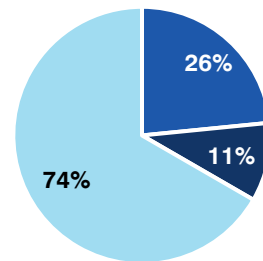
5 to 17 years old	14%
18 to 64 years old	9%
65 years and older	9%
Educational Attainment	
Not a high school graduate	21%
High school graduate or GED	11%
Associate's degree or some college	7%
Bachelor's degree or higher	4%
Disability Status	
With a disability	16%
Veteran Status	
Veteran	7%
Employment Status	
Employed	5%
Unemployed	22%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021l U.S. Census Bureau 2021m, U.S. Census Bureau 2021n

ALICE Data

Another way to understand the scale at which families are struggling to make ends meet is using Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) data. The United Way developed this concept to describe those who may live above the federal poverty guidelines but still struggle to afford the basic costs of living in their community. In addition to the population of Macomb County that lives below the poverty threshold, approximately 26 percent of households that are not living below the poverty threshold are considered ALICE households (Exhibit 34).

EXHIBIT 34. HOUSEHOLDS Below ALICE Threshold in Macomb County, 2021



- Households below ALICE threshold, not below poverty level
- Households below poverty level
- Households above ALICE threshold

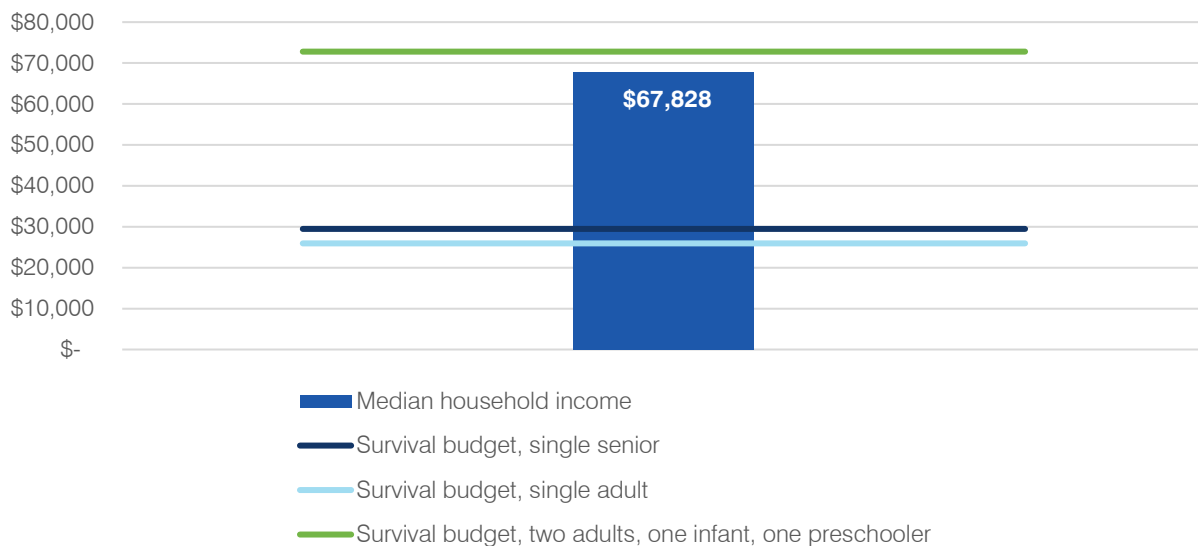
N = 358,011

Notes: Households living below poverty level are considered ALICE.

Source: United for ALICE 2021

As a foundation of the ALICE research, the United Way calculates a survival budget for each state, which includes the costs of basic needs such as housing, food, healthcare, transportation, and child care. Macomb County’s median household income is sufficient to meet the survival budget calculated for single adults and seniors, but not enough to meet the basic needs of a family of four (Exhibit 35).

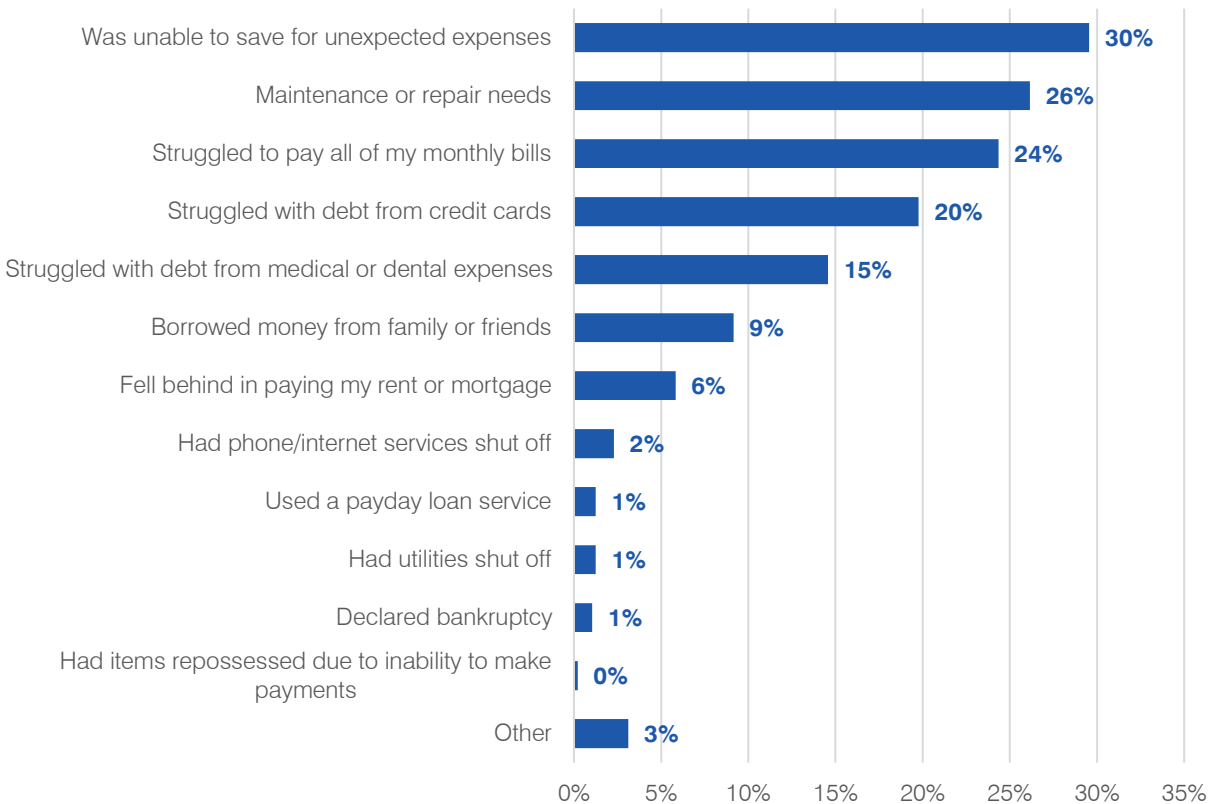
EXHIBIT 35. Median Household Income in Macomb County Compared to ALICE Survival Budgets by Household Type, 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021j, 2021 American Community Survey Five-year Estimates (Median Household Income in the Past 12 Months (in 2021 Inflation Adjusted Dollars), United For ALICE 2021.

Financial Challenges of Survey Takers and Community Forum Attendees

Respondents of the community survey shared similar financial challenges they had faced in the previous 12 months. Almost half (45 percent) of survey respondents reported that they faced financial challenges in the previous 12 months. Thirty percent of respondents said they were unable to save for unexpected expenses, 24 percent said they struggled to pay all monthly bills, and 20 percent struggled with debt from credit cards. (Exhibit 36). Community forum attendees also discussed similar financial challenges and noted that several were magnified by the rate of inflation. Both forum attendees and survey respondents expressed that it is difficult to access services to address financial concerns for reasons such as having too high of an income to qualify.

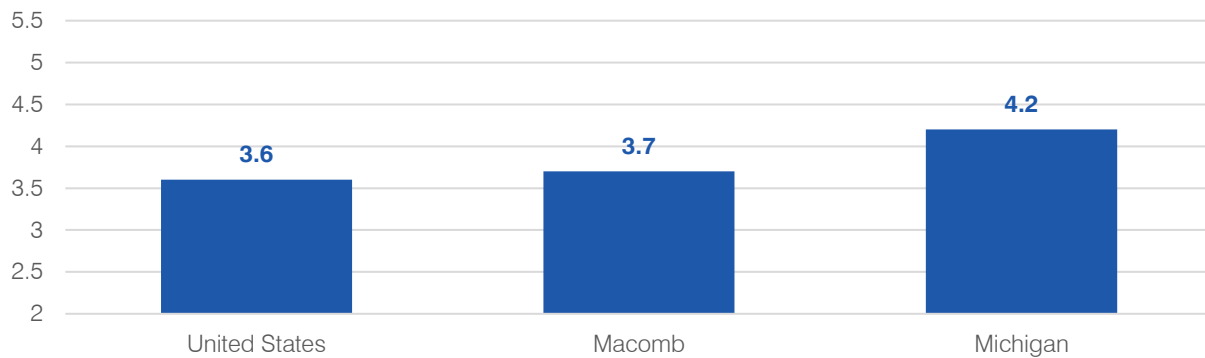
EXHIBIT 36. Reported Financial Challenges of Survey Respondents

N = 486
Source: MCA Community Needs Assessment Community Survey 2023

Employment

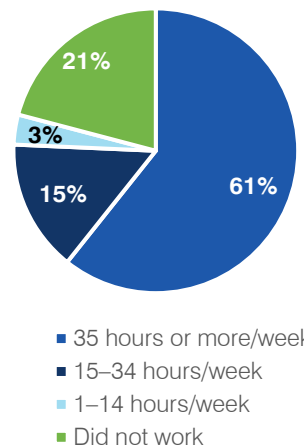
The Macomb County Department of Planning and Economic Development provides that the county boasts a workforce of 442,992 people, which surpasses the record high of 436,000 in 2017 (MCA 2020). Macomb County has blue collar, white collar, and service industry employment opportunities across its many industries. Job growth in the automotive industry, one of Macomb County’s top industries, is projected to grow 15 percent from 2017 to 2027. Similarly, job growth in the agricultural and food processing industry is projected to grow at a similar pace (Macomb County Department of Planning and Economic Development n.d.a., Macomb County Department of Planning and Economic Development n.d.b.)

The average unemployment rate in Macomb County during 2022 was 3.7 percent, which is comparable with the national average but lower than the state of Michigan’s rate (Exhibit 37).

EXHIBIT 37. Unemployment by Geographic Location, 2022

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2022

Approximately 79 percent of Macomb County residents ages 16 to 64 worked for at least one week during 2021. The majority (61 percent) of the residents who were employed typically worked 35 hours per week or more. Fifteen percent typically worked anywhere from 15 to 34 hours per week and 3 percent worked one to 14 hours per week (Exhibit 38).

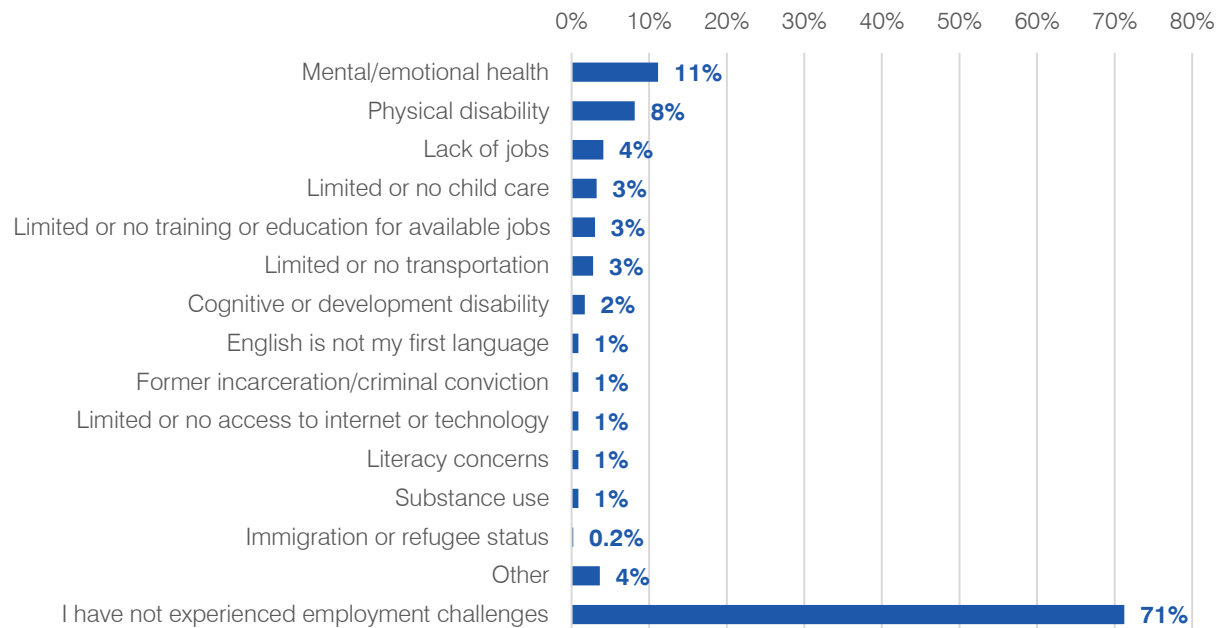
EXHIBIT 38. Typical Work Schedules for the Employed, Population Ages 16 to 64 in Macomb County, 2021

Note: percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021o

Employment Challenges of Survey Takers and Community Forum Attendees

While these employment numbers are generally more favorable than the state average, still 29 percent of survey respondents indicated facing employment challenges in the previous 12 months, the most common of which was mental or emotional health (Exhibit 39). Other noted challenges included physical disability, a lack of jobs, limited or no child care, limited training or education, and limited transportation. Employment challenges did not come up at community forums.

EXHIBIT 39. Employment Challenges Faced by Survey Takers



N = 466

Source: MCA Community Needs Assessment Community Survey 2023

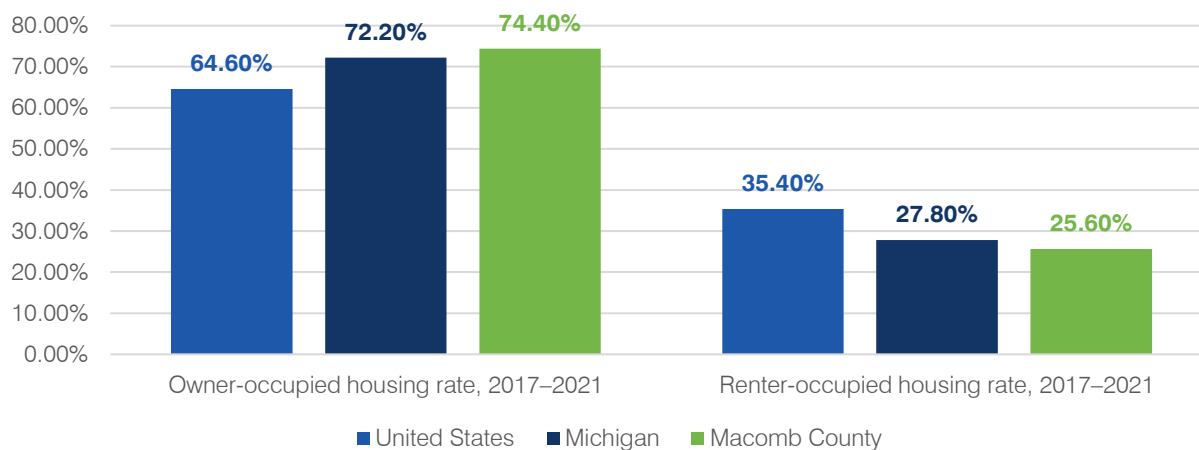
Housing

Accessibility of safe and stable housing can impact health, economic and social outcomes of a community. The United States is facing a housing shortage that more severely affects people with low incomes. The Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity estimates that Michigan’s housing shortage is worse than the national average for renters and owners and is concentrated in Southeast Michigan and West Michigan (n.d.). The U.S. Census Bureau estimated that in 2021 there were 368,224 total housing units in Macomb County, only 4 percent of which were vacant (2021j). Discrepancies in the supply and demand of housing, coupled with the increasing costs of housing and related expenses, can threaten housing stability for community members. Insights on these issues, and others, are described in the following section.

Homeownership

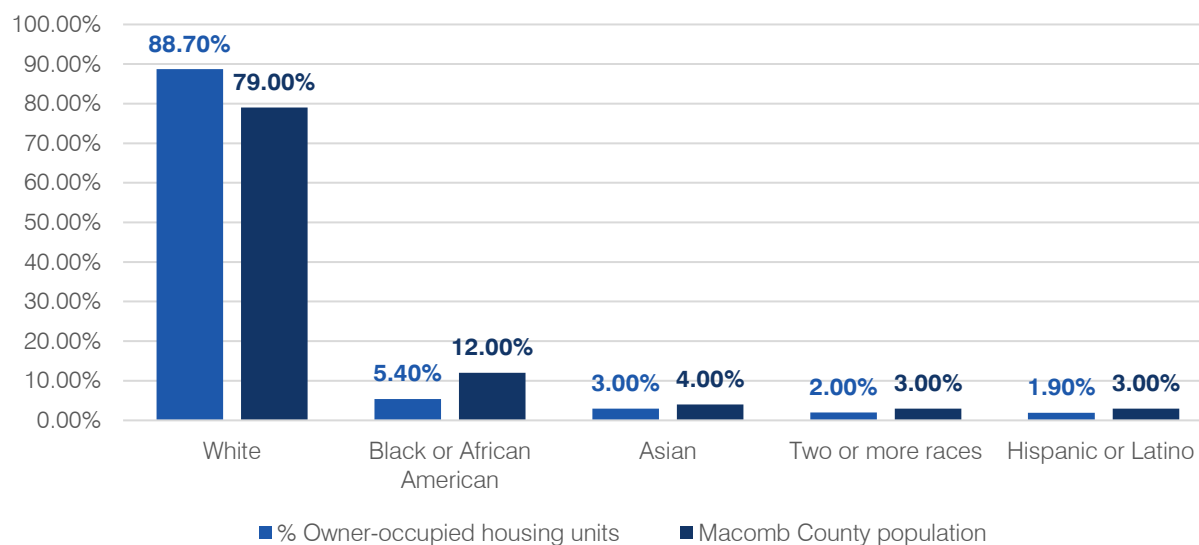
Macomb County has a slightly higher owner-occupied housing rate than the state of Michigan (Exhibit 40). Homes in Macomb County are disproportionately owned by white homeowners, making up 89 percent of homeowners despite only making up 79 percent of the population. Conversely, people who are Black or African American comprise 12 percent of the county’s population, but only 5 percent of homeowners. This trend is seen across other races, too, though there are not as large of differences (Exhibit 41).

EXHIBIT 40. Status Among Occupied Housing Units by Location, 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021j

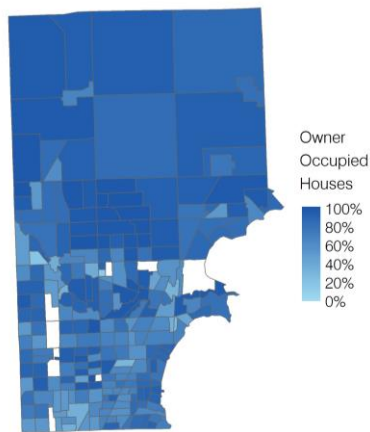
EXHIBIT 41. Homeownership Rates by Race in Macomb County, 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021p

Homeownership rates are highest in the northern portions of the county, including in Romeo, Washington Township, Utica, and Shelby Township, with renters primarily located in Eastpointe, Center Line, and Warren (Exhibit 42).

EXHIBIT 42. Status Among Occupied Housing Units by Census Tract, 2021



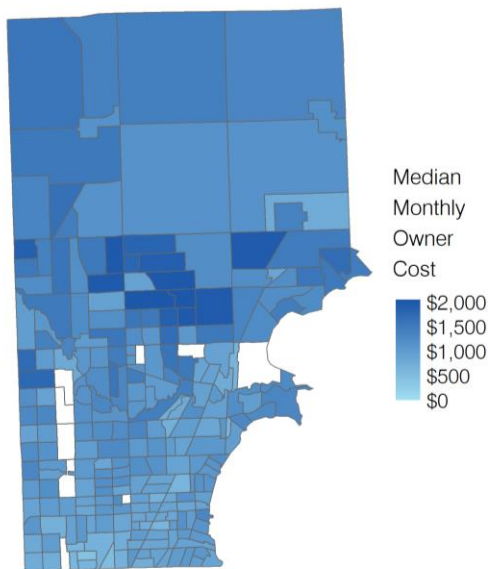
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021p

Housing Cost

Regardless of owner or renter status, many households in Macomb County are impacted by housing costs. In 2021, 27 percent of Macomb County households were considered cost burdened, meaning that they spent 30 percent or more of their income on housing costs (Annie E. Casey Foundation n.d.). The housing cost burden reflects a nationwide lack of affordable housing; the National Low Income Housing Coalition has reported that there is “no state or county where a renter working full-time at minimum wage can afford a two-bedroom apartment” (2023).

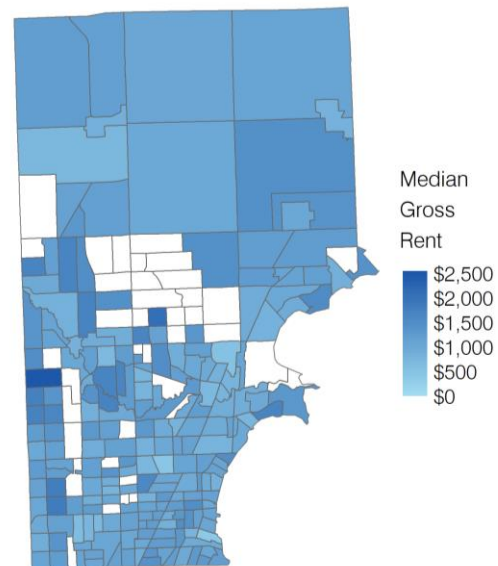
Average housing costs vary greatly throughout the county for both renters and homeowners (Exhibits 43 and 44).

EXHIBIT 43. Median Monthly Owner Costs by Census Tract, 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021q

EXHIBIT 44. Monthly Gross Rent by Census Tract, 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021q

COVID Emergency Rental Assistance

COVID Emergency Rental Assistance (CERA) was funded by the U.S. Department of the Treasury and administered by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) through nonprofit agencies across the state in response to COVID-19 pandemic-related housing instability. CERA began on March 15, 2021, and was provided to renter households that had incomes less than 80 percent of the area median income (AMI), experienced a financial hardship due to COVID-19, and were at risk for housing instability were eligible for rent and utility assistance (MSHDA n.d.). From March 15, 2021, to June 30, 2023, there were:

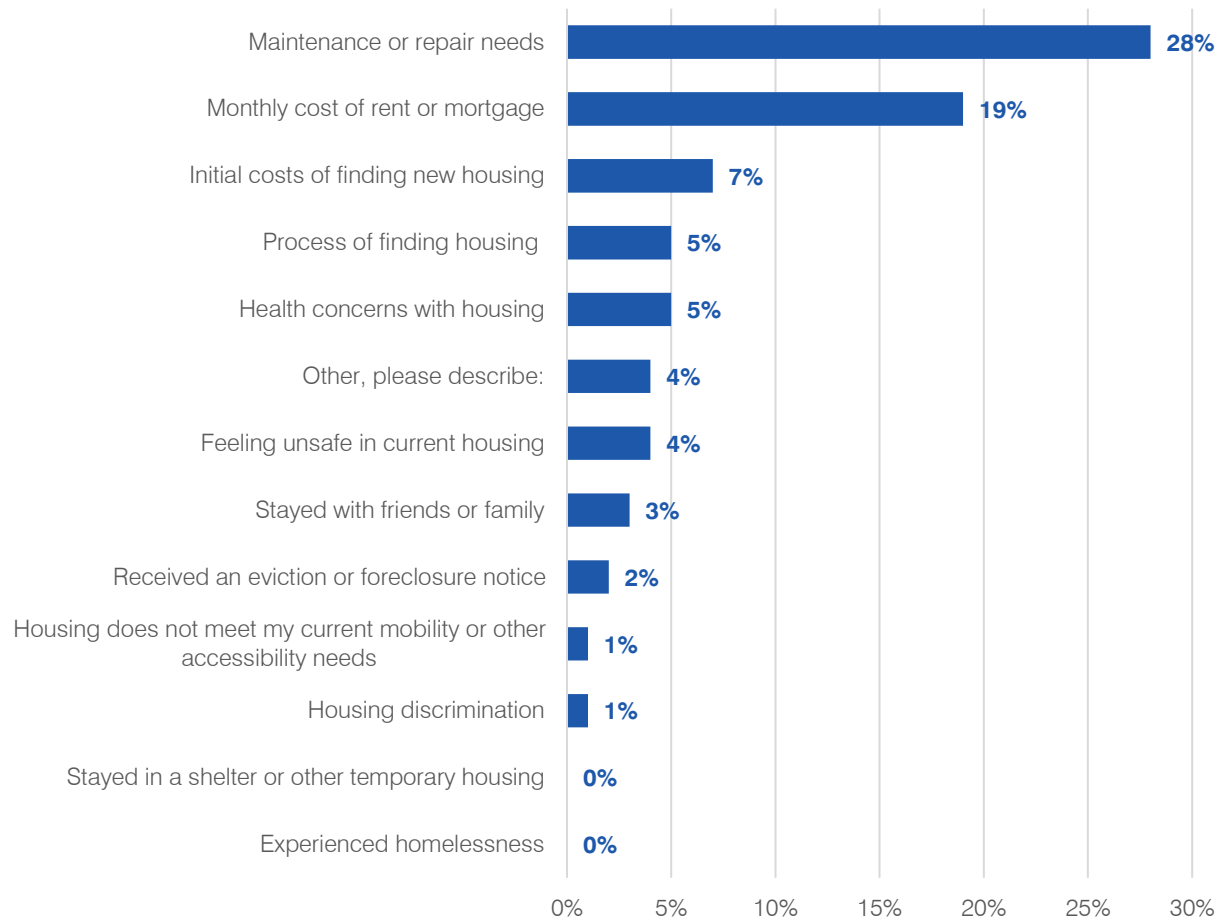
- 22,481 CERA applications filed
- 16,763 people who received assistance
- \$64,990,757 dispersed for rent
- \$4,358 in average assistance received per person

Housing Safety

The U.S. Census Bureau collects data related to inadequate housing conditions. Macomb County generally has fewer units with inadequate conditions than in Michigan and the United States. However, that does not mean that Macomb County residents do not face safety concerns, and more in this area could be explored given the high rates of community survey takers who reported maintenance or repair needs as detailed in the next section.

Housing Challenges of Survey Takers and Community Forum Attendees

Almost half of community survey respondents (48 percent) said they have experienced housing challenges in the last 12 months. The most common reported challenges were maintenance or repair needs (28 percent) and the monthly cost of rent or their mortgage (19 percent). Other commonly cited challenges include the initial cost and process of finding new housing, health concerns with current housing, and feeling unsafe in current housing (Exhibit 45). Forum attendees echoed the challenges related to finding affordable housing that meets their needs.

EXHIBIT 45. Housing Challenges Faced by Survey Takers

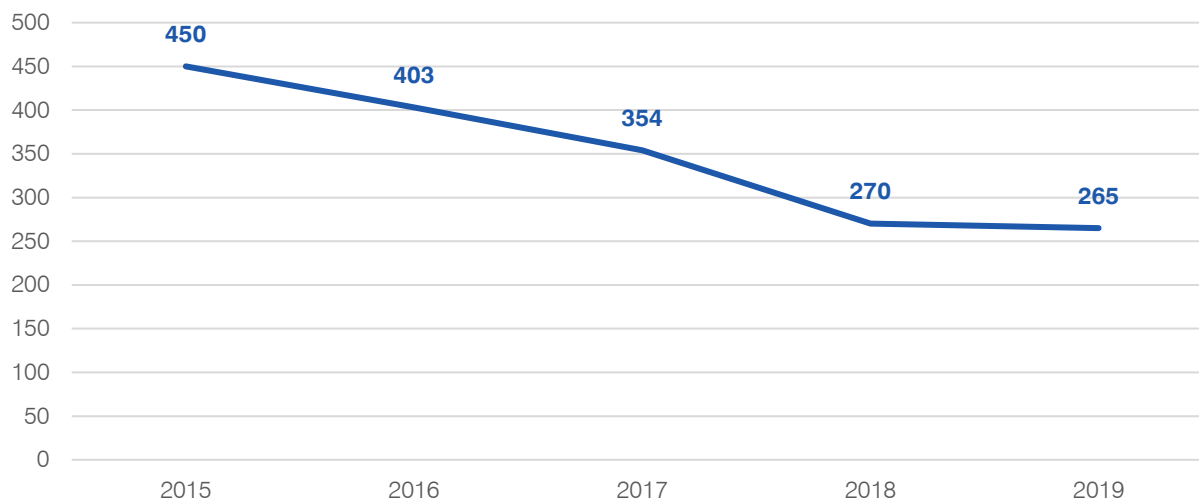
N = 514

Source: MCA Community Needs Assessment Community Survey 2023

Homelessness

The most recently available data shows that the number of people experiencing homelessness on a given night decreased from 2015 to 2019 (Exhibit 46). This data was obtained using the point-in-time (PIT) count. People in the field debate on the usefulness of PIT county data as the best indication of homelessness, so as MCA becomes the convening body of the Continuum of Care, they should discuss which data points are most relevant and need to be prioritized moving forward.

EXHIBIT 46. People Experiencing Homelessness in Macomb County

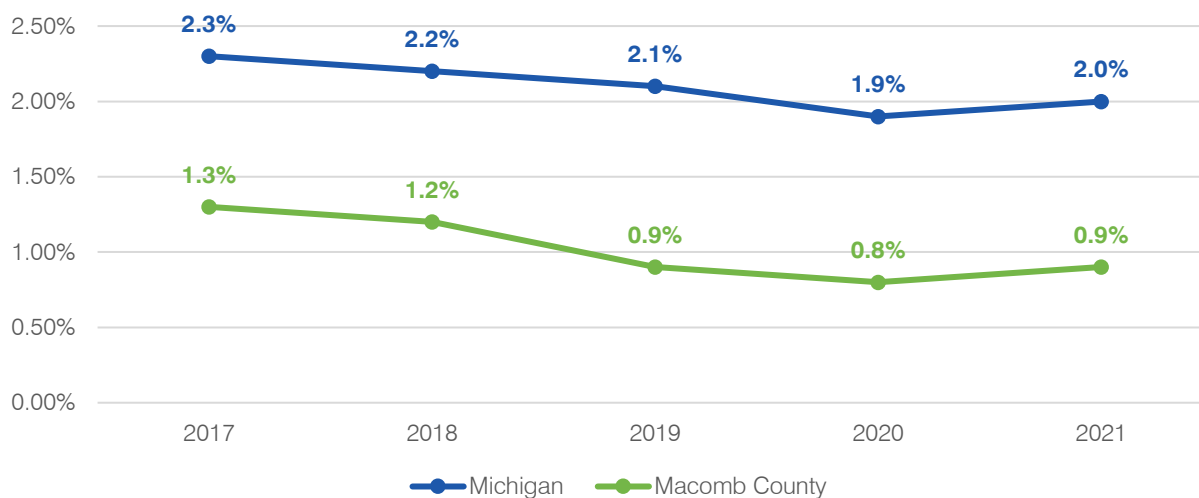


Source: St. Clair Shores, Warren/Macomb County Continuum of Care n.d.

Children Experiencing Homelessness

Housing instability among children can negatively impact a number of outcomes. For example, children who experience homelessness may be vulnerable to sexual exploitation, have worse educational outcomes, or experience chronic homelessness as an adult. The rate at which children in kindergarten through 12th grade experienced homelessness is lower in Macomb County than the state of Michigan and declined from 2017 to 2020 but began to rise marginally again in 2021 (Exhibit 47).

EXHIBIT 47. K–12 Students Experiencing Homelessness by Year



Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation n.d.b.

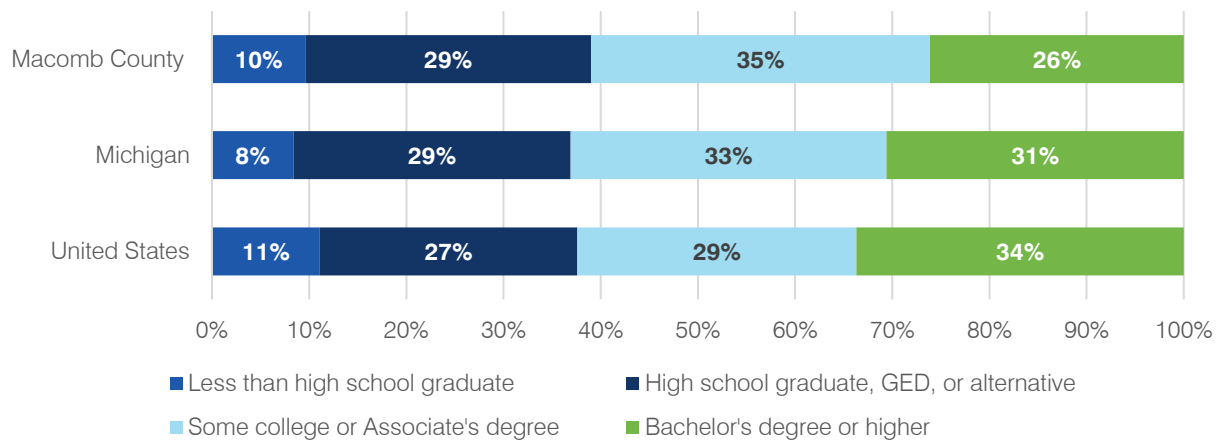
Education

Most of Macomb County’s residents have graduated from high school, and many have achieved higher levels of education. Macomb County has 231 public schools in 21 districts, which provide elementary, middle, and high school education to over 118,000 students (MI School Data 2023). Macomb County is also home to Macomb Community College and Baker College and collaborates with universities across the state.

Educational Attainment

The majority (90 percent) of Macomb County residents have obtained a high school diploma or higher. Ten percent of people in the county have not graduated from high school, compared to 8 percent of people in Michigan and 11 percent of people in the United States (Exhibit 48). As previously shown in Exhibit 34, increasing levels of educational attainment are associated with lower rates of poverty.

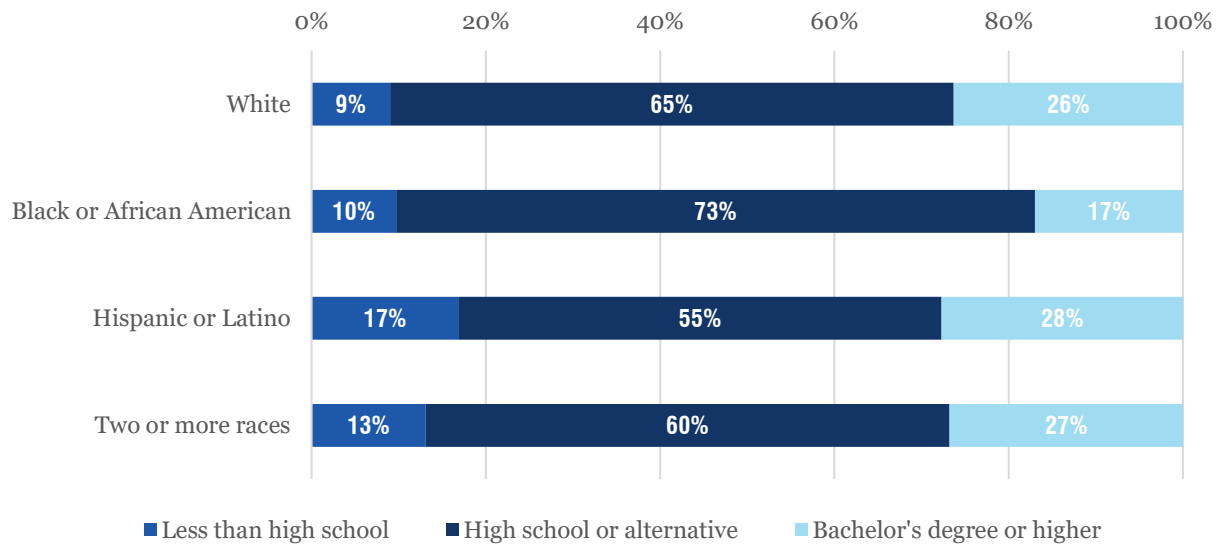
EXHIBIT 48. Educational Attainment by Location



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021r

Across racial and ethnic groups, a higher percentage of people who are Hispanic or Latino did not graduate from high school compared to other groups, followed by people of two or more races, and then people who are Black or African American. A higher percentage of people who are Hispanic or Latino also received at least a bachelor’s degree compared to any other group. Across racial groups, people who are Black or African American had the lowest rate of receiving a bachelor’s degree or higher (Exhibit 49).

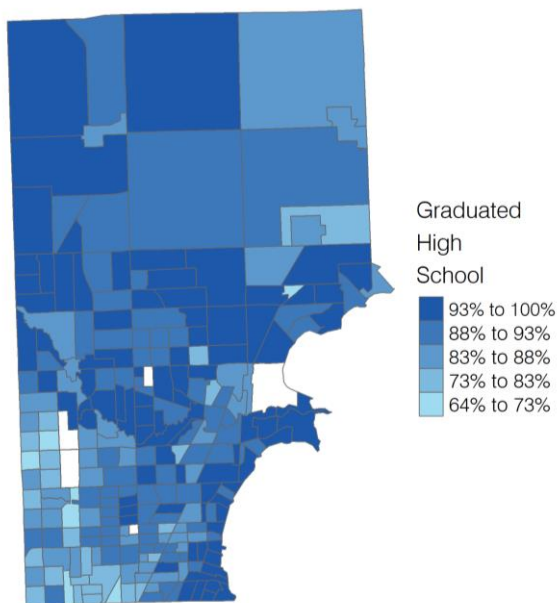
EXHIBIT 49. Educational Attainment by Race



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021r

Across the county, people who did not graduate from high school were most concentrated in the southwestern part of Macomb County (Exhibit 50).

EXHIBIT 50. People Without a High School Diploma by Census Tract, Macomb County, 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021r

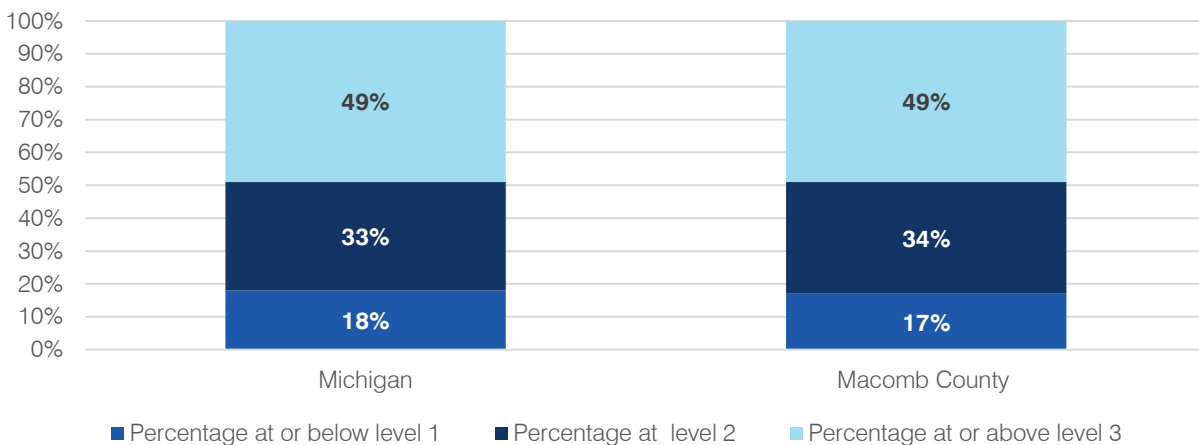
Adult Literacy

The National Center for Education Statistics surveys adults ages 16 to 74 living in noninstitutionalized dwelling units to create the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) map that evaluates the cognitive and workplace skills of adults, including literacy. The PIAAC categorizes adults into three levels of literacy based on the points scored on the assessment. The levels are as follows:

- *Level 1:* “adults at this level can be considered at risk for difficulties using or comprehending print material. Adults at the upper end of this level can read short texts, in print or online, and can understand the meaning well enough to perform simple tasks such as filling out a short form, but drawing inferences or combining multiple sources of text may be too difficult. Adults who are below level 1 may only be able to understand basic vocabulary or find very specific information on a familiar topic. Some adults below level 1 may even struggle to do this and may be functionally illiterate.”
- *Level 2:* “adults at this level can be considered nearing proficiency but still struggle to perform tasks with text-based information. Such adults may be able to read print and digital text, related information within or across a couple documents, compare and contrast, and draw simple inferences. They can navigate in a digital environment to access key information, such as finding two main benefits of one product over another. However, more complex inferencing and evaluation may be too difficult.”
- *Level 3:* “adults at these levels can be considered proficient at working with information and ideas in texts. They have a range of higher literacy skills from the ability to understand, interpret, and synthesize information across multiple, complex texts to evaluate the reliability of sources and infer sophisticated meanings and complex ideas from written sources” (National Center for Education Statistics n.d.)

An estimated 17 percent of Macomb County residents and 18 percent of Michigan residents are considered at or below level 1, 34 percent of Macomb County residents and 33 percent of Michigan residents at a level 2, and nearly half of residents in the county and state are at or above a level 3 of literacy (Exhibit 51).

EXHIBIT 51. Adult Literacy by Location

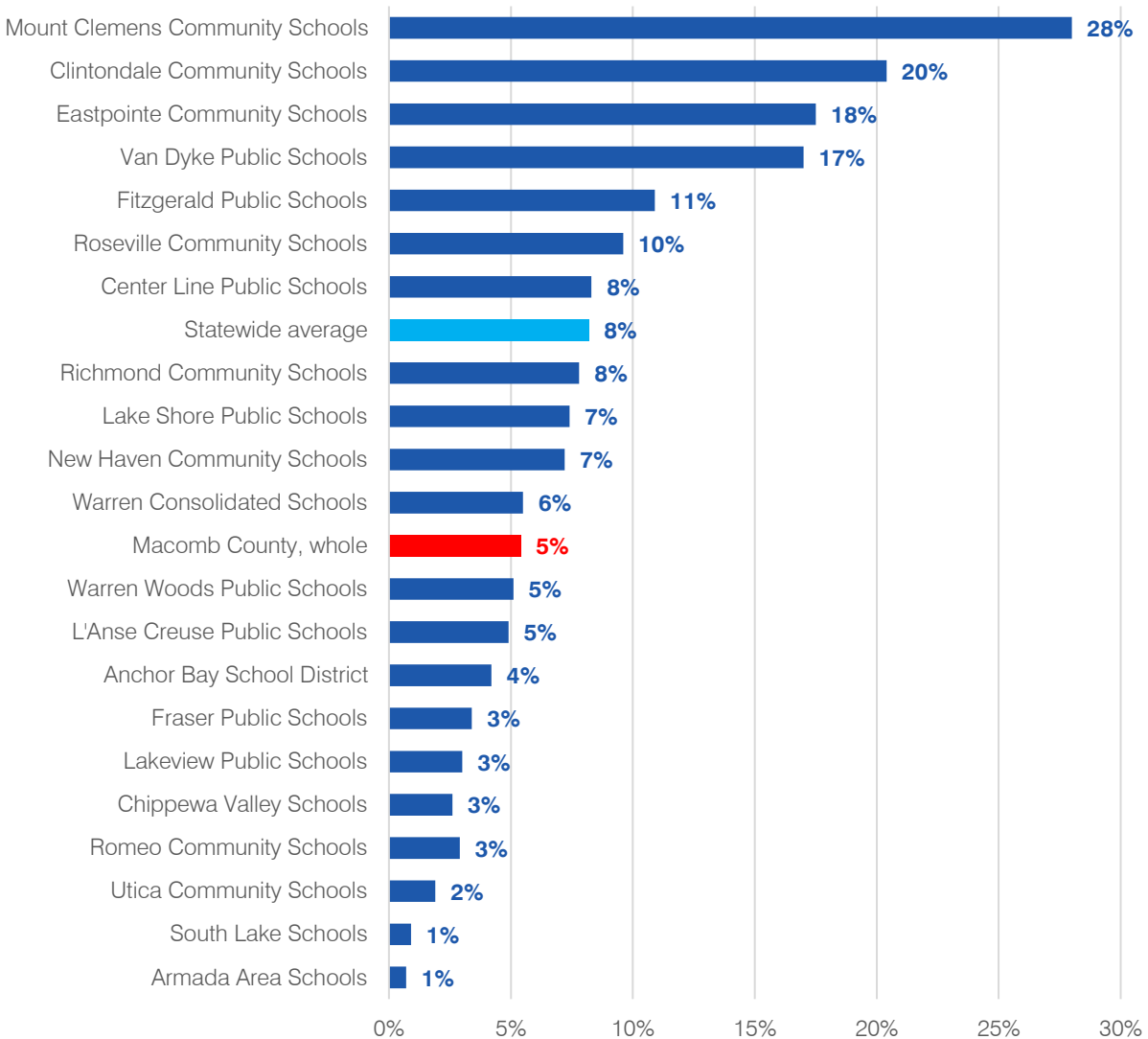


Source: National Center for Education Statistics n.d.

High School Graduation and Dropout

In the 2021–2022 school year, the dropout rate of Macomb County Schools was 5 percent, which was lower than the state average of 8 percent. Twelve school districts in the county had a higher dropout rate than the county average, with Mount Clemens having the highest dropout rate at 28 percent (Exhibit 52).

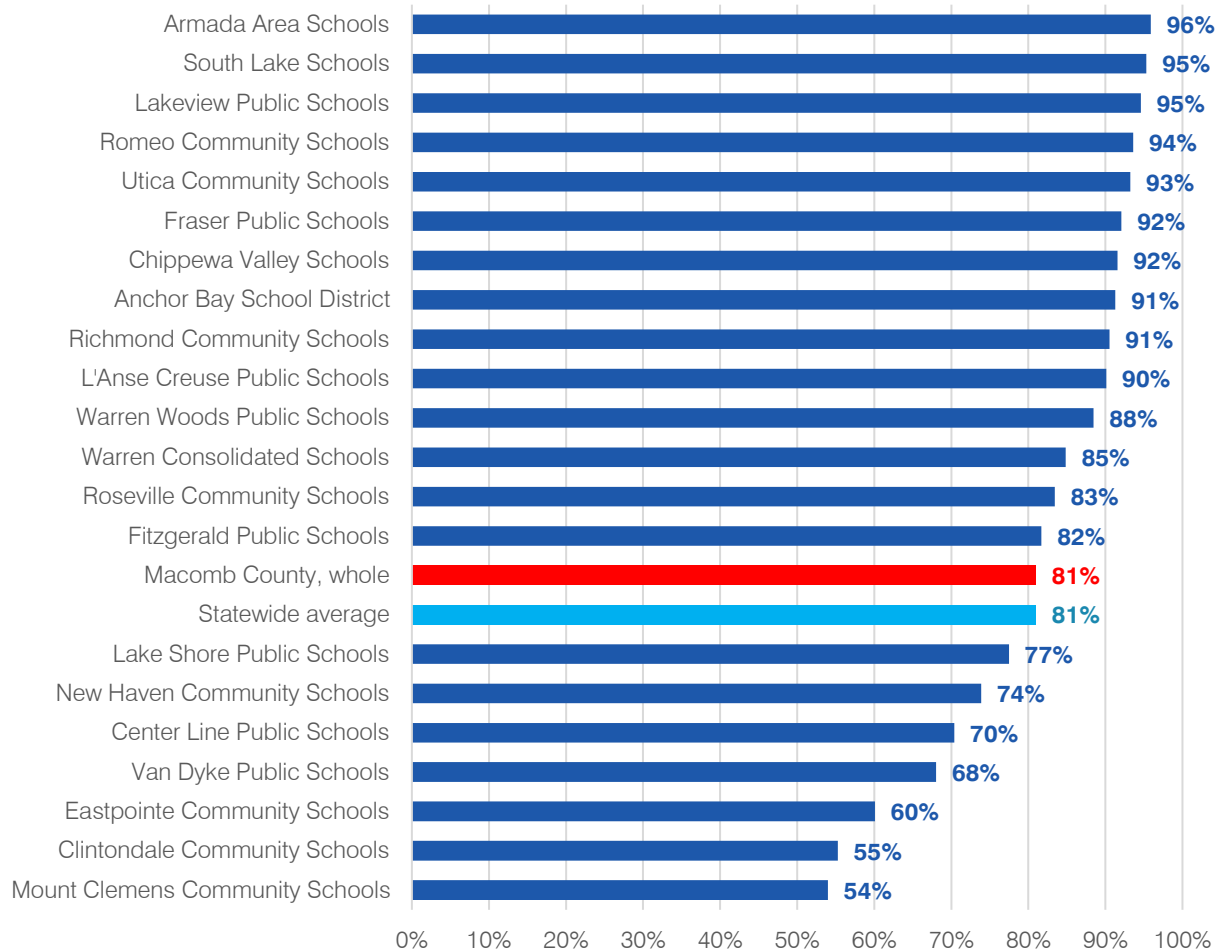
EXHIBIT 52. Dropout Rate by School District, 2021–2022 School Year



Source: MI School Data 2022b, Annie E. Casey Foundation n.d.c

The average on-time graduation rate in Michigan and Macomb County for the 2021–2022 school year was 81 percent. Only seven of the school districts in Macomb County had lower on-time graduation rates than the county average (Exhibit 53).

EXHIBIT 53. On-time Graduation Rate by School District, 2021–2022 School Year



Source: MI School Data 2022b, Annie E. Casey Foundation n.d.c.

Head Start and Early Childhood Education

MCA provides both Early Head Start (EHS) and Head Start (HS) to children ages birth to five years old who are considered at risk by way of their family’s income, having a disability, or being in foster care. Exhibit 54 shows data on Macomb County’s EHS and HS program enrollment for 2021.

EXHIBIT 54. Macomb County Early Head Start and Head Start Enrollment, 2021

	Early Head Start	Head Start
Total cumulative enrollment	155	914
Participant Type		
Children	143	
Pregnant women	12	

	Early Head Start	Head Start
Age of children		
Under 1 year old	29	-
1 year old	53	-
2 years old	61	113
3 years old	0	390
4 years old	-	411
5 years old	-	0
Homeless status		
Experienced homelessness	4	16
Foster Status		
In foster care at any point during the program year	9	34
Disability Status		
Had an Individualized Education Program	22	73
Race		
Asian	1	33
Black or African American	65	286
White	72	483
Biracial or multiracial	17	93
Other race	0	19
Ethnicity		
Hispanic or Latino	6	20
Primary Language at Home		
English	124	601
Spanish	0	1
Middle Eastern or South Asian languages	30	300
European or Slavic languages	0	4
African languages	1	2
Other languages	0	3
Unspecified languages	0	3
Health		
Had health insurance at the end of the program year	95%	98%
Had accessible healthcare at the end of the program year	96%	97%
Had up-to-date immunizations	86%	99%
Had accessible dental care at the end of program year	41%	67%

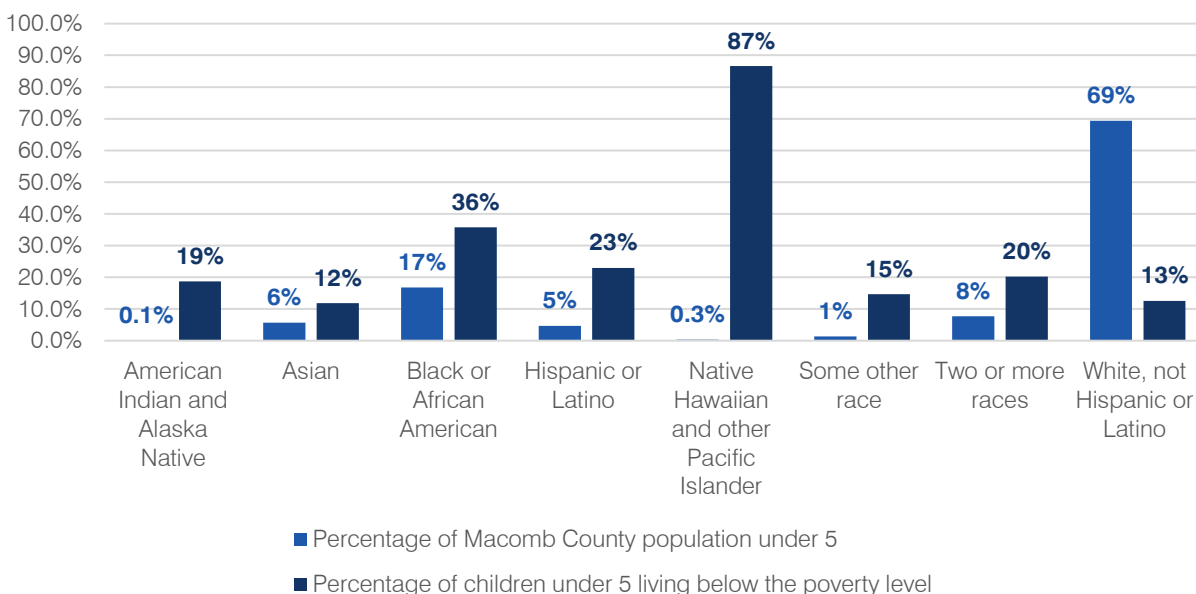
Note: racial groups and other languages were excluded from this table if there were no children enrolled in those categories
Source: Office of Head Start 2021a, Office of Head Start 2021b

Children Under Five Living Below the Poverty Level

As noted, children under five years old and whose families are experiencing poverty are eligible for HS programming. In Macomb County, 14 percent of families with children under five years old live below the poverty level, and 18 percent of all children under five years old in the county live below the poverty level (U.S. Census Bureau 2021l, U.S. Census Bureau 2021s).

When broken down by race, there are glaring racial and ethnic disparities in the rates at which children under five years old are living below the poverty level. Children under five years old that are American Indian or Alaskan Native, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, multiracial, and considered some other race all experience living below the poverty level at higher rates than the average, despite making up smaller proportions of the total population of children under five years old (Exhibit 55).

EXHIBIT 55. Children Under Five Years Old Living Below the Poverty Level by Race and Ethnicity, Compared to the Population of Children Under Five Years Old by Race, 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021t

Health

2022 Community Health Assessment

The Macomb County Health Department conducted a community health assessment (CHA) from May 2, 2022, to January 3, 2023, to determine the biggest health-related needs of the county’s residents. Key findings included:

- The COVID-19 pandemic has had lasting effects, including loss of income—especially among People of Color and people with low incomes, loss of child care, and negative mental health outcomes such as

loneliness and increased anxiety. CHA survey respondents also reported experiencing stress related to the COVID-19 vaccine due to lack of access, vaccine hesitancy, or uncertainty surrounding its side effects.

- Almost half (46 percent) of CHA survey respondents reported new or worsening mental health problems and 21 percent of individuals noted gaps in accessing services to address their mental health.
- The cost of healthcare, including the high costs of insurance and medication, create barriers in accessing health services. These costs have been exacerbated by the state of the economy and a need for better paying jobs.
- People with annual incomes under \$35,000 and People of Color reported higher levels of concern about being able to access enough food for their families and paying bills.
- CHA survey respondents from southern Macomb County, which is more diverse than other parts of the county, noted that reducing crime and violence would most improve the quality of life in their community (Macomb County Health Department Health Communities Program 2023).

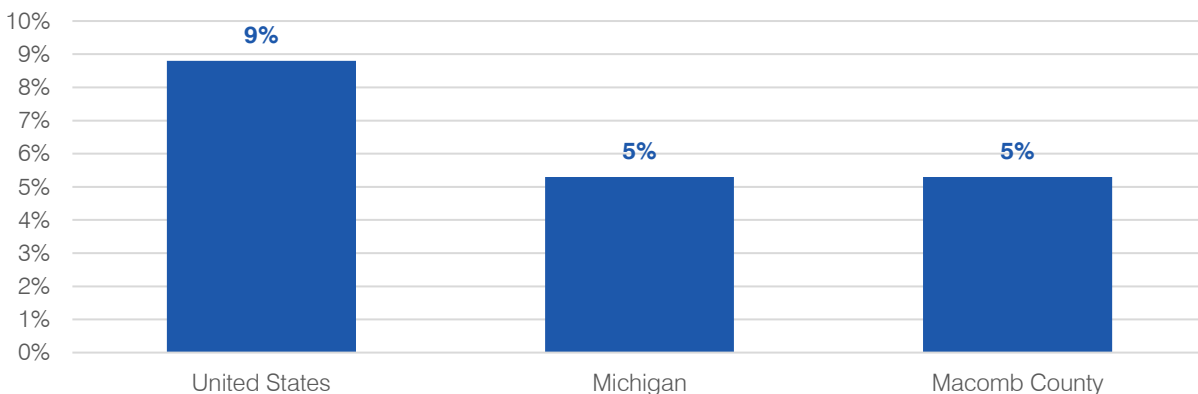
The CHA responses accurately reflect broader trends in healthcare and trends noted throughout this assessment. For example, an estimated 41 percent of U.S. adults experienced high levels of additional distress during the pandemic and over one-third of high school students reported mental health challenges (Gramlich 2023). Healthcare costs are also rising; the Kaiser Family Foundation reports that the average U.S. family premium for private insurance has increased an estimated 43 percent since 2012 (2022). Additionally, out-of-pocket spending grew an estimated 10.4 percent in 2021 alone (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services n.d.).

Health Insurance

Health insurance is among a variety of indicators that can play a significant role in the health of the overall community and affects the accessibility of healthcare services.

Approximately 5 percent of Macomb County residents did not have any health insurance in 2021, which was equivalent to the percentage of uninsured residents in Michigan and lower than the percentage of uninsured residents in the United States (Exhibit 56).

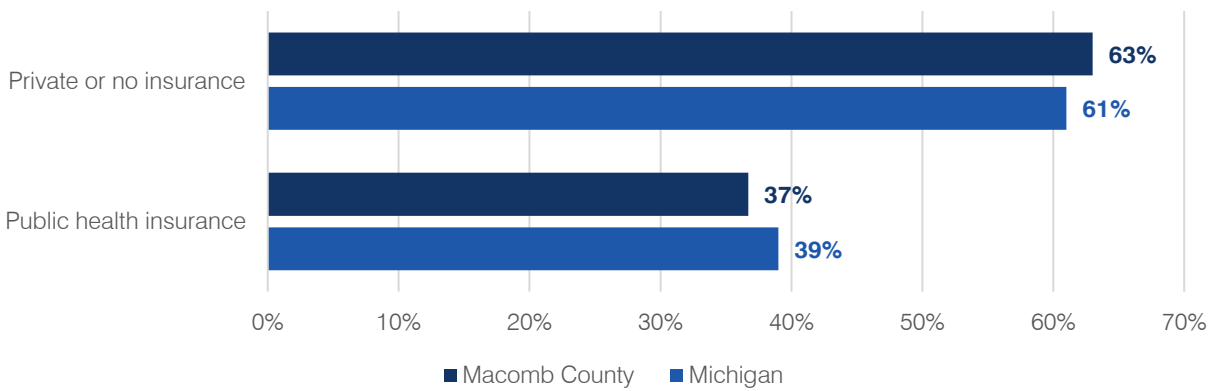
EXHIBIT 56. Insurance Status by Location, 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021u

Public insurance options are available to individuals who meet certain age, income, disability, or veteran status criteria. Approximately 37 percent of the Macomb County population has some form of public health insurance, including Medicare, Medicaid, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs healthcare coverage, or a combination of these. Macomb County has a slightly lower percentage of people with public health insurance than Michigan (Exhibit 57).

EXHIBIT 57. Macomb Public Insurance Usage Compared to State Average Status by Location, 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021v

Federally Qualified Health Centers

Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) are community-based healthcare providers that receive funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration to provide outpatient services, including certain telehealth services, in underserved areas. FQHCs are governed by boards; 51 percent of these boards’ membership is to be made up of patients. Macomb County has five FQHCs—two in Clinton Township, one in Center Line, one in Mount Clemens, and one in New Haven (Exhibit 58).

EXHIBIT 58. Federally Qualified Health Centers

Name	Address	City	Zip Code
MyCare Health Center	6900 E 10 Mile Road	Center Line	48015
MyCare Health Center	18 Market Street, Suite C	Mount Clemens	48043
MyCare Health Center	42627 Garfield Street Suite 213	Clinton Township	48038
MyCare Health Center	43750 Groesbeck Highway	Clinton Township	48036
New Haven Medical Center	57737 Gratiot Avenue	New Haven	48048

Source: Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs 2019

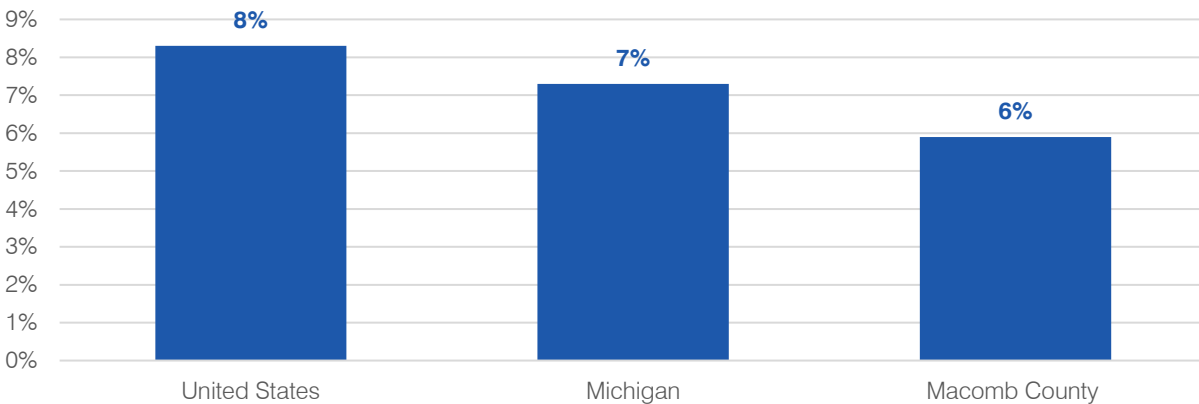
Transportation

Access to transportation options, or lack thereof, impacts health, employment, and child care, among other activities of daily life. According to the Center for Neighborhood Technology's Housing and Transportation Affordability Index in April 2023, 23 percent of a household's income goes toward transportation costs. When combined with housing, transportation costs make up approximately half of the average household's budget in the United States (U.S. Department of Transportation 2015).

Vehicle Availability

A lower percentage of households in Macomb County are without access to a vehicle than in Michigan or the United States (Exhibit 59).

EXHIBIT 59. Households Without a Vehicle by Location, 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021w

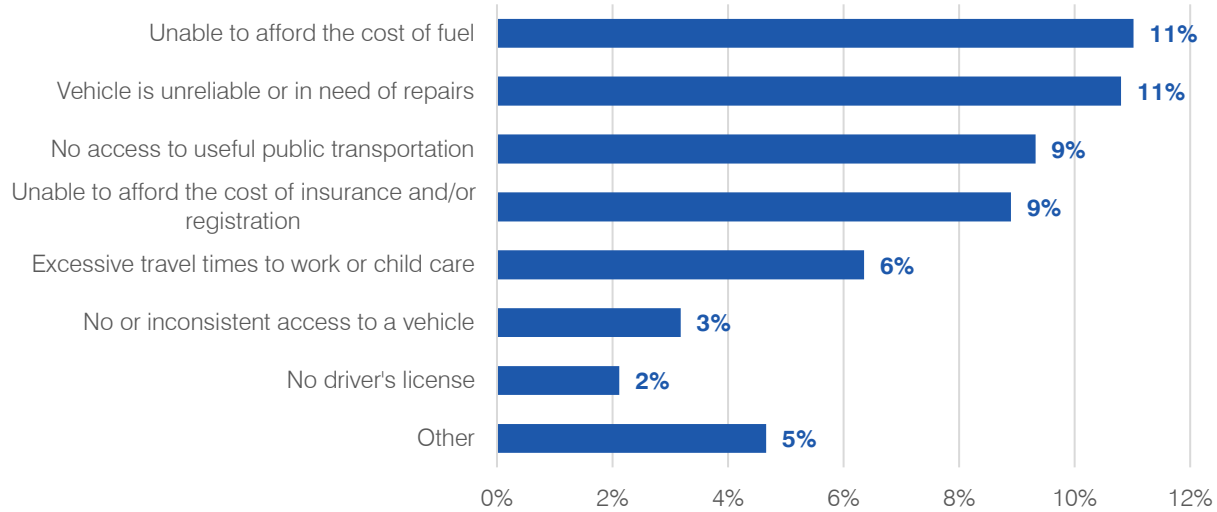
Commuting

The average commute to work in Macomb County is 27 minutes and the majority of workers commute to work alone in their own private vehicle (U.S. Census Bureau 2021x).

Transportation Challenges of Survey Takers and Community Forum Attendees

Two-thirds of respondents had not experienced any transportation challenges in the past 12 months; however, around 10 percent said they were either unable to afford the cost of fuel, that their vehicle is unreliable or in need of repairs, that they did not have access to useful public transportation, and that they were unable to afford insurance and/registration for the vehicle (Exhibit 60).

EXHIBIT 60. Transportation Challenges Faced by Survey Takers



N = 472

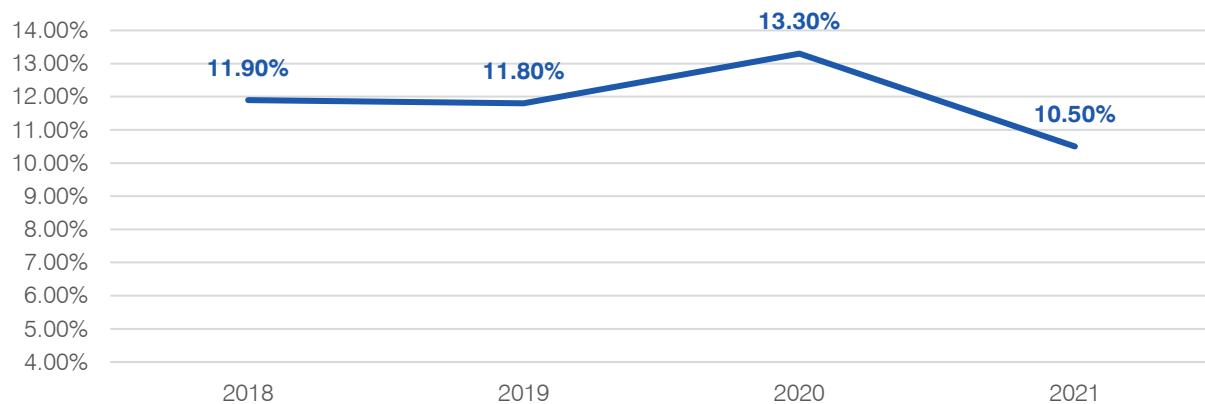
Source: MCA Community Needs Assessment Community Survey 2023

Food and Nutrition Security

Access to nutritious food can also influence both physical and mental health outcomes. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food insecurity as a lack of consistent access to enough food for every person in a household to live an active, healthy life. In 2021, an estimated 11 percent of Macomb County residents were food insecure.

Food insecurity rates remained fairly stable from 2018 to 2021 with just over a one percentage point increase from 2019 to 2020, possibly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by a nearly three-point drop in 2021, potentially due to the county's response to food insecurity and additional state and federal resources being made available (Exhibit 61).

EXHIBIT 61. Residents Experiencing Food Insecurity in Macomb County



Source: Feeding America 2021

Food Assistance

The Supplement Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is federally funded and administered at the state level through the Food Assistance Program (FAP), administered by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. In 2021, 11 percent of Macomb County households received SNAP/FAP assistance, which was a lower percentage than in Michigan (13 percent) and equivalent to the percentage of households in the United States receiving SNAP (11 percent) (U.S. Census Bureau 2021y). The USDA provides that Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) funding is used to provide “supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education to low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age five who are found to be at nutritional risk” (USDA n.d.).

Community Profile

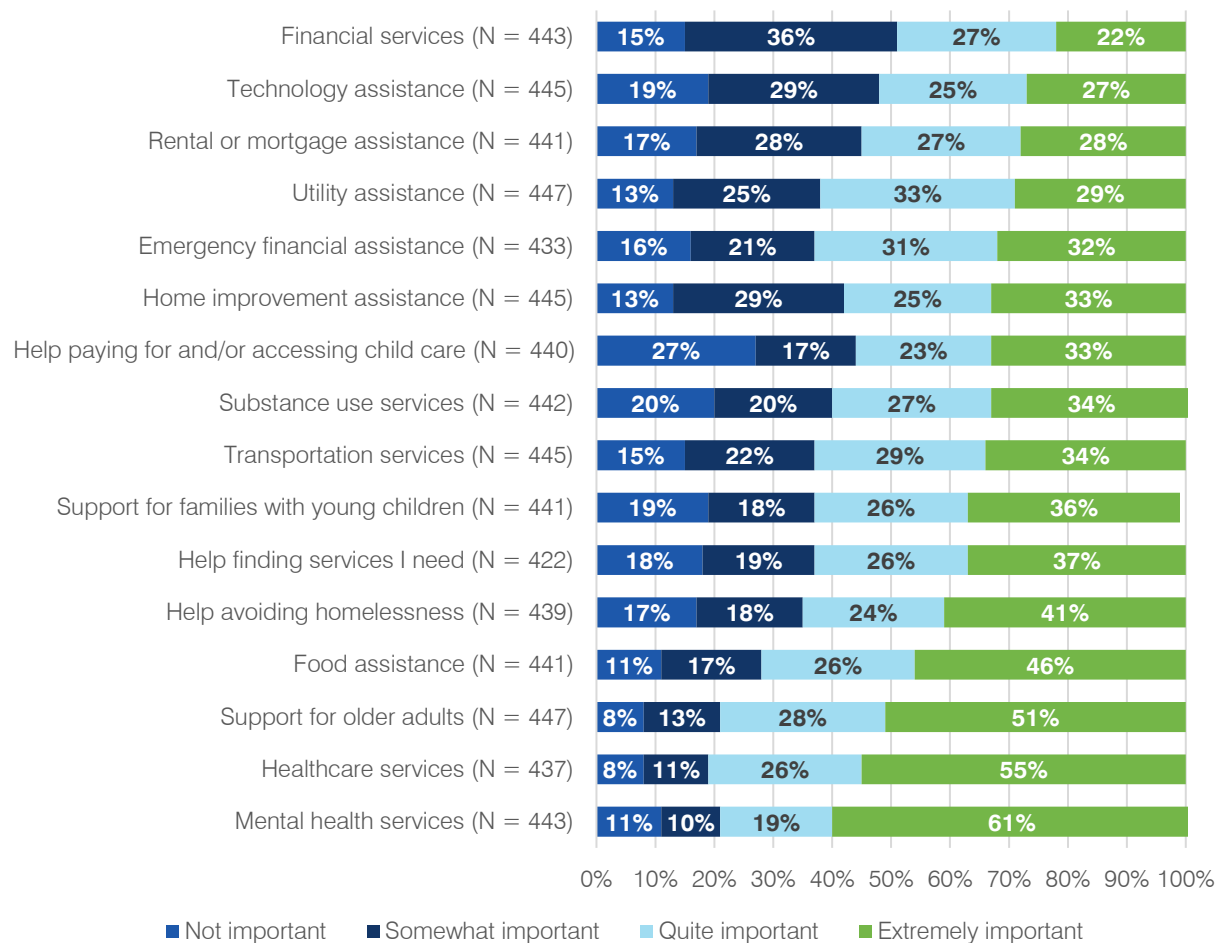
What Is the Current State of Service Delivery and Access in Macomb County?



Community Perspective

Community survey respondents rated the importance of different community services on a four-point scale ranging from not important to extremely important. At least 49 percent of respondents reported each service to be quite important or extremely important (Exhibit 62). The service that the most respondents felt was extremely important was mental health services (61 percent), followed by healthcare services (55 percent) and support for older adults (51 percent).

EXHIBIT 62. Perceived Importance of Community Service

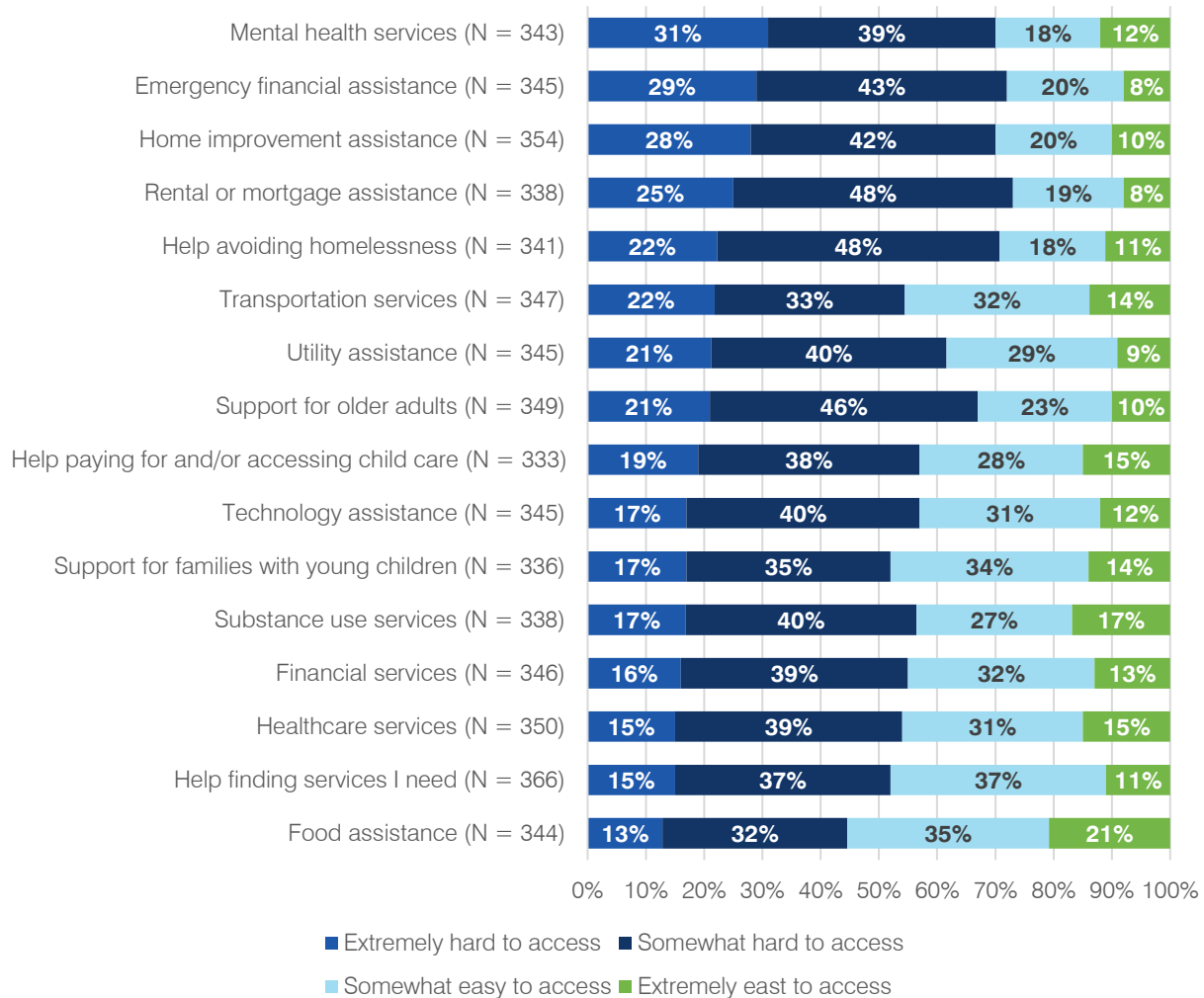


Source: MCA Community Needs Assessment Community Survey 2023

Additionally, respondents rated ease of accessing community services on a four-point scale, ranging from extremely hard to access to extremely easy to access. At least 45 percent of respondents felt that all services were either somewhat or extremely hard to access. This thought was echoed during community forums, as difficulty knowing about and getting to services was a common topic. Despite being rated as the most important service, mental health was the type of service that the highest percentage of respondents (31 percent) said was extremely hard to access (Exhibit 63). Other key services that were

commonly rated as at least somewhat hard to access included support for older adults, healthcare services, and emergency financial assistance. Food assistance was the only service that the majority respondents felt was somewhat easy to access, with 56 percent saying food assistance was either somewhat or extremely easy to access.

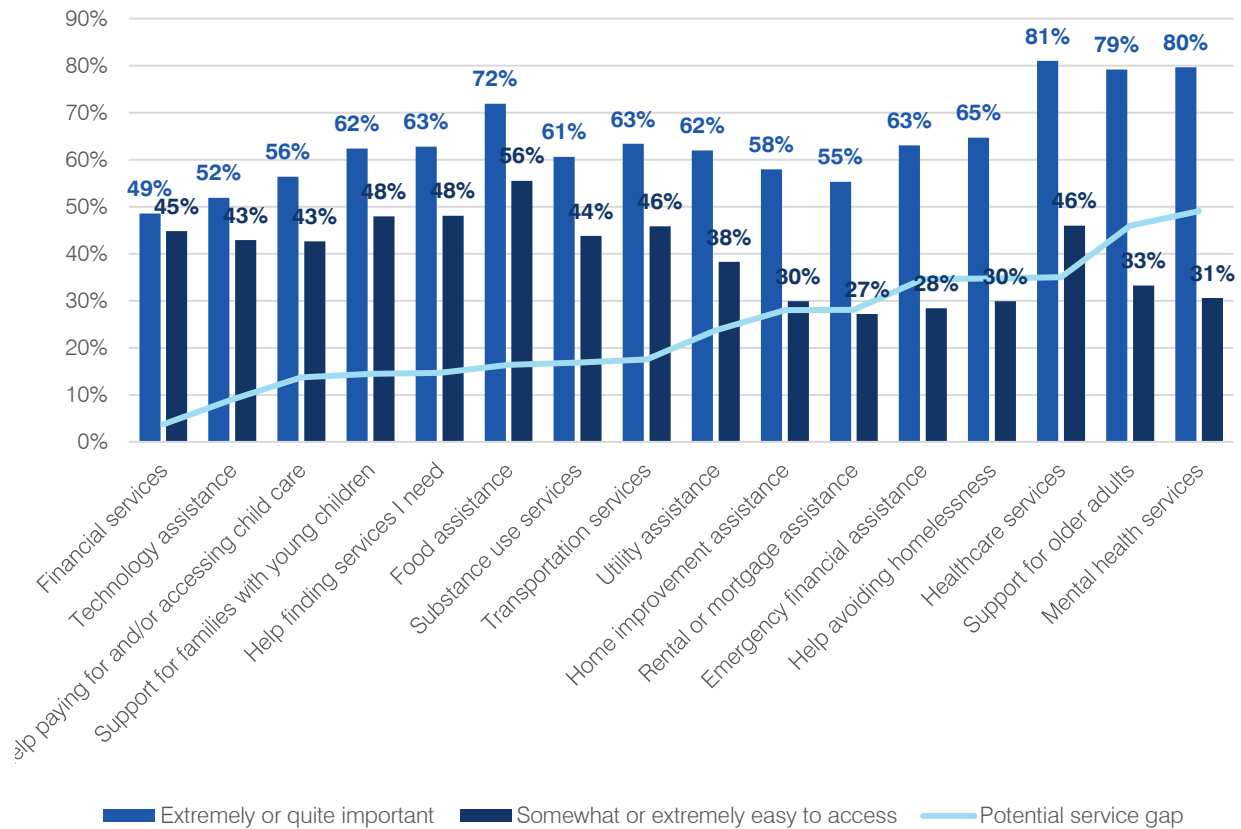
EXHIBIT 63. Perceived Importance of Community Service



Source: MCA Community Needs Assessment Community Survey 2023

Comparing the gap between perceived community importance and ease of accessing services provides an opportunity to explore and prioritize future activities to close the largest gaps (Exhibit 64). Mental health services had the largest gap, followed closely by support for older adults. The next largest gaps between perceived importance and ease of access were healthcare services, help avoiding homelessness, and emergency assistance. However, all service areas inquired about had more respondents believing they were important than believing they were easy to access.

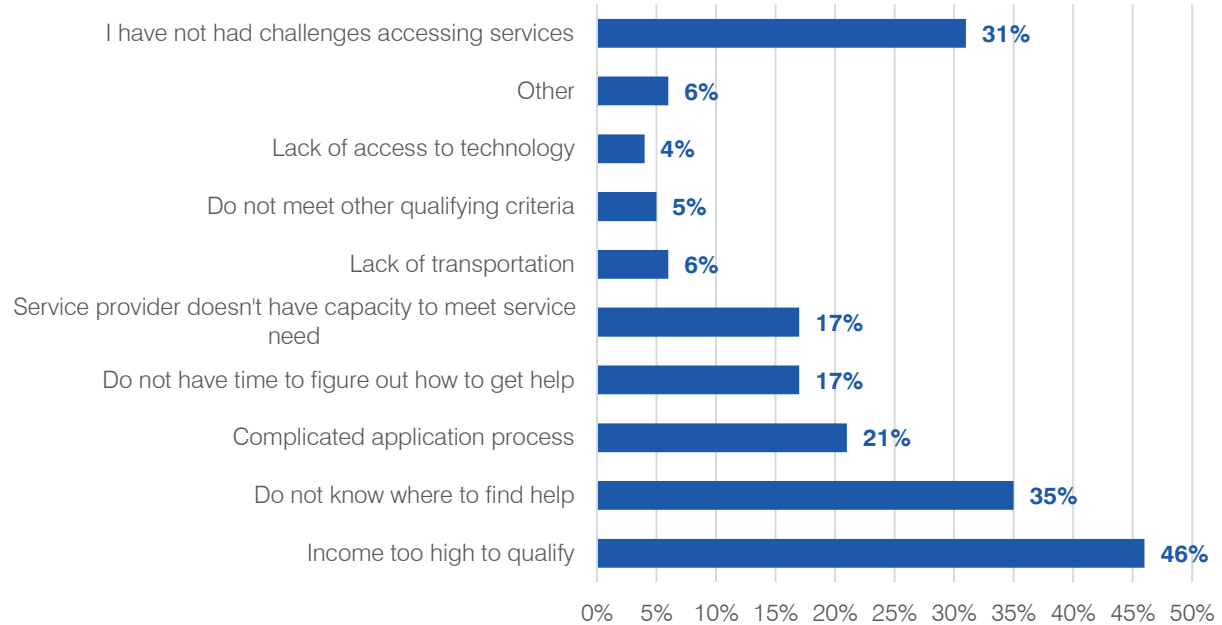
EXHIBIT 64. Comparing Community Importance and Ease of Accessing Different Services



Source: MCA Community Needs Assessment Community Survey 2023

In addition to rating the importance and ease of accessing specific services, respondents also shared what challenges they have experienced accessing community services (Exhibit 65). More than two-thirds (69 percent) said that they have experienced challenges accessing services. The two most common challenges were income too high to qualify (46 percent), followed by not knowing where to find help (35 percent). Both of these were barriers discussed in the community forums, particularly knowing where to find help. Forum attendees spoke to the need for more outreach and communications to help people who do not know what services are available or how to access them.

EXHIBIT 65. Challenges to Accessing Services



Source: MCA Community Needs Assessment Community Survey 2023

Other common barriers were complicated application processes (21 percent), not having time to figure out how to help (17 percent), and service providers not having capacity (17 percent). While not commonly indicated in the community survey as a barrier to accessing services, transportation was a frequent topic at the community forums, particularly one community forum where several residents discussed good experiences using transportation programs to get to medical appointments, but a distinct lack of options when needed to access other services.

Provider Perspective

More than half of service provider survey respondents said that utility assistance is requested most by their clients, and nearly half said rental or mortgage assistance was the most requested. Other commonly requested services included food distribution, homelessness prevention support, crisis/emergency services, housing choice vouchers, and clothing assistance.

Respondents also shared up to five of the needs they felt were not being adequately addressed that would be beneficial to Macomb County residents. Nearly half of respondents selected homelessness prevention support as a need not being addressed, and 43 percent said mental health care services are not adequately addressing needs. One-third said the community needs more housing choice vouchers or other financial housing assistance.

Sixty percent of respondents said their clients lack of awareness of services is a key barrier. Additionally, 60 percent of respondents also reported that a service they offered had a waitlist or limited service capacity that posed a barrier to community. Nearly half said that transportation to services was a barrier for their clients and 40 percent said lack of staff to provide services was a barrier. Thirty percent each said that acceptance criteria and no service availability made it difficult for residents to access services.

Key Findings and Recommendations

What Does This Tell Us About How Macomb Community Action Can Continue Serving Residents and Workers?



Bridge the Outreach Gap

According to community members and providers, the lack of awareness of services, including how to access services, is one of the biggest barriers facing Macomb County residents. Survey takers and community forum attendees all spoke of the importance of increased communication and outreach to ensure residents in need of services know the service exists. Beyond that, once an individual knows about a service, ensuring they have the wraparound supports necessary to access the service (e.g., transportation, child care) must also be considered.

Key takeaways:

- More individuals said that they did not know where to find services (35 percent) than did not experience any challenges accessing services (31 percent).
- Sixty percent of providers said lack of awareness of service or how to access was a barrier to community members accessing services, tied for the highest of any barrier.

Recommendations: Macomb Community Action can:

- Increase offerings and MCA presence at in-person events, as used to be common practice before COVID-19.
- Host cross-department education and engagement opportunities to ensure community health workers and community mental health case managers who interface with large numbers of residents eligible for service are aware of and able to make warm referrals to MCA services and vice-versa.
- Explore building upon an existing community-approved model of providing transportation to medical appointments to use similar practices to address transportation concerns of individuals seeking to engage with MCA services.
- Continue to work to rebuild community partnerships with community-centered organizations to develop a network of distribution of important service information.

Address Root Causes

Many residents are facing economic challenges, despite Macomb County having a higher average household income than the rest of the state. That, paired with the mental health crisis following COVID-19, as well as challenges accessing healthcare services, shows there is a need to address root causes and ensure wraparound services that empower residents to improve their well-being.

Key takeaways:

- Almost half of the survey respondents reported financial challenges in the past 12 months. Thirty percent said they were unable to save for unexpected expenses, 24 percent said they struggled to pay all monthly bills, and 20 percent struggled with debt from credit cards.
- Macomb County residents spend 48 percent of their income on housing and transportation, more than 25 percent higher than what is considered the threshold for affordable.

- Mental health was the most reported employment challenge and was identified as having the largest gap between perceived importance to the community and the ease of accessing services.

Recommendations: Macomb Community Action can:

- Prioritize new initiatives that seek to help residents move beyond crisis response and begin to proactively take steps to improve their financial situation, such as establishing a Financial Empowerment Center.
 - Leverage cross-department education and engagement opportunities (see *Bridging the Outreach Gap*) to ensure MCA staff are knowledgeable and capable of making warm referrals to healthcare and mental health services.
-

Invest in Early Childhood Education Programming

MCA has a robust Head Start program that offers wraparound support to many Macomb County families. However, this program is limited to families and children who qualify for Head Start even though many in the community could benefit from this program. Given the importance of early childhood education in improving long-term outcomes for communities, investing in what already exists and works well could be an opportunity to specifically address a critical root cause.

Key takeaways:

- One in five children are living under the poverty level in Macomb County and are thus eligible for Head Start programming, but there are currently only 1,069 children enrolled in Head Start or Early Head Start programs.
- Children under five who are racial minorities are significantly more likely to be living under the poverty level than their white counterparts.
- Participation in Head Start has been shown nationally to increase the likelihood of high school graduation, a metric with substantial disparities by school districts in Macomb County, with three school districts having graduation rates 20 percentage points below the county and state average.

Recommendations: Macomb Community Action can:

- Supplement Head Start funding from local, state, or other more flexible funding sources to offer similar services to families that may be in need, but do not currently qualify for Head Start services.
- Increase Head Start outreach to communities with poor education outcomes and higher proportions of children to ensure all families are aware of available services.
- Leverage engaged parents as ambassadors for sharing services and connecting their friends and neighbors with children to MCA and other county services.

Consider Race and Place

Breaking out community profile data by race, as well as mapping those data points out by census tract, showcased a variety of disparities. People of Color in Macomb County, particularly the Black and African American population, reported lower average household income, educational attainment rates, and homeownership rates. Continuing to work to understand the history that drives these disparities while targeting efforts to address these root cause factors of poverty will be crucial to achieving MCA's vision where all residents achieve their fullest potential and maintain personal stability and security.

Key takeaways:

- Every racial minority group is underrepresented in homeownership rates in Macomb County.
- Black or African American households make less than 75 percent of what other races report making in Macomb County.
- Average income varies greatly by location, with some census tracts having a median household income more than four times larger than others in Macomb County.

Recommendations: Macomb Community Action can:

- Ensure equity is woven throughout all phases of its programs and services.
- Leverage existing and build new partnerships with organizations throughout the community, especially those that serve People of Color and areas in Macomb County where disparities are well documented.
- Use maps and community input to prioritize and track the increased outreach efforts (see *Bridging the Outreach Gap*) to ensure they are occurring in areas and with the populations currently experiencing the greatest disparities.

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