



COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

2023 | EL PASO COUNTY, CO

COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Program is a federally funded program that aims to better understand the causes and conditions of poverty and to address the burdens impacting low-income communities. The El Paso County Department of Human Services (DHS) utilizes CSBG funding to support services and activities for individuals and families with low incomes that alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty in communities.

In general, to be eligible for assistance through the CSBG, a household or family of four must be at or below \$37,500, or 125 percent of the federally set poverty guidelines used to determine eligibility for federal programs, referred to as the Federal Poverty Level. However, effective until at least September 30, 2023, the income threshold to qualify for assistance has increased to 200 percent of the FPL, or \$60,000, for a family of four (see Figure 1). Services provided with CSBG funds span the following categories: employment; education and cognitive development; income and asset-building; housing; health and social/behavioral development; civic engagement and community involvement; and services that support multiple domains.

| Number of Persons in Family/Household | 100% Federal Poverty Level | 200% of Federal Poverty Level (Effective <u>through</u> 9/30/2023) | 125% of Federal Poverty Level (Effective <u>after</u> 9/30/2023) |
|--|---|---|---|
| 1 | \$14,580 | \$29,160 | \$18,225 |
| 2 | \$19,720 | \$39,440 | \$24,650 |
| 3 | \$24,860 | \$49,720 | \$31,075 |
| 4 | \$30,000 | \$60,000 | \$37,500 |
| 5 | \$35,140 | \$70,280 | \$43,925 |
| 6 | \$40,280 | \$80,560 | \$50,350 |
| 7 | \$45,420 | \$90,840 | \$56,775 |
| 8 | \$50,560 | \$101,120 | \$63,200 |
| | Add \$5,140 for each additional person | For families/households with more than 8 persons add \$10,280 | For families/households with more than 8 persons add \$6,425 |

Figure 1. 2023 Poverty Guidelines for the 48 Continental United States

The El Paso County Department of Human Services (DHS) in partnership with El Paso County Public Health (EPCPH) completed the 2023 Community Needs Assessment (CNA) for the CSBG to help better understand community needs and gaps in services provided in the county. The CSBG is a federal program that aims to reduce the burden of poverty for El Paso County residents and work toward supporting community services and programs to meet their communities' needs. This assessment meets the requirements of the CSBG by identifying the needs and resources available to the communities served by grantees every three years. This CNA also collected quantitative and qualitative data to explore the ongoing conditions of poverty as well as the COVID-19 pandemic and its amplifying effects.

Purpose

To complete this 2023 CNA, the El Paso County DHS partnered with EPCPH from August 2022 to June 2023. This assessment is guided by objectives found within the CSBG and the results provide an outline in which the County develops targeted strategies. These strategies aim to alleviate poverty and promote self-sufficiency for El Paso County residents and will assist in determining the appropriate allocation of funds for future priorities. This assessment also highlights the impact of COVID-19, especially among individuals and families experiencing the greatest disparities.

Methods

Multiple quantitative and qualitative data sources were compiled from various existing sources to develop a better understanding of health and well-being in the county. Quantitative data was collected from the U.S. Census/American Community Survey, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, the National Center for Education Statistics, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Council for Community and Economic Research, the El Paso County Community Health Indicators Report, and El Paso County programs and partner organizations. Collection of qualitative data was taken from the 2020 Protect Our Neighbors (PON) Grant project that surveyed 1,500 Spanish-speaking individuals heavily impacted by COVID-19 at the peak of the pandemic. These PON surveys were gathered from community members spanning across faith-based communities, small businesses, trusted organizations, and more. PON surveys were collected between October 30, 2020, and December 30, 2020, both in writing and online via Survey Monkey.

Key Findings

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic affected many individuals as countless faced exacerbated yet already existing disparities while experiencing some new challenges. Many of the issues identified in previous needs assessments continue, but some have worsened due to the effects of the pandemic. The top needs identified in this report are housing, food access, and childcare. Other high needs on the rise include behavioral health, unemployment, and overall COVID-19 impacts.

Housing

Homelessness and inadequate housing have been difficult for many individuals and continue to be a high need area. Affordable housing (rental and ownership) has a direct impact on the social, economic, and environmental health of our community. According to the City of Colorado Springs' 2021 Action Plan, one-third of people in El Paso County are spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing and nearly 14 percent are paying more than half.

Food Security

Individuals experiencing food insecurity face poorer health outcomes. Nearly one out of every three residents live in a low-income area that also has low food access, which includes no supermarkets within miles of the home and having no reliable transportation to the nearest locations.¹

Childcare

The COVID-19 pandemic worsened childcare access, which was already out of reach for many due to its cost. The 2021 Colorado Health Access Survey found that families cited either cost (30.9 percent) or a facility closure due to COVID-19 (29.1 percent) as the main reason for unmet childcare needs. Other reasons include an inability to find a provider with space for additional children, problems with the location, or concerns over the quality of care.

Behavioral Health

Prior to the 2020 pandemic, El Paso County and the Pikes Peak Region reported high rates of poor mental health, opioid and other substance use, suicide, and rates of incarceration related to mental health and substance use. As part of its strategic planning, EPCPH targeted the need to improve mental health and

¹ Economic Research Service. USDA Food Access Research Atlas 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/go-to-the-atlas/>

decrease substance misuse, guided by data from the county's 2017 Community Health Assessment and Health Indicators Report. EPCPH facilitated efforts by the Healthy Community Collaborative, a stakeholder group of over 60 community partners, to identify a range of behavioral health related strategies that became part of the 2018 - 2022 EPCPH Community Health Improvement Plan.

Employment and Training

Unemployment leads to great financial instability that can have impacts on a household's access to health coverage, health services, food, and other needs. After the pandemic, the unemployment rate went from a low 2.8 percent to 6.9 percent. Although the unemployment rate was down to 3.0 percent in 2022, competing with the cost of living has been a barrier for many individuals. Educational and job training also continues to be a need, as does economic opportunity and development. Collaboration and coordination of services across partner organizations are critical to ensure that gaps in services are identified and addressed effectively.

COVID-19 Impacts

In early March 2020, El Paso County had its first COVID-19 case. To mitigate the spread of disease, a phased approach through a multi-level dial was implemented with a "Stay at Home" order issued by the State of Colorado requiring all non-essential businesses to cease operation in order to slow further spread. Many of the needs identified early in the pandemic were revealed to be gaps that were already existing and heightened due to COVID-19. These exacerbated barriers were identified as individuals needing support around job or wage loss, food access, housing assistance, childcare options, health care, and behavioral health resources.

II. EVALUATION OF PAST PERFORMANCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

Community Action Agencies (CAAs) are required to complete a Community Needs Assessment (CNA) every three years in order to receive CSBG funding. Section 676(b)(11) of the CSBG Act states “...an assurance that the State will secure from each eligible entity in the State ...a community action plan ...that includes a community needs assessment for the community served, which may be coordinated with community needs assessment conducted for other programs...”

A CNA establishes a profile of a community, noting both needs as well as community resources. CAAs conduct assessments to determine the needs in a community that can be addressed and the population most impacted by the needs. CAAs should include both qualitative and quantitative data to assist in identifying needs in the community. Through identifying these needs on the family, community, and agency levels as well as through a strategic planning process, the CAAs determine the outcomes they plan to achieve for the next three years. A CNA must meet the CSBG Standards Category Three for Community Assessments.

Through the 2021 CSBG funding, multiple partners successfully served 1,956 households which included 3,071 individuals ranging from youth to older adults, with the largest age population between the ages of 25-44 (24 percent). The majority of this range served were singles, making up approximately 78 percent. Of the individuals served, 57 percent received anywhere between some education to graduate or post-secondary school. The remaining 43 percent were unknown or not reported (see Figure 2).

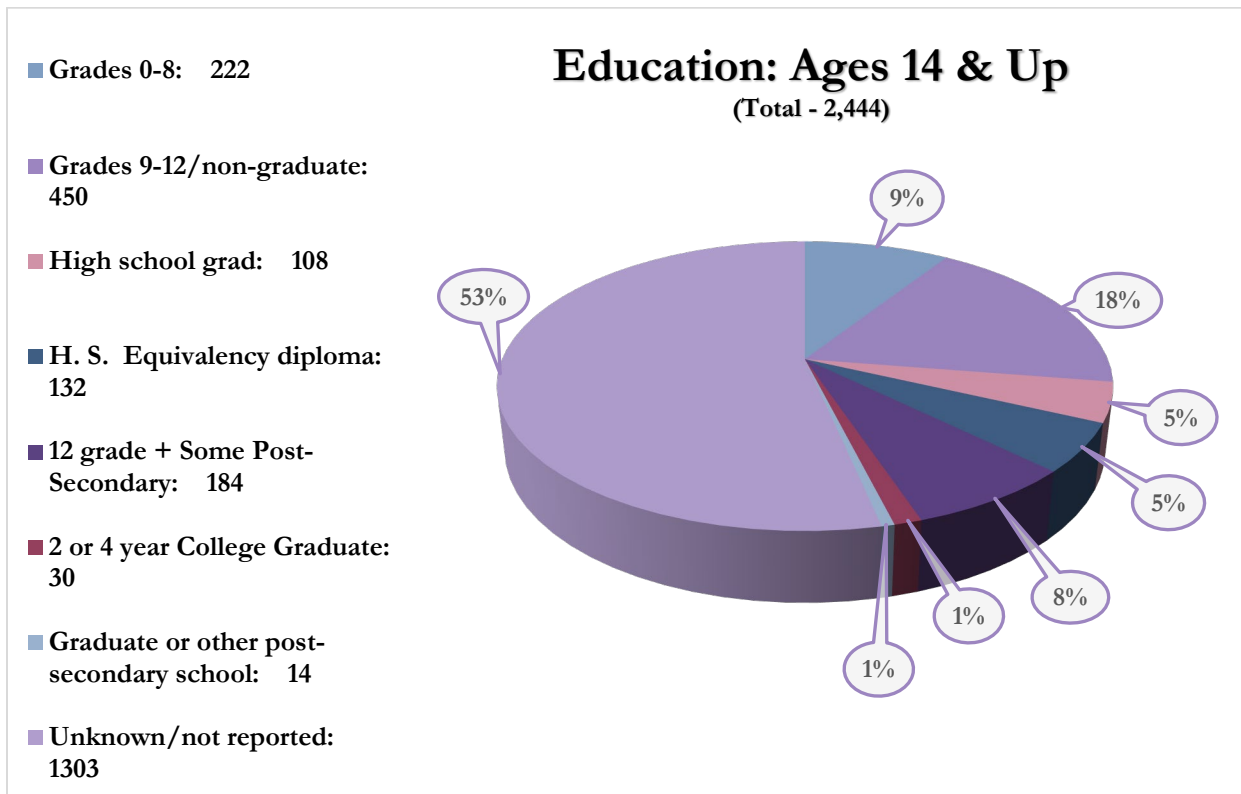


Figure 2. Educational achievement status of clients, 2021

For employment status of those ages eighteen years of age and older, only 18 percent of clients reported having full-time, part-time, or migrant seasonal farm work. Approximately 31 percent reported short-term and long-term unemployment as well as not working in any labor force. The remaining clients are unknown or did not report their work status (see Figure 3).

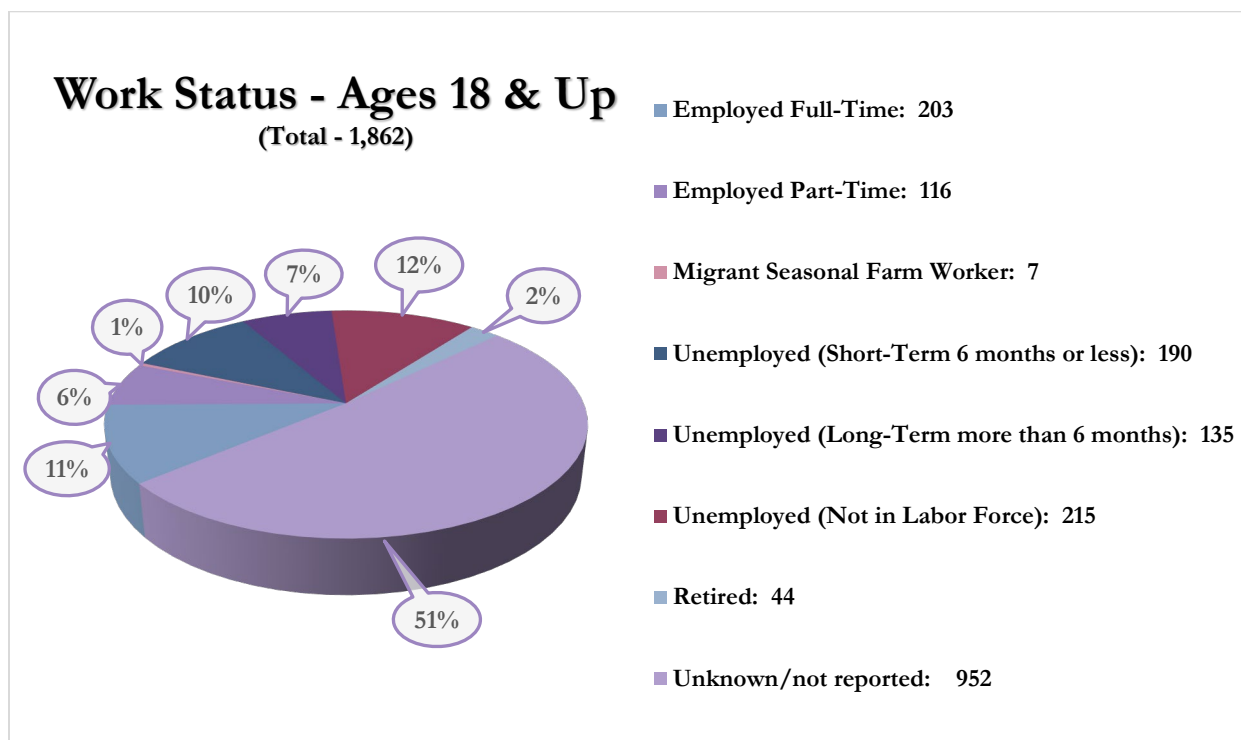


Figure 3. Work status of clients, 2021

A total amount of \$583,347.53 was spent from October 2020 to September 2021 on services and administration purposes. For the services, funding was targeted toward low-income households living at or below 125 percent the Federal Poverty Level. Tables 1 and 2 show the different categories of services, and Figure 4 illustrates the individuals served by the services provided.

| Employment Services Include: | Education Services Include: | Housing Services Include: |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| ▪ Vocational Training | ▪ Parenting Support | ▪ Rent Payments |
| ▪ Skills Training | | ▪ Mortgage Payments |
| ▪ Career Counseling | | ▪ Current Utilities |
| ▪ Resume Development | | ▪ Utilities in Arrears |
| ▪ Interview Skills | | |

Table 1. Employment, education, and housing services

| Health & Social/Behavioral Development Includes: | Services Supporting Multiple Domains Includes: |
|--|--|
| ▪ Prescription Payments | ▪ Case Management |
| ▪ Dr. Visit Payments | ▪ Eligibility Determinations |
| ▪ Adult Dentist Payments | ▪ Referrals |
| ▪ Domestic Violence Programs | ▪ Transportation Services |
| ▪ Food Distribution | ▪ ID Documents |

Table 2. Health and social/behavioral development and other services

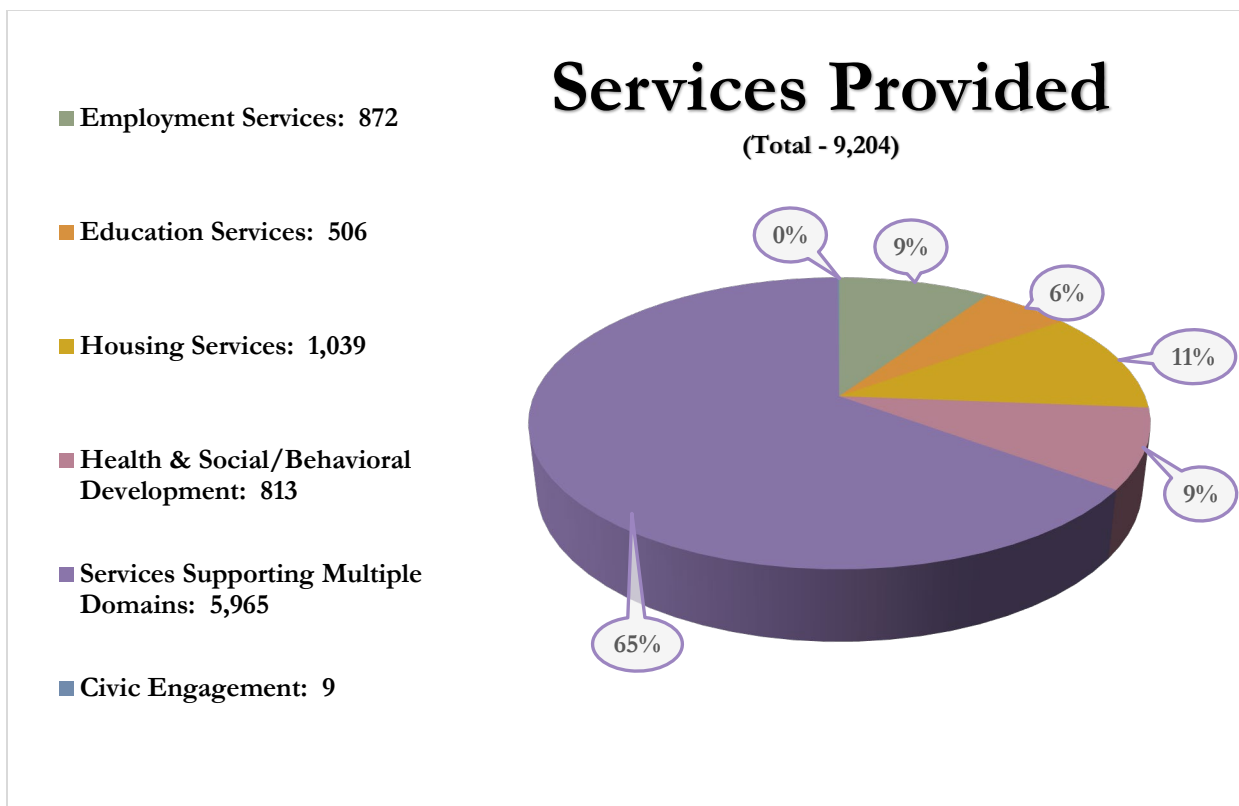


Figure 4. CSBG-funded Expenditures Domains by category, 10/1/2020 to 9/30/2021

Outcomes achieved in the various domains represent those who achieved one or more outcomes as identified by the National Performance Indicators. Each category includes specific outcomes. Tables 3 and 4 show the different outcomes categories, and Figure 5 presents a cursory summary of the outcomes.

| Employment Outcomes Include: | Education Outcomes Include: |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unemployed Youth Obtained Employment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth demonstrated improved positive approaches to learning |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unemployed Adults Obtained Employment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth are Achieving at Basic Grade Levels |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unemployed Adults Obtained AND Maintained Employment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals obtained a credential, certificate, or degree relating to the achievement of educational or vocational skills |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employed Adults Participated in Career Advancement Programs | |

Table 3. Employment and education outcome domains

| Housing Outcomes Include: | Health & Social/Behavioral Development Outcomes Includes: |
|--|---|
| Households obtained safe and affordable housing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals gained access to medical and dental care and demonstrated improved physical health and well-being |
| Households obtained AND maintained safe and affordable housing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals demonstrated improved mental and behavioral health and well-being. |
| Households avoided eviction/foreclosure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals improved skills related to the adult role of parents/ caregivers. |
| Households did not experience utility service disruption | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals achieved safe conflict and risk free visit or exchange. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals experienced reduced food insecurity. |

Table 4. Housing, health and social/behavioral development outcome domains

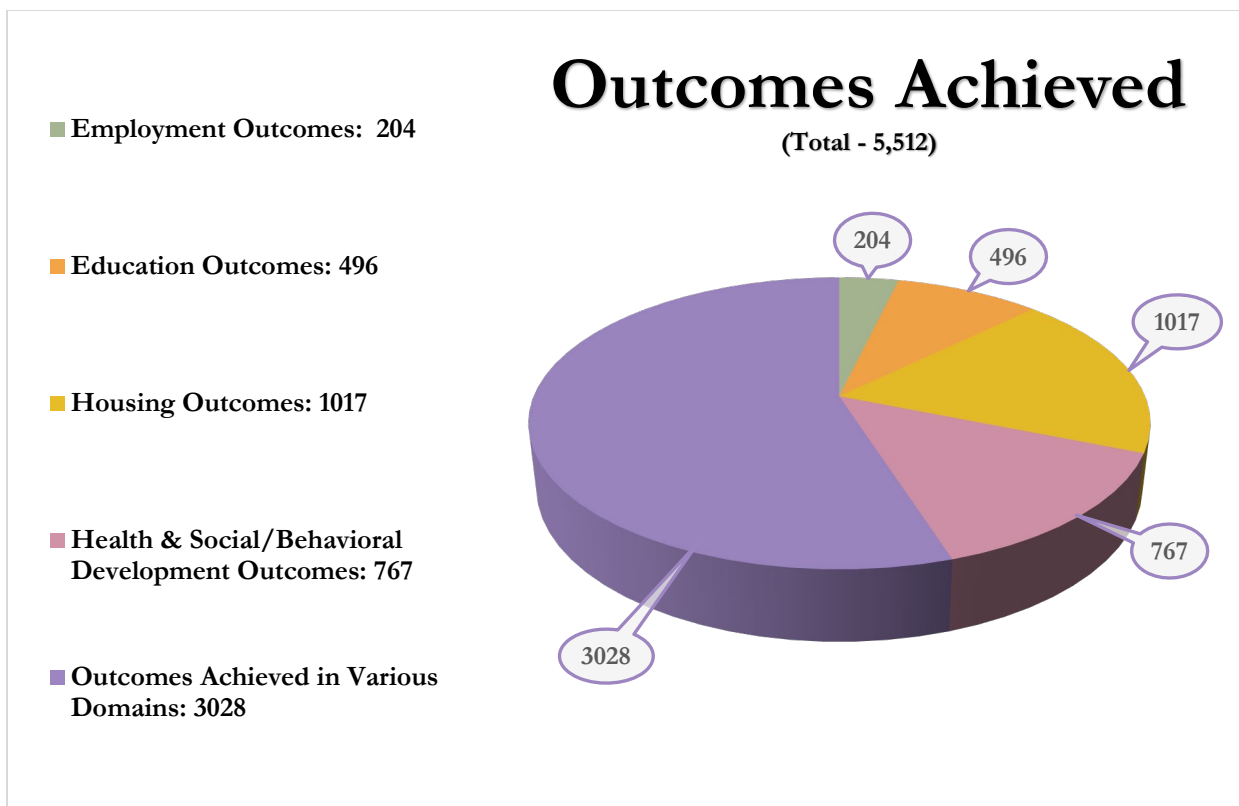


Figure 5. CSBG-funded Outcomes Achieved Domains by category, October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2021

In addition to the CSBG program, a Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) program was launched in response to COVID-19 in early 2020. Two organizations were approved for the CARES funding through an application process, Catholic Charities and Mercy's Gate. In the summer of 2022, to avoid unspent funds, Tri-Lakes Cares was awarded CARES funding as well. The main purpose of these funds was to provide those impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic with housing financial assistance. This included rent, mortgage, and utility assistance. The number of people served with CARES funding is as follows:

Housing Services Provided by CARES:

| | |
|--|-----|
| Housing Payment Assistance – Rent: | 480 |
| Housing Payment Assistance – Mortgage: | 13 |
| Utility Payment Assistance: | 66 |
| Utility Arrears Payment Assistance: | 33 |

Services Supporting Multiple Domains:

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| Case Management: | 544 |
| Eligibility Determinations: | 544 |

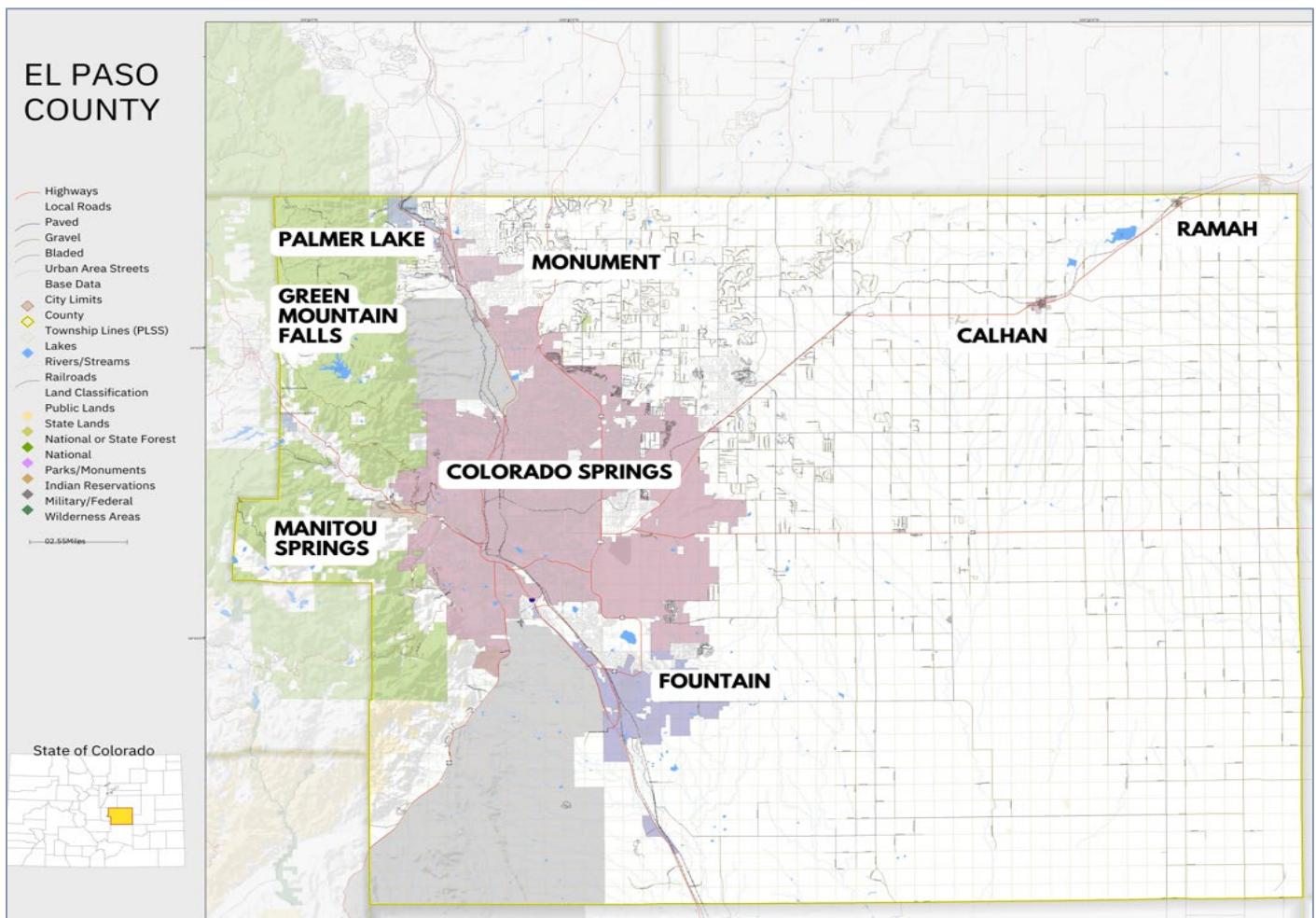
The information above is specific to CARES services provided. These numbers are included in the charts previously presented for the CSBG program as a whole.

III. GEOGRAPHIC AREA

This assessment covers El Paso County, which has the highest county population in the state of Colorado. In 2021, El Paso County’s population was estimated to be 737,867, with a population density of 346 per square mile across a total area of 2,130 square miles.² The county consists of three major cities, five towns, 12 census-designated places, and seven unincorporated communities. Colorado Springs is the second most populous city in the state with an estimated 483,956 residents, which is nearly two-thirds of the county’s overall population.

Many services are located within the urban center of Colorado Springs. However, individuals living in rural communities must travel far to access health care, healthy food, government services, jobs, and other community assets. Health outcomes, wealth, employment, and education status are linked to geography.

El Paso County has five military installations – Fort Carson Army Base, Peterson Air Force Base, Schriever Air Force Base, North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), and the United States Air Force Academy. The recently formed Space Force is also currently headquartered in Colorado Springs.



² U.S. Census Bureau El Paso County, Colorado 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/elpasocountycolorado>

IV. COMMUNITY RESOURCES

As the most populous county in Colorado, El Paso County has programs and services available to residents. Many of these organizations and programs are located in or near Colorado Springs. For the 2021 to 2023 Grant Cycle, CSBG community agency recipients are listed below.

Community Services Block Grant Community Agencies

| |
|---|
| Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) |
| CASA is located in downtown Colorado Springs. Court Appointed Special Advocates provides a supervised exchange and parenting time program for parents involved in court proceedings. |
| Community Partnership for Child Development (CPCD) |
| CPCD is located in the Old Colorado City area of Colorado Springs. Community Partnership for Child Development offers job certification training (e.g., child development associate, information technology, manufacturing, etc.). |
| Careers in Construction Colorado (CICC) |
| CICC is a non-profit located in north Colorado Springs and offers vocational education into high schools where individuals can earn certificates, gain internships, shadow jobs, and acquire entry level work within construction. |
| Catholic Charities |
| Catholic Charities is located in downtown Colorado Springs and provides a wide range of services, resources, assistance, education and referrals to vulnerable individuals and families facing crisis. Catholic Charities also offers emergency food boxes as well as daily free meals through the Marian House. |
| Homeward Pikes Peak |
| Homeward Pikes Peak is located in downtown Colorado Springs. Homeward Pikes Peak offers behavioral health treatment services for individuals and group settings, relapse prevention programs, counseling, trauma recovery, and more. Additionally, Homeward Pikes Peak provides a residential treatment facility with sober home living through Housing First. |
| Mercy's Gate |
| Mercy's Gate provides services, resources, education and referrals to individuals and families facing crisis. Mercy's Gate is located in Colorado Springs and has been awarded funds to provide rent and mortgage assistance. |
| Tri-Lakes Cares |
| Tri-Lakes Cares is a community-based, volunteer-supported resource center located in Monument. Tri-Lakes Cares' mission is to improve people's lives through emergency assistance and self-sufficiency and relief programs. Tri-Lakes Cares is the only food pantry and human services organization located in and serving northern El Paso County. Tri-Lakes Cares is conducting a COVID-19 survey to assess the impact of the pandemic on individuals receiving services from the agency. |

Other Community Resources and Partners

El Paso County has a strong connection to these social services organizations and collaborative groups working to create resilient, healthy communities. Some partners focus their efforts on the needs of low-income individuals and families, including the Healthy Community Collaborative, Community Health Partners, the Resilient, Inspired, Strong, Engaged Coalition and Pikes Peak YMCA. Military installations and institutions of higher education are also valuable contributors to community well-being and resilience.

Housing

There are several programs available that provide housing support, transitional housing, and emergency shelter in El Paso County. The main services to assist individuals experiencing homelessness in El Paso County

include the Salvation Army's RJ Montgomery Center and the Springs Rescue Mission. The RJ Montgomery Center provides shelter for up to 210 individuals experiencing homelessness per night, while Springs Rescue Mission helps individuals who chronically experience homelessness and financially struggling citizens of El Paso County with entry shelters, resource centers, sober living, food assistance, and more. The SRM shelter includes up to 450 beds for men and women and offers hot breakfasts through the winter months. The Colorado Springs Fire Department Homeless Outreach Team does outreach to individuals experiencing homelessness to offer resources, care navigation, and achieve self-sufficiency. A major housing support through 2021 until February of 2023 was the City Hope shelter. City Hope began as a COVID-19 isolation shelter but later became a low barrier housing facility for families and individuals with varying needs.

Several programs offer financing or housing assistance, including Colorado Housing and Finance Authority. Other programs provide low-barrier transitional housing or other solutions for individuals in need, such as Rocky Mountain Land Trust, Family Life Services, Family Promise, Family Mentor Alliance, Partners in Housing, Housing First, Dream Center, Catholic Charities of Central Colorado (Marian House Soup Kitchen) and Gospel Homes for Women.

Special population shelter options and programs are available as well through TESSA. TESSA offers housing or hotel vouchers for women and children experiencing domestic violence. Crawford House and Homes for All Veterans serve veterans experiencing homelessness and provide emergency or permanent housing. Both The Dale House Project and The Place provide shelter and resources for homeless youth, including employing outreach workers and providing temporary, transitional, and long-term housing. Both organizations provide life skills education leading to self-sustainability.

Employment and Education

Numerous workforce training and continuing education resources are available in El Paso County. Pikes Peak Library District offers free adult education, including English as a Second Language classes, online high school diploma and GED programs (including preparation courses) and classes for those preparing for college. English as a Second Language courses are also available through Catholic Charities. Seniors seeking work can access Silver Key or AARP's Senior Community Service Employment Program. The Women's Resource Agency and Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation also provide various job training programs. Pikes Peak Workforce Center also provides support to individuals seeking employment through free training, opportunities to continue education, and job search navigation.

In 2023, pre-K and K-12 education in El Paso County are primarily provided by the area's 240 public schools and 39 public charter schools, which together serve approximately 137,000 students across 17 public school districts.³ Private schools serve an additional approximately 6,400 students.⁴ El Paso County is also home to several post-secondary educational institutions, including the University of Colorado – Colorado Springs, Colorado College, Pikes Peak State College and other institutes of higher education.

Health and Social/Behavioral Development

Major public health and health care systems providing health and behavioral services in the county include:

- **Penrose-St. Francis Health Services (Centura Health) and UCHealth hospital systems** provide millions of dollars in uncompensated care and community benefits in the Pikes Peak region.

³Colorado Department of Education. 2022-23 Pupil Membership by District and County. Available from:

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/pupilcurrent>

⁴National Center for Education Statistics. Available from: <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps/ntpsdashboard/Dashboard/CO>

- **Peak Vista Community Health Centers** is the area's Federally Qualified Health Center and provides critical safety-net medical, dental, and behavioral health care. Peak Vista serves over 89,000 patients through its outpatient centers in Colorado's Pikes Peak and East Central regions.
- **Diversus Health** provides continuum-of-care behavioral health services throughout El Paso County, from therapy and case management to crisis services, education, career development, and life skills programs.
- **Colorado Community Health Alliance (CCHA)** is the Health First Colorado (Colorado's Medicaid Program) regional organization serving the counties of Boulder, Broomfield, Clear Creek, El Paso, Gilpin, Jefferson, Park, and Teller. CCHA connects Medicaid members to needed providers and community resources.
- **El Paso County Public Health (EPCPH)** provides comprehensive public health services for disease control and prevention, from air and water quality to infectious disease and emergency preparedness. Many of the county's programs, such as immunizations, Women, Infants and Children (WIC), Reproductive Health, and Nurse-Family Partnership focus on serving low-income individuals and families. Many El Paso County Public Health programs focus on upstream prevention efforts that address the social determinants of health.

Income, Infrastructure, and Asset-building

Economic Opportunity Zones

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 created a new tax initiative known as Opportunity Zones that utilizes federal tax incentives to bring long-term investment to communities experiencing high unemployment and poverty rates. There are eight designated Opportunity Zones in the Pikes Peak region which continue to address economic development and job creation in economically distressed communities.

Solid Rock Community Development Center

Solid Rock continues to serve the highest need communities and work within areas of poverty within southeast Colorado Springs. They focus efforts through strategic and cooperative community transformation investments to support and empower their communities.

Transportation

Mountain Metropolitan Transit is the primary source of public transportation services in the Pikes Peak region, providing over 11,000 one-way trips per day within the City of Colorado Springs, Manitou Springs and the Widefield area.

Other transportation options include:

- **Envida Cares** provides medically necessary transportation, including for riders who have been compromised by COVID-19. Additionally, they provide food and prescription delivery for those homebound and rides to work for those who are unable to use public transportation.
- **Fountain Valley Senior Center** provides door-to-door and door-through-door, wheelchair-accessible transportation services for those living in southern El Paso County.
- **GoodWheels** is a community transportation option that provides door-to-door services for appointments, errands, grocery store runs, prescription pick up, and community events for mobility-challenged individuals or completely ambulatory.
- **Medicaid Non-Emergent Medical Transportation** is provided through the Colorado Community Health Alliance (CCHA) for those with Medicaid needing transportation for non-emergent medical.

- **Mountain Metro Mobility** is an ADA paratransit service provided for individuals who, because of disability, are unable to or do not wish to use MMT fixed-route bus service.
- **Silver Key Reserve and Ride** is a senior service that provides door-through-door, ADA-accessible transportation for medical appointments, shopping, group meals, social activities, recreation trips, and more.
- **Tri-Lakes Cares** provides financial assistance around transportation needs and can provide emergency assistance for car repairs for those with high needs.

Linkages, Capacity-Building and Civic Engagement

The Healthy Community Collaborative (HCC) and Resilient, Inspired, Strong, Engaged (RISE) Coalition are both heavily engaged community partnerships working in El Paso County to build capacity and achieve collective impact on complex health and social problems. The HCC is a diverse group of representatives from over 60 organizations that serve residents of the Pikes Peak region. The HCC works together to conduct a Community Health Assessment and write a Community Health Improvement Plan. Under the current El Paso County Community Health Improvement Plan, the HCC created Thriving Colorado dashboards to track key indicators related to the priority areas of [Healthy Eating/Active Living](#), [Mental Health/Substance Abuse](#) and [Health Equity](#).⁵

The RISE Coalition focuses on southeast Colorado Springs through resident-led change, with a vision of creating a vibrant, connected community that provides opportunities for all to thrive. RISE engages leaders in southeast Colorado Springs to foster resident-led action to enhance five main areas in the community: cultural, social, built, human and financial capital. The efforts of RISE have leveraged millions of dollars in funding for projects in southeast Colorado Springs and resulted in the opening of the Southeast Women, Infants and Children Clinic to bring services closer to Southeast residents without access to reliable transportation, as well as other collaboratives. Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services Department, the Trust for Public Land, EPCPH, and RISE completed the renovation of Panorama Park, a 13.5 acre neighborhood park located in Southeast Colorado Springs near Panorama Middle School, marking the largest neighborhood park renovation in city history.⁶ The park officially opened August 2022 and offers a variety of key features such as playgrounds, an event lawn for live entertainment, a bike park, climbing boulders, fitness stations, splash pad, community-made art mural, and public art (see Figure 6).

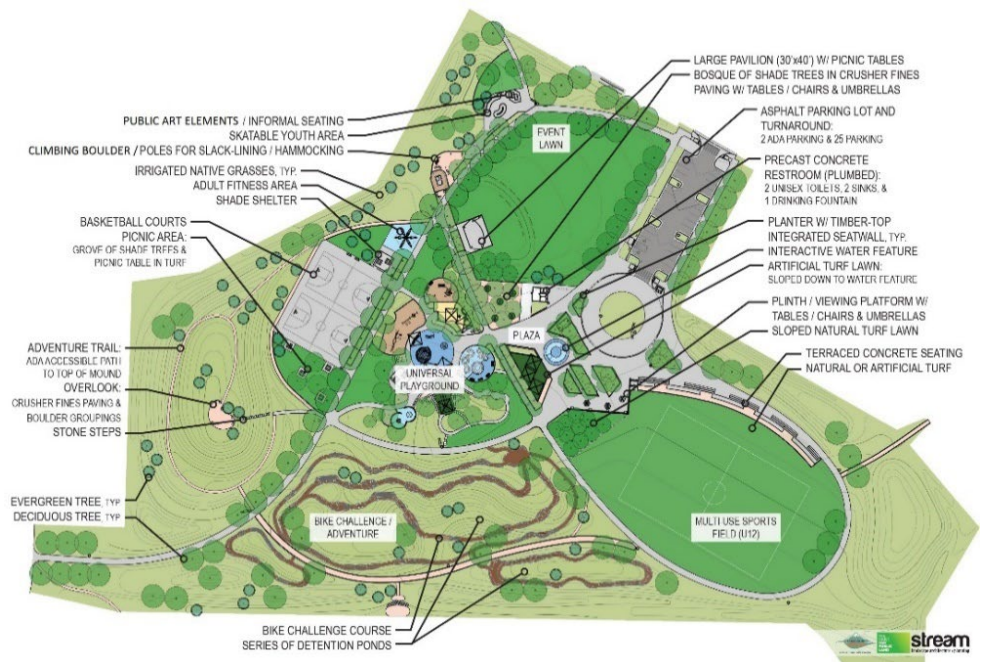


Figure 6. Panorama Park Map, 2022

⁵El Paso County Public Health Thriving Colorado Dashboard [Internet]. Available from: <http://thrivingcolorado.com/partners/el-paso-county-public-health-scorecards/>

⁶ Colorado Springs Panorama Park Renovation. Available from <https://coloradosprings.gov/project/panorama-park-renovation>

V. DATA ANALYSIS

El Paso County Demographic Overview

El Paso County continues to see expansive growth over the recent years and has become the highest populated county in the state. From 2012-2022, El Paso County grew by an estimated 17.5 percent. During this time, the median household income grew from \$68,119 to \$75,909, a 4.2 percent increase. The three largest ethnic groups in El Paso County are white (82 percent), Hispanic (18 percent) and Black or African American (seven percent).⁷ Nearly 97 percent of county residents are U.S. citizens. Nearly 15 percent of the county's adult population are veterans, which is more than double the state and national average. As of 2021, an estimated 13 percent of El Paso County's population is aged 65 and older, and 23 percent is under 18, with a median age of 35.

In 2021, those living below the 125 percent of the Federal Poverty Level in El Paso County are estimated to be 92,110 individuals (13 percent of the population), and 176,161 individuals (25 percent) living below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level.⁸ Table 5 shows a demographic breakdown of the population at less than 125% poverty level.

| Population at less than 125% poverty level | |
|--|-------|
| Poverty by sex | |
| Female | 10.4% |
| Male | 8.8% |
| Poverty by age | |
| Under 18 | 12.2% |
| 18-64 | 9.2% |
| 65 years and older | 6.6% |
| Poverty by race | |
| American Indian / Alaska Native | 16.0% |
| Some other race | 15.7% |
| Two or more races | 13.5% |
| Black or African American | 12.4% |
| White | 8.5% |
| Asian | 7.7% |
| Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander | 7.3% |
| Poverty by ethnicity | |
| Hispanic / Latino | 15.9% |
| White, Non-Hispanic | 7.7% |
| Source: U.S. Census. American Community Survey 1-year estimates, 2021 ⁹ | |

Table 5. Population at less than 125% poverty level demographics, 2021

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, El Paso County Quick Facts 2021. Available from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/elpasocountycolorado>

⁸ Community Services Block Grant Dashboard, El Paso County 2017-2021. Available from: <https://gis.dola.colorado.gov/apps/CSBG/>

⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey: PUMS 1-year Estimate, 2021. Available from <https://data.census.gov/table?q=El+Paso+County,+Colorado+poverty&tid=ACST5Y2021.S1701>

In Colorado, an estimated 9.7 percent of the population lived below the poverty level in 2021 according to the American Community Survey five-year estimates. The same report states that poverty rates are twice as high for Black or African Americans (17.7 percent) and one-half times more for Hispanic or Latinos (15 percent) compared to White individuals (8.1 percent).

The Self-Sufficiency Standard is a measure of income adequacy that is based on the costs of basic needs for working families. These costs include housing, childcare, food, health care, transportation, and miscellaneous items, as well as the cost of taxes and the impact of tax credits (see Figure 7). The 2022 Self-Sufficiency Standard for one adult in El Paso County is \$32,589; and for two adults, one preschooler, and one school-age child is \$84,651.¹⁰ Across Colorado, while wages continue to rise, they are not keeping pace with the increase in cost of living. Since 2001, the Self-Sufficiency Standard increased on average by 124 percent across the state for a family with one adult, one preschooler, and one school-age child. In 2001, the median wage for two adults was just enough to afford the basic needs for a household; however, in 2022, the same two adults with earnings at the median is estimated to be \$20,000 short of what is needed to cover the same costs according to the Self-Sufficiency Standard report.

| | Adult | Adult Preschooler | Adult Infant Preschooler | Adult Preschooler School-age | Adult School-age Teenager | 2 Adults Infant | 2 Adults Infant Preschooler | 2 Adults Preschooler School-age |
|------------------------------|----------|----------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Monthly Costs | | | | | | | | |
| Housing | \$1,033 | \$1,302 | \$1,302 | \$1,302 | \$1,302 | \$1,302 | \$1,302 | \$1,302 |
| Child Care | \$0 | \$1,168 | \$2,355 | \$1,743 | \$575 | \$1,186 | \$2,355 | \$1,743 |
| Food | \$344 | \$507 | \$658 | \$753 | \$868 | \$775 | \$913 | \$1,004 |
| Transportation | \$321 | \$329 | \$329 | \$329 | \$329 | \$635 | \$635 | \$635 |
| Health Care | \$228 | \$637 | \$658 | \$672 | \$720 | \$722 | \$739 | \$753 |
| Miscellaneous | \$305 | \$507 | \$643 | \$592 | \$492 | \$618 | \$750 | \$700 |
| Broadband & Cell Phone | \$112 | \$112 | \$112 | \$112 | \$112 | \$156 | \$156 | \$156 |
| Other Necessities | \$193 | \$394 | \$530 | \$480 | \$379 | \$462 | \$594 | \$544 |
| Taxes | \$484 | \$994 | \$1,539 | \$1,234 | \$827 | \$1,126 | \$1,556 | \$1,351 |
| Earned Income Tax Credit (-) | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Child Care Tax Credit (-) | \$0 | (\$50) | (\$100) | (\$100) | (\$100) | (\$50) | (\$100) | (\$100) |
| Child Tax Credit (-) | \$0 | (\$167) | (\$333) | (\$333) | (\$333) | (\$167) | (\$333) | (\$333) |
| Self-Sufficiency Wage | | | | | | | | |
| Hourly (per adult) | \$15.43 | \$29.70 | \$40.06 | \$35.19 | \$26.59 | \$17.47 | \$22.21 | \$20.04 |
| Monthly | \$2,716 | \$5,228 | \$7,051 | \$6,193 | \$4,680 | \$6,148 | \$7,817 | \$7,054 |
| Annual | \$32,589 | \$62,731 | \$84,609 | \$74,313 | \$56,156 | \$73,776 | \$93,799 | \$84,651 |
| Emergency Savings Fund | \$74 | \$160 | \$378 | \$302 | \$179 | \$95 | \$122 | \$116 |

Figure 7. The Self-Sufficiency Standard for El Paso County, Colorado, 2022

There is a higher incidence of poverty within rural areas, southeastern El Paso County (including Fountain, Security, and Widefield), and in southeastern Colorado Springs. This is due in part to years of disinvestment, historic biases, poor transportation links, and limited representation in the civic process. Southeast Colorado Springs residents experience not only higher rates of poverty, but also a significantly lower life expectancy and less access to healthy food options. In 2018, the Urban Land Institute explored these issues in their report, “Healthy Places: Promoting Equitable and Healthy Communities in Southeast Colorado Springs” which highlighted how these communities had the highest percentage of minority households as well as lower median income and higher business and residential vacancy rates than the rest of the city.¹¹

¹⁰ Colorado Center on Law and Policy. The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Colorado, 2022. Available from <https://cclponline.org/resource/self-sufficiency-standard-for-colorado-2022/>

¹¹ Urban Land Institute. Healthy Places: Promoting Equitable and Healthy Communities in Southeast Colorado Springs, 2018. Available from: <https://americas.uli.org/southeast-colorado-springs-colorado-advisory-services-panel/>

In 2021, the Southeast Community Health Assessment highlights health inequities within Colorado Springs with a focus on how the southeast community health outcomes compare to other parts of the city. The key findings show that the well-being and socioeconomic health of southeast Colorado Springs falls behind due to uneven grocery store access, high concentrations of fast-food near most residents, lack of safe access to nearby parks, and higher temperatures on average in many of the southeast residential areas.¹²

Issue Areas

Income

Levels of poverty vary by census tract, with the lowest income areas concentrated predominantly in the southeast portions of El Paso County (see Figure 8). The 2021 Census data shows a median annual household income of \$75,909 across the county.

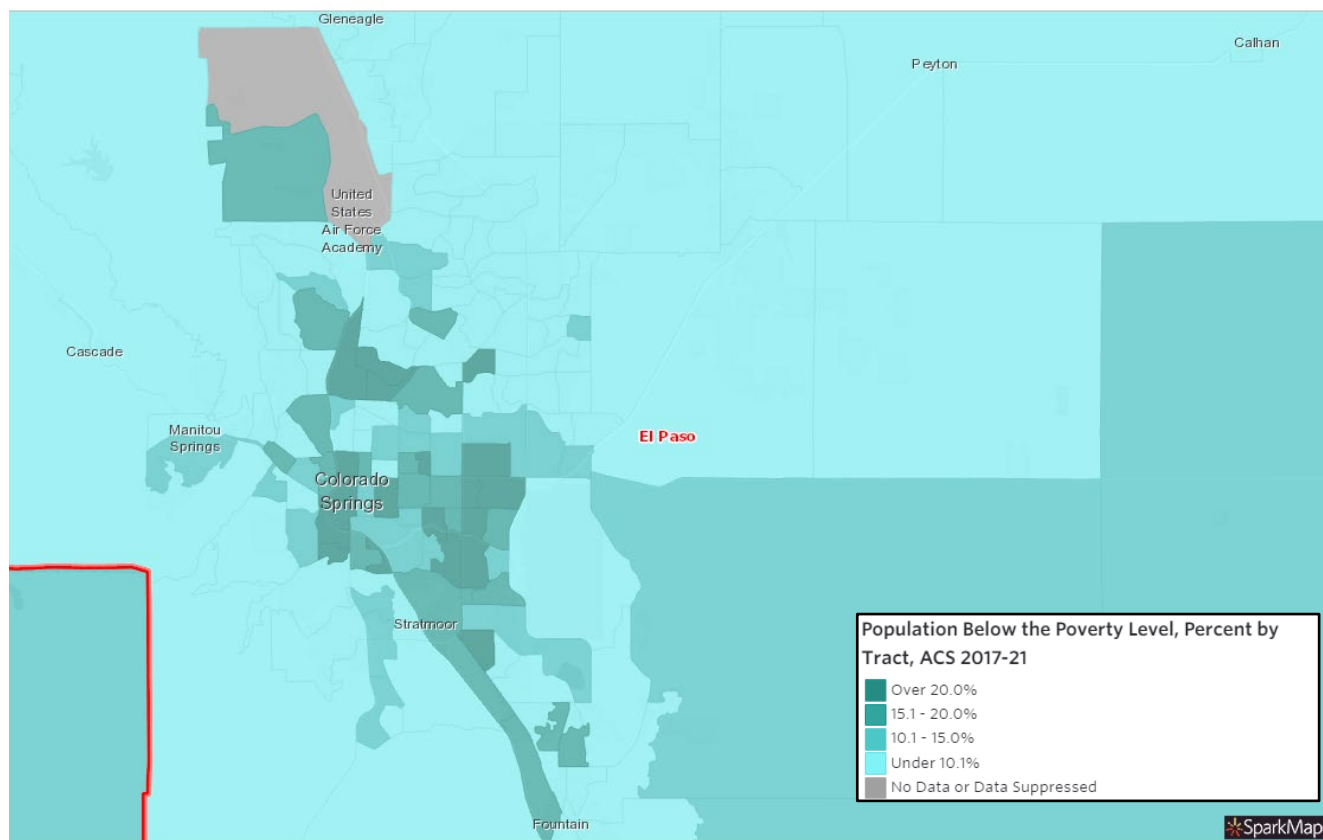


Figure 8. Population Below the Poverty Level, 2017-2021

Income inequality can be measured using the Gini index. The Gini index measures the distribution for wages on a zero to one scale in which zero indicates that all wages are equal, one indicates that a single person possesses all of the income, and everyone else has none. In 2021, the income inequality in Colorado was 0.46 and El Paso County at 0.43 according to the Gini index. Colorado in comparison to the national average is lower and ranks 17 among the 50 states.¹³

¹² Southeast Community Plan Healthy People and Places Assessment 2021. Available from <https://coloradosprings.gov/document/secoshealthypeopleandplacesassessment-final.pdf>

¹³ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey: PUMS 1-year Estimate, 2018. Available from: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/> PUMS 1-year Estimate, 2018

For children and youth living below the 100 percent FPL (the federally-set poverty guideline used to determine eligibility for certain federal programs) in 2021, 12.2 percent of children aged 0 – 17 (or 20,737) live below the poverty threshold measure, referred to as living in poverty. The percentage of children aged 0 – 17 living below the poverty level between 2017 – 2021 varies by census tract (see Figure 9).

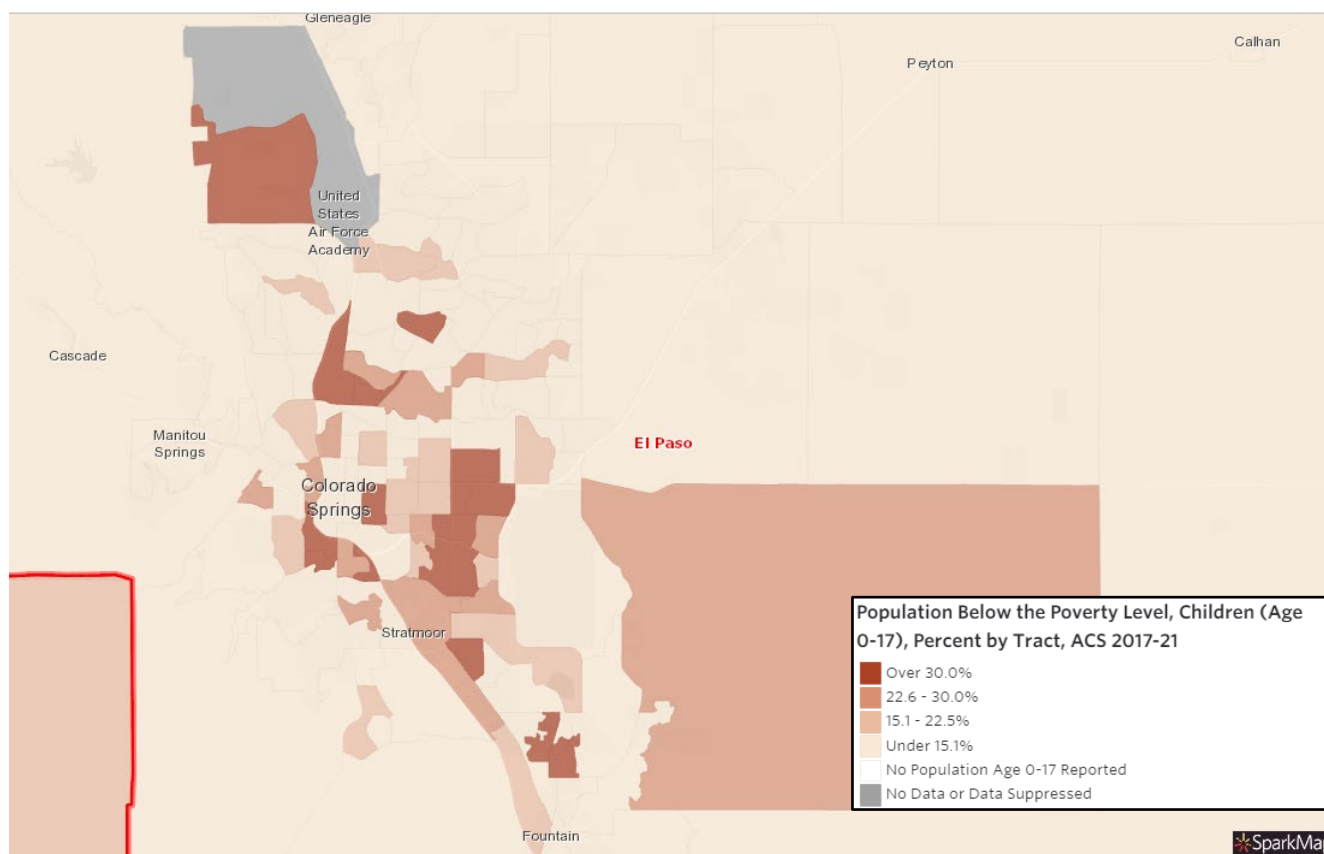


Figure 9. Population of Children Aged 0-17 Below Poverty Level, 2017-21

Education

El Paso County continues to meet the state average for education levels, which tend to be slightly higher than the U.S. average. Approximately 5.5 percent of El Paso County residents have no high school diploma, compared to 11.1 percent in the U.S. However, El Paso County falls behind in preschool and early education enrollment, as seen in Figures 10 and 11, and Table 6.

Percent Population with No High School Diploma

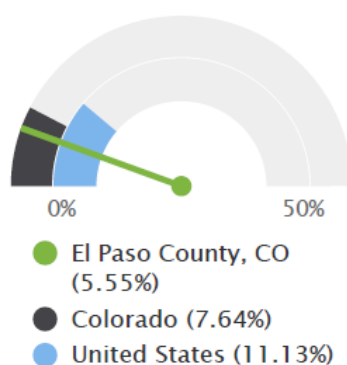


Figure 10. No high school diploma

Percentage of Population Age 3-4 Enrolled in School

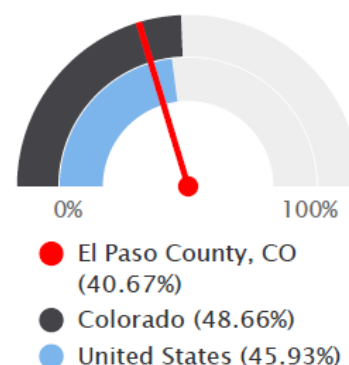


Figure 11. Age 3-4 years old enrolled in school

| | No High School Diploma | High School Only | Some College | Associates Degree | Bachelor's Degree | Graduate or Professional Degree |
|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| El Paso County | 5.5% | 19.6% | 24.4% | 11.0% | 24.1% | 15.5% |
| Colorado | 7.6% | 20.6% | 20.5% | 8.5% | 26.7% | 16.1% |

Table 6. Education status in El Paso County (Source: Community Action Partnership)

Employment

The top employers in El Paso County are its five military installations, school districts, the two hospital systems (UCHealth and Penrose-St. Francis Health Services), the City of Colorado Springs and El Paso County (government). The average weekly wage in El Paso County is \$1,044.

The COVID-19 pandemic led to a high rate of unemployment in early 2020, reaching 9.6 percent. Unemployment claims more than tripled in the first half of 2020 over the previous year, with 18,866 claims from January 1, 2020, through June 30, 2020 (up from 5,353 during the same period in 2019). Many efforts went towards recovery and in December of 2022, unemployment reached three percent (see Table 7). Figure 12 illustrates the percentage of employment by the different sectors in El Paso County.

| | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|-------|------|------|
| El Paso County | 2.9% | 3.3% | 3.1% | 9.6% | 5.6% | 3.0% |
| Colorado | 2.5% | 2.8% | 2.6% | 10.0% | 5.4% | 2.8% |

Table 7. Unemployment in El Paso Count, 2017 – 2022 (Source: Community Action Partnership)



Figure 12. 2020 Employment by Sector in El Paso County (Image source: <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/el-paso-county-co>)

Housing

The U.S. Census Bureau estimated that 65.9 percent of homes in El Paso County were owner-occupied in 2021, or 205,262 owner-occupied homes out of a total of 295,342 housing units. Of owner-occupied households, 74.1 percent had a mortgage; 25.9 percent owned their homes “free and clear,” without a mortgage or loan. The median monthly housing costs for owners with a mortgage was \$1,757. For owners without a mortgage, it was \$493.¹⁴ Housing costs have increased over the past few years and many households were found paying more than 30 percent of their monthly income resulting in a high-cost burden (see Figure 13 and Figure 14).

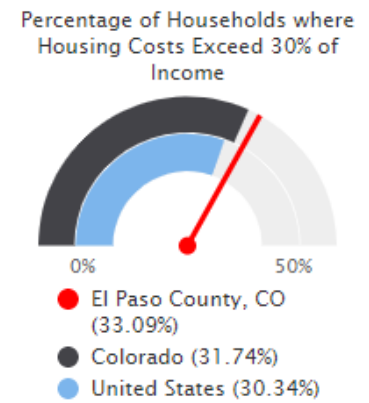


Figure 13. Housing Cost Exceeds 30%

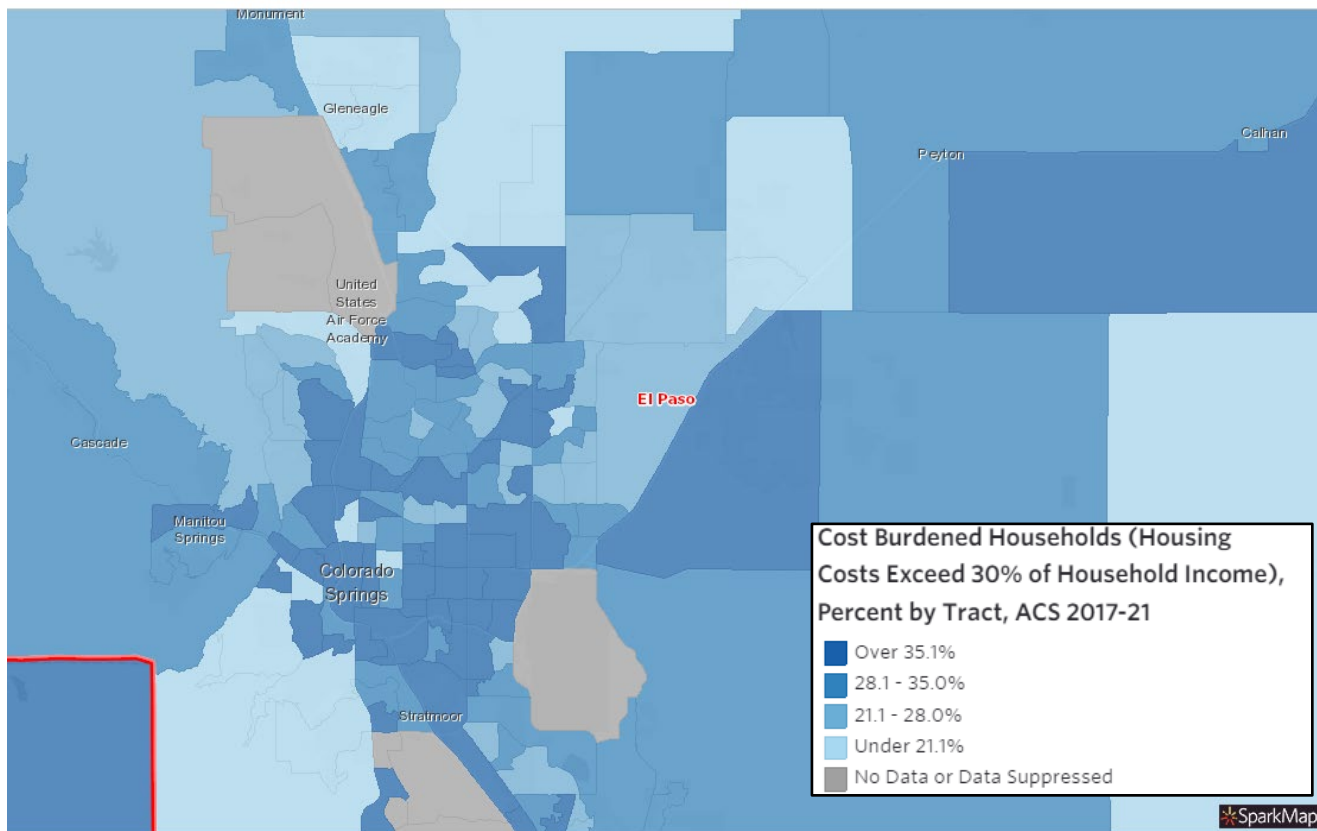


Figure 14. Cost Burdened Households Exceeding 30% of Household Income, 2017-21

The median home value in Colorado Springs in 2019 was \$349,205 which often provided a newly built home with approximately 2,400 square feet, three bedrooms, two full baths, a living room, a dining room, one fireplace, a utility room, a fully finished basement, and an attached two-car garage on an 8,000 square-foot lot. However, the median cost by June of 2022 reached a record high of \$495,000. While there has been a slowdown since 2022, the mortgage rates have since doubled from an average of 3 percent up to 6 percent.

In 2022, the U.S. Department and Urban Development Point-in-Time count recorded a total of 1,443 individuals experiencing homelessness in Colorado Springs. While these numbers per capita are comparable to other similarly populated areas across the nation, many others still need help finding housing shelters or affordable housing support within the county.

¹⁴US Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2017-21. Available from: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>

Nutrition

Colorado continues to be ranked as one of the lowest states among obesity rates, however, nutrition and food access is still a leading health concern in Colorado and El Paso County. Food insecurity affects a significant number of El Paso County residents. Nearly one out of every three residents live in a low-income area that also has low-food access which includes no supermarkets within miles of the home and having no reliable transportation to the nearest locations. This is much higher than Colorado or U.S. averages. In 2019, 9.3 percent of the population received SNAP benefits and certain parts of the county experience food deserts (see Figure 15).

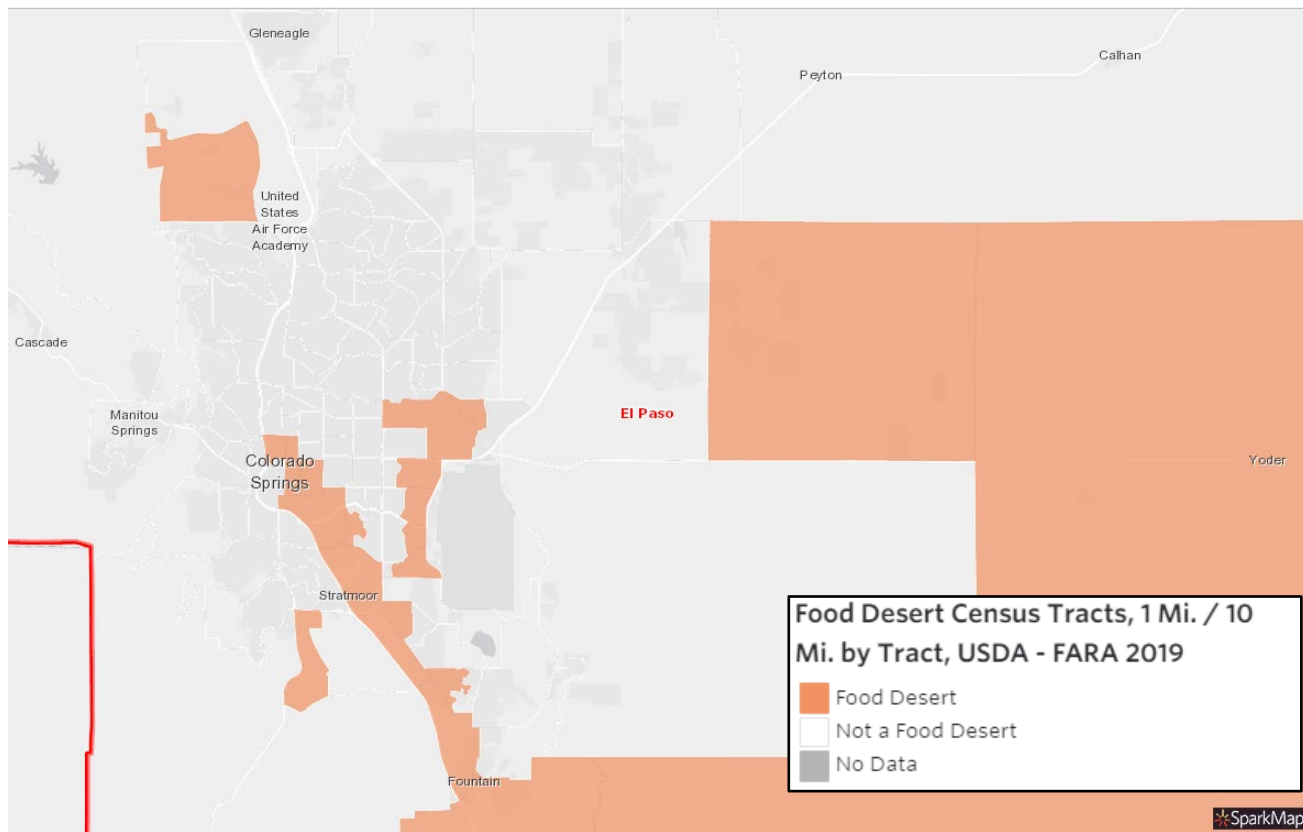


Figure 15. El Paso County Food Desert Census, 2019

In 2021, there were 25,475 households in El Paso County living in poverty but only 34.7 percent received SNAP benefits with a remaining 65.3 percent eligible but not receiving SNAP benefits.¹⁵ For children in public school, those living below 130 percent of the federal poverty level qualify for free lunches, and reduced-price lunches are available for those below 185 percent of the federal poverty level. In 2021, 33 percent of those living in poverty were eligible for free or reduced lunch (see Table 8 and Figure 16).

¹⁵U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2017-21. Available from: <https://gis.dola.colorado.gov/apps/CSBG/>

| Poverty Level | Data Type | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|------------------------------------|-----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch | Number | 40,188 | 43,474 | 45,383 | 46,894 | 47,122 | 46,160 | 45,595 | 45,829 | 43,997 | 39,093 |
| | Percent | 36% | 37% | 39% | 40% | 39% | 38% | 38% | 37% | 37% | 33% |
| Eligible for Free Lunch | Number | NA | 34,634 | 36,321 | 37,323 | 37,659 | 36,629 | 35,860 | 36,468 | 36,752 | 32,471 |
| | Percent | 29% | 30% | 31% | 31% | 31% | 30% | 30% | 30% | 31% | 27% |
| Eligible for Reduced Price Lunch | Number | 8,189 | 8,840 | 9,062 | 9,571 | 9,463 | 9,531 | 9,735 | 9,361 | 7,245 | 6,622 |
| | Percent | 7% | 8% | 8% | 8% | 8% | 8% | 8% | 8% | 6% | 6% |

Table 8. Students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, 2012 – 2021

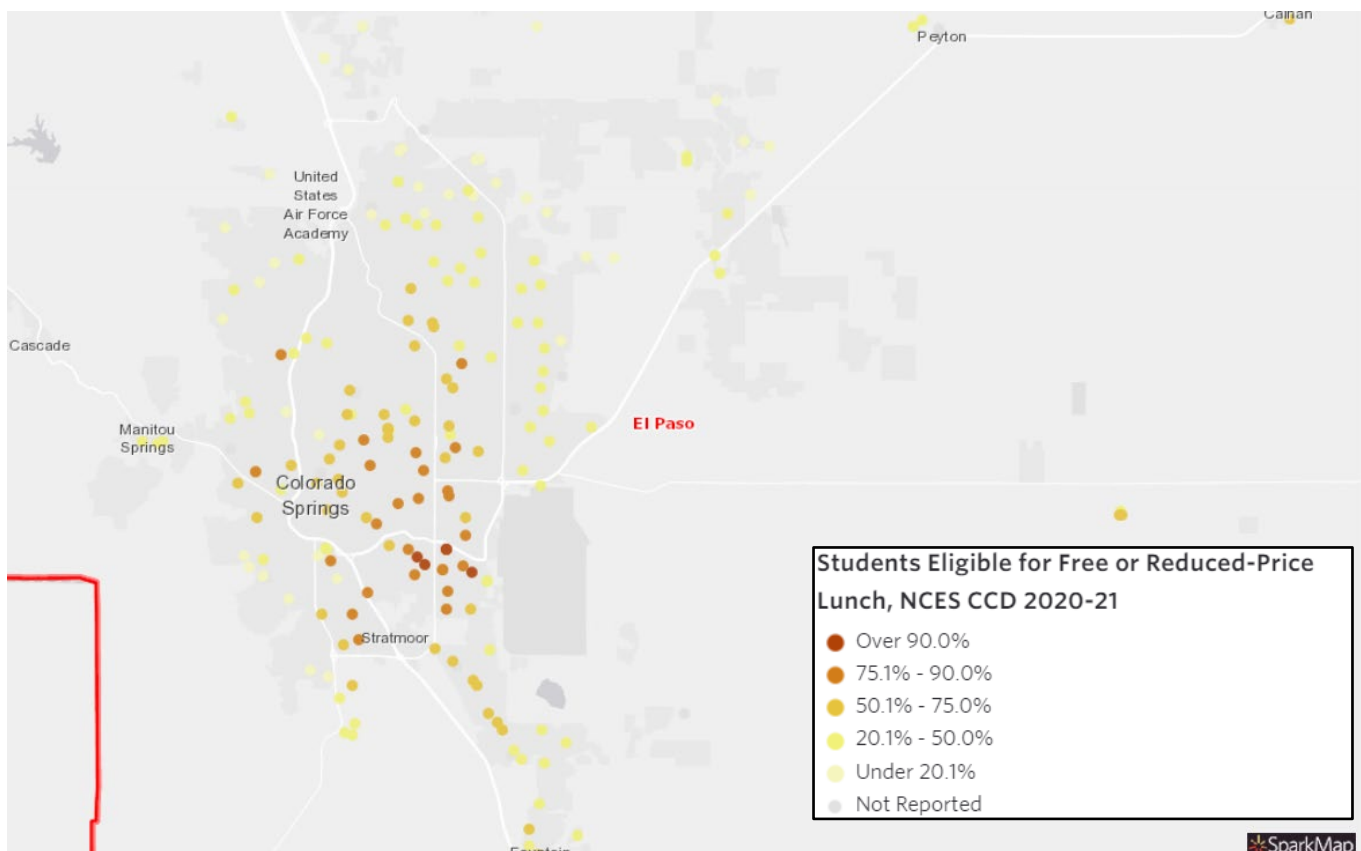


Figure 16. Students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, 2020-21

In 2017, EPCPH conducted a Food Systems Assessment examining how access to healthy food varies across the county. The goal of this assessment was to increase access to and consumption of affordable, nutritious food, particularly in neighborhoods with disproportionately high access to less healthy food and disparate levels of societal and economic burden. From the areas of opportunity in the report, Food to Power completed Phase II of the assessment and in 2022, published their collaborative research findings.¹⁶

¹⁶ Envisioning Food Security: Highlighting Neighborhood Resident Expertise through Community-Based Research 2022. Available from: <https://collaborations.miami.edu/articles/10.33596/coll.91>

Within the 2018-2022 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), a key goal is to reverse the upward trend of obesity across an individual’s lifespan by addressing root causes such as diet and physical activity. The Healthy Community Collaborative created a strategy map to outline how key outcomes can be achieved through focused efforts addressing the upstream causes of obesity, including access to recreation opportunities and physical activity programs, as well as increasing use of public and private food assistance programs (see Figure 17).

El Paso County: Healthy Eating/Active Living

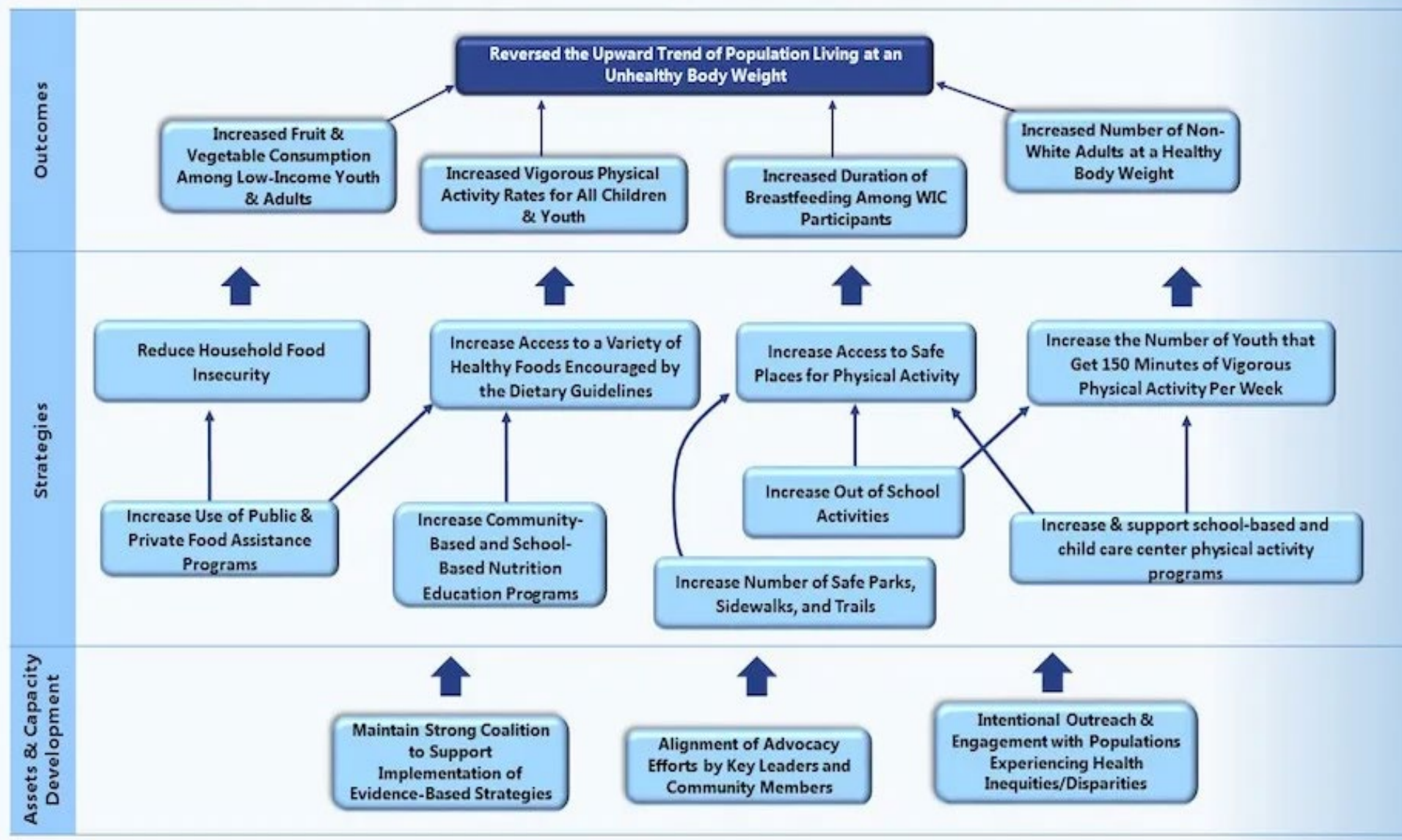


Figure 17. Thriving Colorado Dashboard: Healthy Eating/Active Living strategy map (Source: 2018-2022 CHIP)

Health

El Paso County residents report having “excellent,” “very good,” or “good” health; however, some areas face a 16-year difference in lifespan across census tracts (see Figure 18). Areas of high poverty, primarily southeast Colorado Springs, also have worse health outcomes.

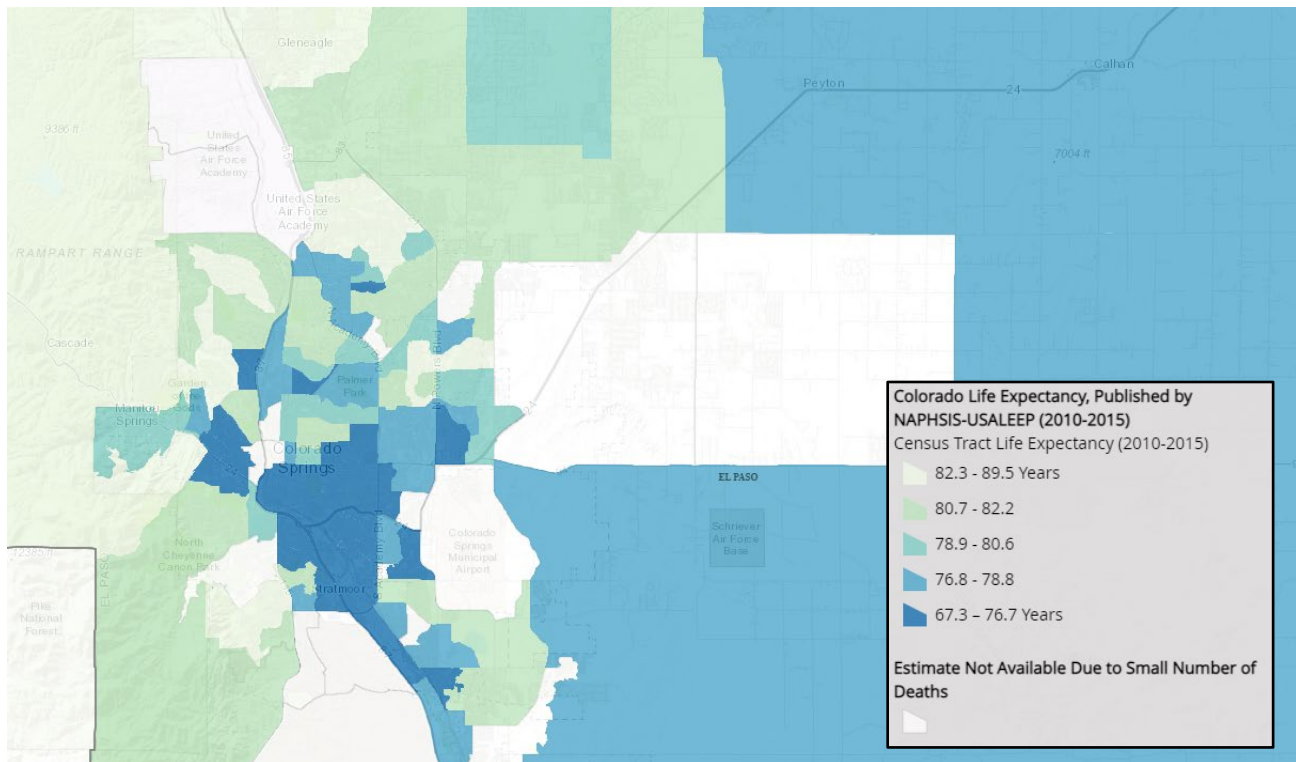


Figure 18. Colorado life expectancy at birth by census tract, 2010-2015

Mental health and substance use is a priority area identified in the 2018-2022 CHIP. The CHIP outlines strategies to address mental health and substance use, including increasing community-based mental health education and training, expanding clinical screenings and referrals to treatment, increasing social connectedness through various social programs, and intentional outreach to high-risk populations (see Figure 19).¹⁷

¹⁷El Paso County Public Health. El Paso County 2018-2022 Community Health Improvement Plan, 2017. Available from: https://www.elpasocountyhealth.org/sites/default/files/CHIP_For%20print_0.pdf

El Paso County: Mental Health & Substance Abuse

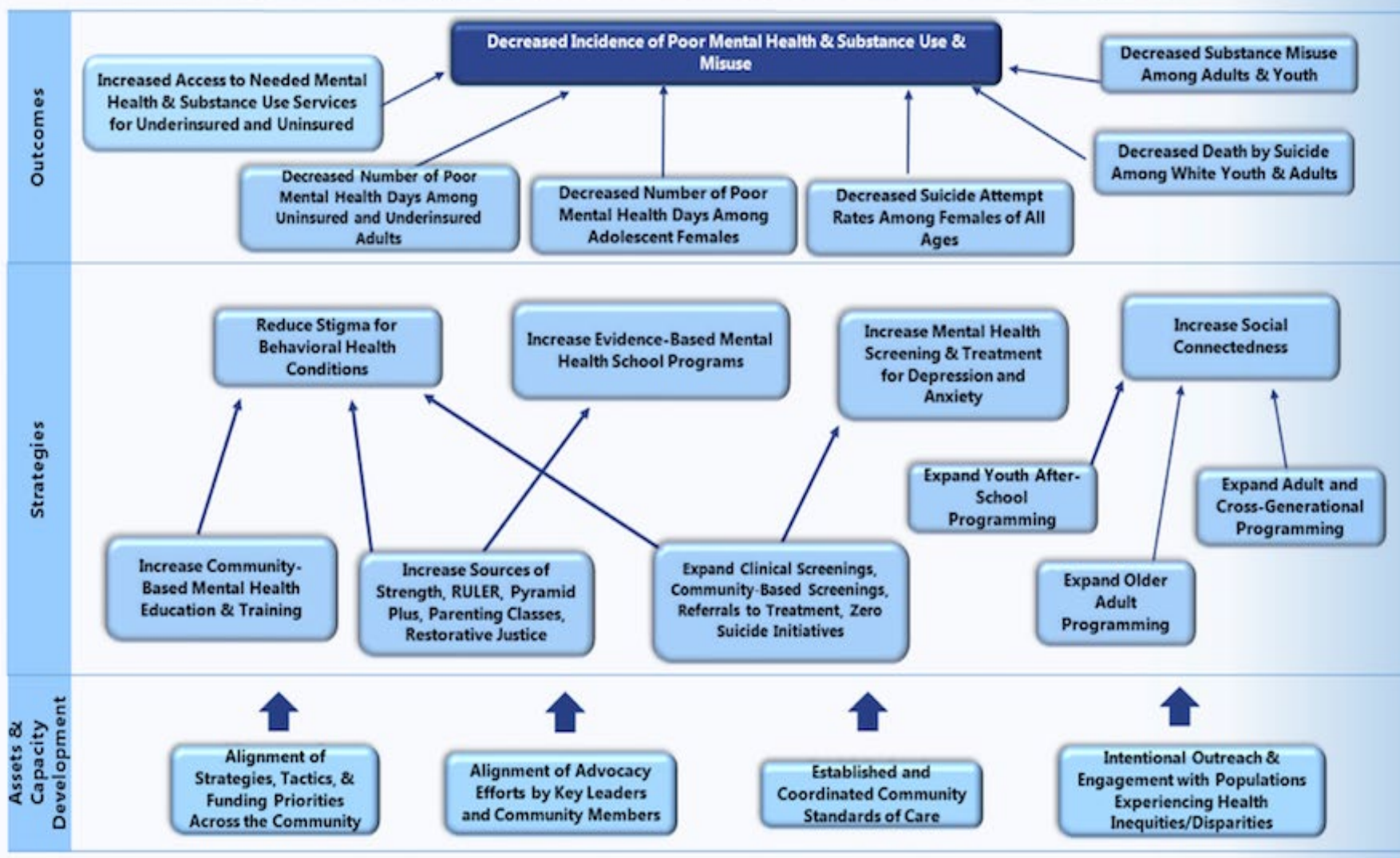


Figure 19. Thriving Colorado Dashboard: Mental Health & Substance Abuse strategy map (Source: 2018-2022 CHIP)

Transportation

Walk, bike, and transit scores are nationally recognized measures for walkability, bicycle-friendliness, and how well an area is served by transit. Walk Score measures pedestrian friendliness by analyzing population density and road metrics. Transit Score is based on data released in a standard format by public transit agencies, including the frequency, type of route (rail, bus, etc.), and locations serviced. Bike Score measures bike infrastructure (lanes, trails, etc.), hills, destinations and road connectivity, and the number of bike commuters. In 2023, the city of Colorado Springs had a transit score of 19 and a walk score of 36, indicating that people are very car-dependent for their transportation. Scores are on a scale of one to 100 with scores at 50 or higher considered “good transit.”¹⁸ These scores indicate that Colorado Springs is “somewhat bikeable” and has moderate transit but falls behind Denver in all measures (see Table 9).

| | Colorado Springs | Denver |
|----------------------|------------------|--------|
| Walk Score | 36 | 61 |
| Bike Score | 45 | 72 |
| Transit Score | 19 | 45 |

Table 9. Accessibility metrics for Colorado Springs, CO and Denver, CO (Source: WalkScore, 2023)

Among commuters in El Paso County, the majority (69.2 percent) drove to work alone, while 7.8 percent carpooled. Less than one percent of all workers reported that they used some form of public transportation, 3.6 percent walked or commuted by bicycle and one percent used taxis to travel to work.¹⁹ The 22-minute average commute time is slightly lower than the national average (27 minutes). During the height of the pandemic, many individuals who were able to do so shifted to remote work, resulting in an all-time high of 18.1 percent (see Table 10).

| | Total Workers 16 and Up | Drive Alone | Carpool | Public Transit | Bicycle or Walk | Taxi or Other | Work at Home |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|---------|-------------------|--------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| El Paso County | 367,714 | 69.2% | 7.8% | 0.2% | 3.6% | 1.0% | 18.1% |
| Colorado | 2,992,582 | 63.7% | 7.1% | 1.3% | 3.1% | 1.2% | 23.7% |

Table 10. Transportation data (Source: [U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey](https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2017/acs/commuting/2017-21.html), 2017-21)

Colorado Springs has minimal public transportation options with an estimated 33 bus lines in the city. Mountain Metropolitan Transit (MMT) provides public transportation services in the Pikes Peak region. MMT provides over 11,000 one-way trips per day, with reduced fare options for youth, seniors, and individuals with disabilities. MMT provides service west to Manitou Springs, north to the Chapel Hills Mall, and south into the Widefield area.

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed additional strain on the highest need populations as well as the systems and organizations that serve them. Below is a summary of the qualitative and quantitative information collected from some of the communities facing the greatest barriers during the height of the pandemic.

¹⁸Walk Score. Colorado Springs, 2020. Available from: https://www.walkscore.com/CO/Colorado_Springs

¹⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2021. Available from: <https://data.census.gov/table?q=commute+el+pasco+county+colorado&tid=ACST1Y2021.S0801>

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging – The Protect Our Neighbors Planning Grant

To help support impacted communities, EPCPH partnered with local trusted Latinx organizations to strengthen public health and health care infrastructure that moves towards Protect Our Neighbors. Under the Protect Our Neighbors (PON) grant program, EPCPH was awarded the Planning and Infrastructure Strengthening grants.

For the PON grant, Spanish-speaking communities were identified as some of the highly impacted communities by COVID-19. EPCPH partnered with Resilient Inspired Strong Engaged Coalition (RISE) and Servicios de La Raza to focus efforts on targeting the collection and dissemination of data and information from/to Spanish-speaking communities. Through a community-based approach, project partners engaged in and co-created a culturally relevant COVID-19 impacts survey, provided trusted cultural brokers from the community to assist with community outreach, disseminated surveys and COVID-19 resource information, and provided referrals or care navigation for those in need. Community partners and cultural brokers were compensated for their time through the grant as well. These efforts were not only framed around equitable approaches to serve the community, but also provided space to listen to the impacts and needs of individuals living in areas experiencing some of the greatest health disparities in the county. Examples of equitable efforts include developing the survey in Spanish first by community leaders, including open ended questions where individuals could share their experience with the cultural brokers, and ensure a follow-up system where surveyed individuals could receive direct referrals or supports to the needs they shared.

Spanish-speaking residents in the most disparate regions of El Paso County were engaged in a self-report survey to assess impacts of COVID-19 on basic needs, COVID prevention practices, access to social support, and preferred methods of communication (see Figure 20). More than 1,500 surveys were collected and analyzed (see Appendix A and B). The co-created survey used the Social of Determinants of Health (SDOH) framework to capture needs across the different determinants domains to equitably capture accurate and timely community data that was used to provide better supports from EPCPH as well as the partnering organizations. Additionally, the barriers identified through the surveys led to the development of a comprehensive community resource list that was shared widely in the community and throughout the county which included timely COVID-19 supports such as food distribution locations, rent and utility assistance, housing shelters, emergency access Medicaid enrollment, unemployment benefits enrollment, and more. Please see Appendix A for further collaboration and data analysis details.

Key findings included 89 percent of respondents reported having access to social support and more than 95 percent reported frequent handwashing, social distancing and wearing a mask when in public. Television, social media, and radio were reported as the top three preferred methods of communication for COVID-related information. Other key findings from the data include:

Key Findings

- Nearly one out of every two survey participants experienced difficulties due to loss of a job or wages
- One out of every four had difficulty affording basic need items such as food or supplies
- One out of every five had difficulties paying rent, mortgage, or other bills

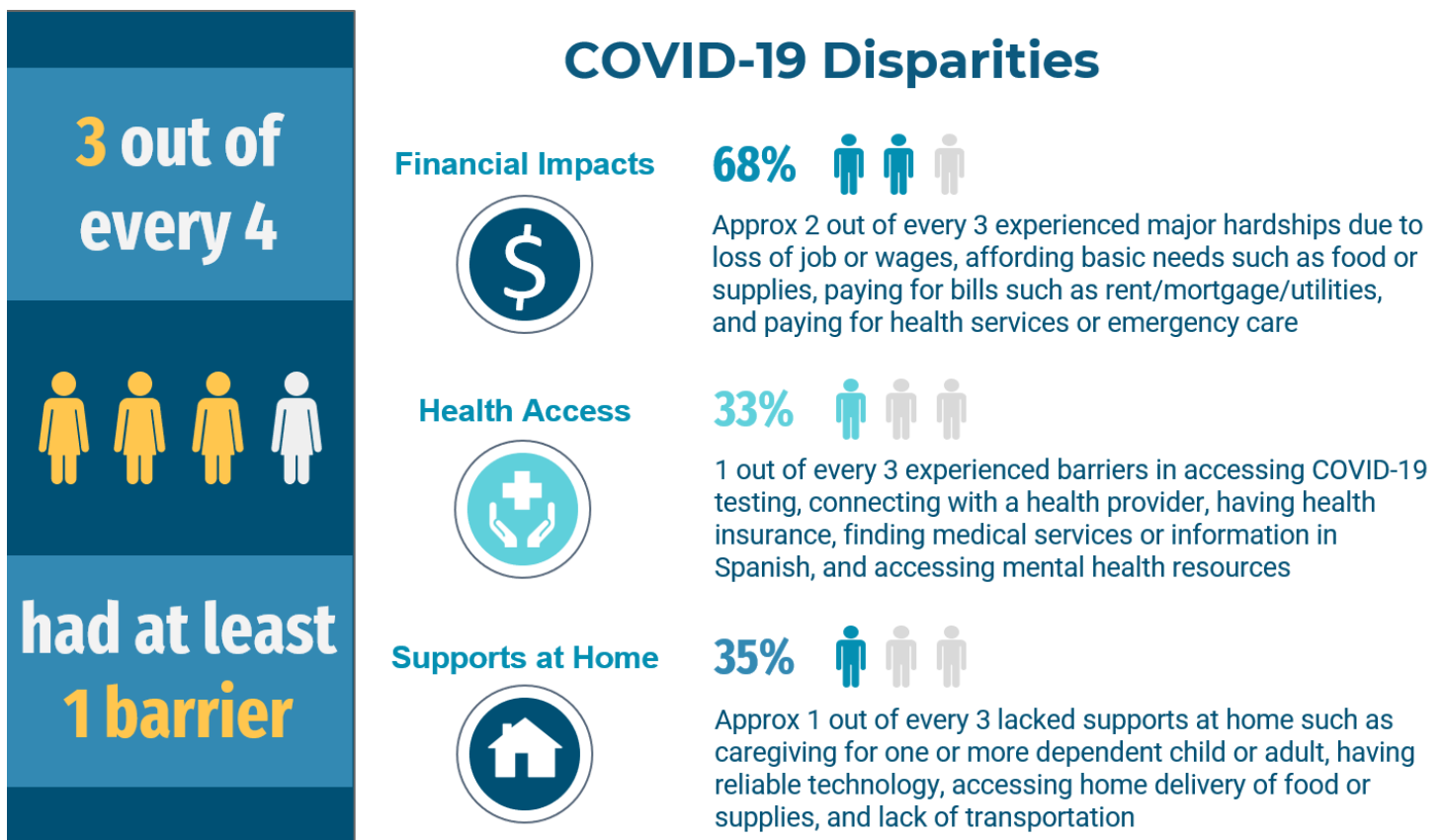


Figure 20. COVID-19 Disparities – PON Grant 2021

Other Identified Disparities

- Access to reliable supports: 88.5 percent felt that they had a reliable support system during these difficult times. For those who felt they needed more support, the following examples were identified:
 - Family, financial aid, medical help, rent and mortgage assistance, trusted sources, spiritual and emotional help, Latino support, more information in Spanish, childcare support
- Ways communities received information: The top five ways of communication that respondents received their COVID-19 information were:
 - 78 percent through television
 - 66 percent through social media
 - 42.5 percent through radio or podcasts
 - 39.5 percent through talking to other people
 - 31 percent through searching online
- Community barriers: The top four needs with which respondents reported having barriers or difficulty during the pandemic were:
 - 41.5 percent reported loss of job/wages
 - 23 percent reported paying for basic needs
 - 20.5 percent reported paying for rent, mortgage, bills
 - 18 percent reported COVID-19 testing

Only 26.5% of respondents reported having no difficulties. Community partners identified priority items around financial needs and access to reliable technology and mental health resources.

Participants Voices on Impacts from COVID-19

| Survey Question: What supports would be helpful for you during this pandemic? | |
|--|--|
| Spanish | English Translation |
| Atravesar x esto no tenemos apoyo económicamente para pagos y ayudas para facturas medicas | <i>Going through this, we do not have financial supports and aid to pay for medical bills</i> |
| ayuda con alguien que me pueda traer comida y mandado a | <i>Help with someone who can bring me food and groceries</i> |
| Sistema médico deficiente pata hispanos inmigrantes | <i>Poor medical system for Hispanic immigrants</i> |
| Pérdidas de trabajo y sin dinero para nuestros gastos | <i>Job losses and no money for our expenses</i> |
| ayuda con dinero porque perdi mi trabajo | <i>Help with money because I lost my job</i> |
| ayuda espiritual | <i>Spiritual help</i> |
| Saber que hacer, a donde ir, pero sobre todo, sentirme segura de que si algo me pasa mis hijos estarán bien cuidados | <i>knowing what to do, where to go, but above all, feeling secure that if something happens to me, my children will be cared for</i> |
| Saber adónde dirigirnos si nos kedamos sin trabajo | <i>Knowing where to go if we are out of a job</i> |

These survey efforts created ongoing opportunities to continue the work under the EPCPH Care Coordination Program which has expanded out into the broader community.²⁰ The three care coordinators specialize in different populations including Spanish-speaking, southeast Colorado Springs, and families with special health care needs. The needs of the community continue to be captured through their care navigation and analyzed according to the SDOH framework to improve supports and services to those who are facing the greatest disparities.

²⁰ El Paso County Public Health Care Coordination Program. Retrieved from <https://www.elpasocountyhealth.org/clinical-care/community-resource-navigation>

VI. KEY FINDINGS

Using the most recent available data, the information provided below shares a summary of the causes and conditions of poverty in El Paso County.

Causes and Conditions of Poverty

Demographics

- An estimated 9.6 percent of households had income below the federal poverty line, and about 12 percent of children under 18 lived below the poverty level.
- The Living Wage for a family of four with two adults and two children (with one adult working full-time for 2080 hours per year) is \$41.02/hour or \$85,321. To achieve the Living Wage at a minimum wage of \$13.65, both adults would be required to hold two full-time positions (6,250 hours/year each).²¹
- Disparities persist by race and ethnicity. Poverty rates are twice as high for Hispanic/Latino residents compared with white residents.
- Poverty is distributed unevenly across El Paso County, with higher rates of household poverty in rural communities, southeast Colorado Springs, and older neighborhoods of Colorado Springs. Poverty rates are the highest in southeastern El Paso County.
- There are higher rates of unemployment among people identifying as two or more races, Black or African American, and American Indian or Alaska Native, than those identifying as white.

Housing and Homelessness

- While Colorado Springs is more affordable than the Denver metro area, its housing costs are still higher than the national average.
- The populations experiencing homelessness in Colorado Springs is on par with other similarly sized cities but has been growing over time. Homelessness-related issues are among the most frequent complaints that the City receives.²²
- Improving housing affordability for all is identified as one of the cornerstone challenges and priorities in the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Colorado Springs, “PlanCOS.”²³ New affordable housing development must take into consideration job access, transportation connectivity, and local opportunity for economic advancement into consideration.²⁴

Transportation and Development

- Certain neighborhoods in Colorado Springs have less access to public transportation and are less bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly. There are many reasons for inequity in development across the city. The geographic size of both the city and county are a challenge for efficient transit connections. This makes the location of services relative to high-need populations an important consideration.

²¹Living Wage Calculation for El Paso County, Colorado – MIT Institute. Retrieved from <https://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/08041>

²²City of Colorado Springs. 2019 Homelessness Initiative. Available from: https://coloradosprings.gov/sites/default/files/inline-images/homelessness_initiative_20190212_0.pdf

²³City of Colorado Springs. PlanCOS - Comprehensive Plan: Colorado Springs, 2021. Available from: <https://assets-admin.elpasoco.com/wp-content/uploads/ACFR/2021-Annual-Comprehensive-Financial-Report.pdf>

²⁴City of Colorado Springs and El Paso County. Affordable Housing Needs Assessment, 2014. Available from: <https://assets-admin.elpasoco.com/wp-content/uploads/EconomicDevelopment/Colorado-Springs-HNA-10.30.141.pdf>

Top Identified Needs

2-1-1 Calls

A major community resource utilized by many needing assistance and navigating supports is the free information and referral 2-1-1 call line service. Inquiries are tracked and reported which provides valuable insight into community needs. The Pikes Peak United Way 2-1-1 line is a free, bilingual resource of health and human service providers for residents throughout 12 counties in Colorado.

From January 2021 through July 2022, the PPUW 2-1-1 line responded to 27,552 calls from individuals and families seeking navigation support to high need resources. The top five needs during this period were utilities assistance (6,148), income support and assistance (4,349), rent payment assistance (4,248), vaccine related (2,638), and food or meals (2,287). While vaccine related calls are ranked as a high need, calls related to vaccine assistance began to significantly decrease beginning in May of 2021. From January 2022 through July 2022, only 50 calls in total were received related to vaccine assistance. Figure 21 shows a breakdown of presenting needs to 2-1-1 from January 2021 through July 2022 is shown.

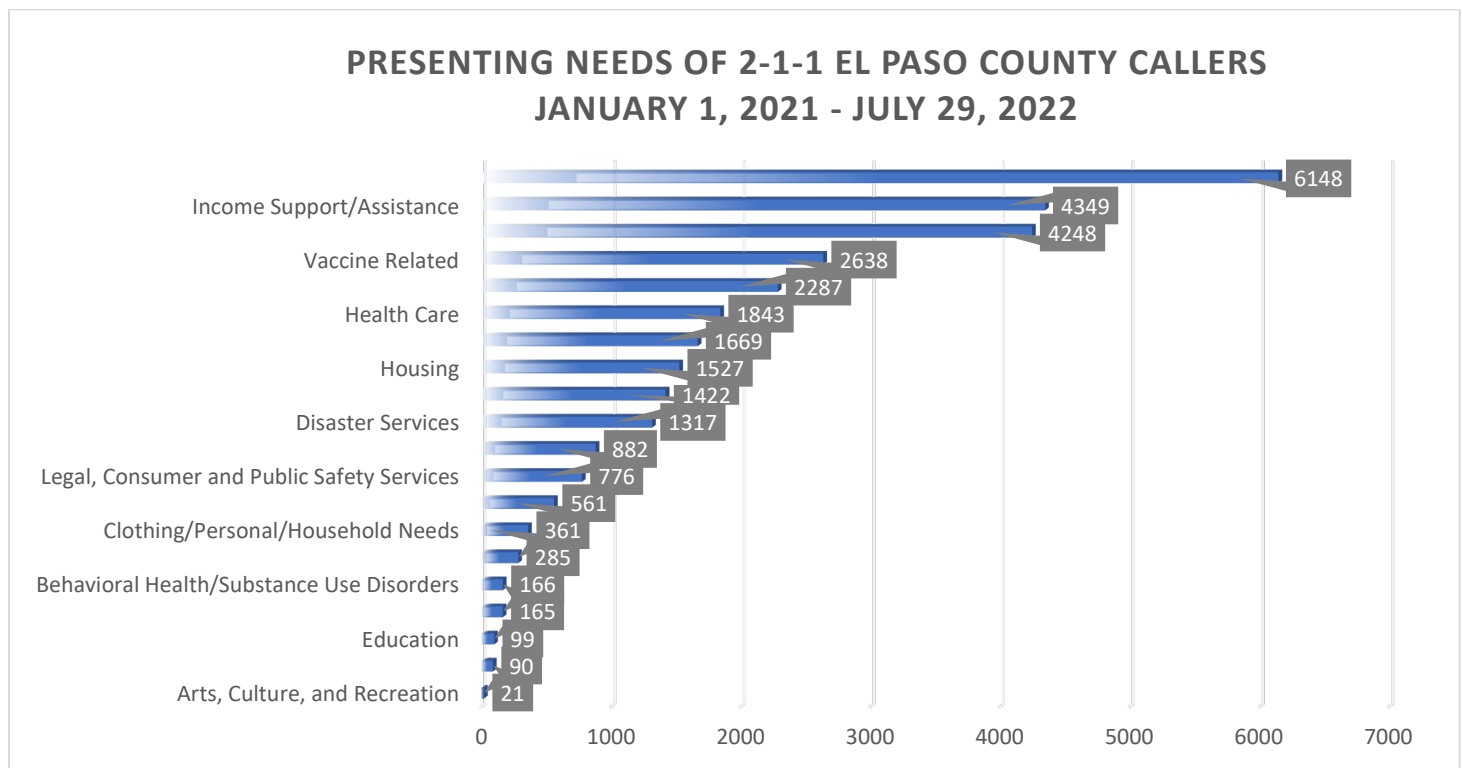


Figure 21. Presenting needs of 2-1-1 callers, January 1, 2021 - July 29, 2022 (Source: Pikes Peak United Way)

Nationally, housing expenses continue to impact families struggling to afford the cost of living. Despite household income rising over the past decade, those earning lower incomes cannot compete with growth in the top percentiles. Individuals living near or below poverty levels have been particularly hard-hit due to the impacts of the pandemic. Providing care coordination and community navigation will help those facing complex challenges that span multiple domains, such as mental and physical health challenges, poverty, unemployment, homelessness, and justice involvement.

Collaborations are essential in identifying and addressing gaps, as capacity may be stretched thin for organizations providing health and social services. Repeat assessments should be conducted regularly to expand on and enhance this report.

VII. APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: Protect Our Neighbors Survey

COVID-19 Community Survey

The RISE coalition in Southeast Colorado Springs, Servicios de la Raza and El Paso County Public Health are working together to find out how we can better support our community during this difficult time. The information collected from this survey will be used to inform future efforts to provide information, services and resources to our residents. The survey consists of a list of statements and questions that describe you or your household's experience with COVID-19. It will only take a few minutes to complete and **it is completely anonymous**, meaning that your personal information will be removed before the survey is sent for analysis.

1. Your Zip Code: _____
2. Your Gender:
- ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Other (please specify) _____
3. Your Age:
- ☐ Under 19 ☐ 20 - 29 ☐ 30 - 39 ☐ 40 - 49
- ☐ 50 - 59 ☐ 60 - 69 ☐ 70 - 79 ☐ 80 +
4. Your Race/Ethnicity(s) (select all that applies to you):
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino ☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native ☐ Asian ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander ☐ White ☐ Other (Please Specify) _____

For the statements and questions below, please put an X in areas that best describe you

| | Yes | No |
|--|-----|----|
| 5. If I have questions about COVID-19, I would know who to ask or where to look | | |
| 6. Since the beginning of the pandemic, did you feel that you had a reliable network of support from friends and family in case you needed help? | | |

If you answered no, what would have helped you feel more supported during this pandemic?

Based on public health recommendations, we are advised to wear a mask in public, maintain 6 feet of social distancing, and wash our hands frequently while disinfecting high touch surfaces. For the following statements below, please put an X in areas that best describe you.

| | Yes | No |
|---|-----|----|
| 7. I wear a mask in public areas | | |
| 8. I maintain social distancing | | |
| 9. I wash my hands frequently and disinfect high touch surfaces | | |

| 10. I find out information about COVID-19 from: | Yes | No |
|---|-----|----|
| Watching television (news, programs, sports) | | |
| Listening to the radio or podcasts | | |
| Social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat) | | |
| Receiving e-mails from friends or family | | |
| Receiving e-mails from organizations or other groups | | |
| Searching on the internet | | |
| Reading the newspaper or magazines | | |
| Seeing signs or posters in person | | |
| Talking to other people | | |

11. Because of COVID-19, I have experienced difficulty with *(please select all that applies)*:

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> COVID-19 Testing | <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of job or wages | <input type="checkbox"/> Paying for basic needs (food/supplies) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caregiving for 1 or more child | <input type="checkbox"/> Caregiving for 1 or more dependent adult | <input type="checkbox"/> Access to a health provider |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Paying for health Services or emergency care | <input type="checkbox"/> Access to reliable technology | <input type="checkbox"/> Access to health services or information in my language |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Access to health insurance | <input type="checkbox"/> Paying rent, mortgage, or bills | <input type="checkbox"/> Citizenship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Home delivery of food or supplies | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | <input type="checkbox"/> Access to mental health services or resources |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I had no difficulties | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |

**El Paso County Public Health
Protect Our Neighbors Grant Project Summary**

- **Demographics of respondents:**
 - Gender: 65% female 35.5% male 0.5% other
 - Age groups
 - 19 and under – 9%
 - 20 to 29 – 17.5%
 - 30 to 39 – 30%
 - 40 to 49 – 25.5%
 - 50 to 59 – 10.5%
 - 60 to 69 – 5%
 - 70 to 79 – 2%
 - 80 and over – 0.5%
 - Race and Ethnicity
 - White – 1.5%
 - Black or African American – 0.5%
 - Hispanic or Latino – 99.55%
 - Asian – 1%
 - Native American or Alaskan Native – 0.5%
 - Other – 0.5%
- **COVID-19 Prevention practices:** Nearly all respondents reported that they practiced regular COVID-19 prevention practices
 - Mask wearing – 98.5%
 - Social distancing – 97%
 - Hand washing and disinfecting – 95%
- **Access to COVID-19 information:** 78% of respondents reported that they knew where to look if they had questions about COVID-19
- **Access to reliable supports:** 88.5% felt that they had a reliable support system during these difficult times. For those who felt they needed more support, the following examples were identified:
 - Family, financial aid, medical help, rent & mortgage assistance, trusted sources, spiritual and emotional help, Latino support, more information in Spanish, child care support
- **Ways communities received information:** The top 5 ways of communication that respondents received their COVID-19 information were:
 - 78% through television
 - 66% through social media
 - 42.5% through radio or podcasts
 - 39.5% through talking to other people
 - 31% through searching online
- **Community barriers:** The top 5 disparities that respondents reported having barriers with or difficulty during the pandemic were:
 - 41.5% reported loss of job/wages
 - 23% reported paying for basic needs
 - 20.5% reported paying for rent, mortgage, bills
 - 18% reported COVID-19 testing
 - And only 26.5% reported having no difficulties
 - Community partners identified priority items around financial needs and access to reliable technology and mental health resources

Beyond the Survey

- **What worked well:** Community partners identified what worked well during this project and found that using community members to help with this community-based effort has made a huge impact on building trust with others as well as EPCPH. Additionally, engagement was successful largely due to providing the community resource list in addition to the survey. Lastly, young cultural brokers were able to network widely through their contacts and share out the survey and resources via their own social media
- **What could be improved:** For feedback on what could have been done better, partners felt the short time frame limited a lot of long-term impacts and made it difficult to utilize more tools to push out COVID-19 messaging and information. Language translation was also important to change in future approaches regarding consideration of translating information vs. trans-creating and making the content more approachable to the community when in Spanish.
- **Lessons Learned:** Identifying lessons learned, partners shared their agreement with a saying: “We are all learning at the same time. It’s like building a plane while trying to fly it at the same time”. They were very thankful for this opportunity to work with us and their trusted cultural brokers/navigators. Both RISE and SDLR would like to continue using the survey as a tool to further connect with members in the community as well as providing further support via the resource list or their own referral services.
- **Community-based approach:** Throughout the project, community leaders were involved in every step of planning the process of the project, developing the survey relevant to the community, identifying trusted cultural brokers from the community, disseminating surveys and resources, and reviewing the finalization of the project through feedback and future recommendations. Servicios de La Raza was able to provide referrals for each respondent they contacted. RISE coalition was able to provide community care navigation and resources for each respondent they contacted. Overall, there was a reported increase of community engagement and built trust among partnered organizations and local public health agencies.

Final Survey Report

1,494 Completed Surveys

| Item | Results | Notes |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| Completed Surveys | 1,494 Completed Surveys <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 860 through RISE • 612 through SDLR • 2 through Be You • 9 through no org. • 1 through Other | Other – 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centro de la raza 10 skipped |
| Question 1 Zip Code | Top Reported Zipcodes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80916 – 783 responses • 80910 – 394 responses • 80917 – 105 responses • 80909 – 41 responses • 80905 – 23 responses • 80810 – 20 responses • 80911 – 16 responses • 80904 – 15 responses • 80915 – 15 responses • 80918 – 13 responses • 80907 – 7 response • 80903 – 6 responses • 80923 – 6 responses • 80922 – 5 response | Other zipcodes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80831 – 4 responses • 80906 – 4 responses • 80920 – 4 responses • 80016 – 3 responses • 80816 – 3 responses • 80930 – 2 responses • 80905 – 2 responses • 81004 – 2 responses • 80817 – 1 response • 80919 – 1 response • 80908 – 1 response • 80926 – 1 response • 80829 – 1 response • 81001 – 1 response • No zipcode – 11 responses |
| Question 2 Sex/Gender | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 529 male • 951 female | 4 identified as “other” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No se • No tengo sexo (non-gender conforming) • Bisexual |
| Question 3 Age Range | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under 19 – 136 responses • 20 to 29 – 260 responses • 30 to 39 – 450 responses • 40 to 49 – 381 responses • 50 to 59 – 154 responses • 60 to 69 – 76 responses • 70 to 79 – 29 responses • 80 and over – 4 responses | Top 5 age group responders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 to 39 – 450 responses • 40 to 49 – 381 responses • 20 to 29 – 260 responses • 50 to 59 – 154 responses • Under 19 – 136 responses |
| Question 4 Race/Ethnicity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asian – 11 responses • Black/African American – 7 responses | Other – 6 responses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Columbian – 4 responses • Latin American - 1 |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hispanic/Latino – 1,470 responses White – 21 responses Native American/Alaskan Native – 3 response | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indian – 1 response |
| Question 5 Finding COVID-19 Information | <p>Si tengo preguntas sobre la COVID-19, me gustaría saber a quién hacérselas o dónde averiguar al respecto</p> <p><i>If I have Questions about COVID-19, I would know where to look</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes – 1,162 responses No – 327 responses | |
| Question 6 Social Supports | <p>Desde que comenzó la pandemia, ¿cree que usted tiene un círculo de apoyo de personas que lo puedan ayudar en caso de que usted necesite de ellos?</p> <p><i>Since the beginning of the pandemic, did you feel that you had a reliable network of support from friends and family in case you needed help?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes – 1,322 responses No – 169 responses | <p>If answering no (88 responses):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> See bottom of e-mail for responses |
| Question 7 COVID-19 Prevention Practices | <p>Me pongo un tapabocas en sitios públicos</p> <p><i>I wear a mask in public areas</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes – 1,464 responses No – 24 response | |
| Question 8 COVID-19 Prevention Practices | <p>Respeto el distanciamiento social</p> <p><i>I maintain social distancing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes – 1,444 responses No – 46 responses | |
| Question 9 COVID-19 Prevention Practices | <p>Me lavo las manos con frecuencia y desinfecto las superficies de alto contacto</p> <p><i>I wash my hands frequently and disinfect high touch surfaces</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes – 1,412 responses No – 71 responses | |
| Question 10 Sources of COVID-19 Information | <p>Averiguo acerca de la COVID-19 del siguiente modo</p> <p><i>I found out information about COVID-19 from</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TV – 1,160 responses Radio/Podcasts – 630 responses Social media – 985 responses E-mail from friends/family – 297 responses | <p>Top 5 answers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TV – 1,160 responses Social media – 985 responses Radio/Podcasts – 630 responses Talking to other people – 587 responses On the internet – 459 responses |

| | | |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emails from organizations/other groups – 251 responses • On the internet – 459 responses • Newspaper/magazines – 192 responses • Signs/Posters – 283 responses • Talking to other people – 587 responses | |
| Question 11 Disparities | <p>A causa de la COVID-19, he tenido problemas con <i>Because of COVID-19, I have experienced difficulty with</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 Testing – 245 responses • Loss of job/wages – 611 responses • Paying for basic needs – 342 responses • Caregiving 1 + child – 264 responses • Caregiving 1+ dependent adult – 133 responses • Access to health provider – 168 responses • Paying for health services/emergency care – 185 responses • Access to reliable technology – 109 responses • Access to health services or info in Spanish – 153 responses • Access to health insurance – 115 responses • Paying rent/mortgage/bills – 304 responses • Citizenship – 113 responses • Home delivery – 102 responses • Transportation – 112 responses • Mental health services/resources – 77 responses • No difficulties – 392 responses | <p>Top 5 barriers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of job/wages – 611 responses • Paying for basic needs – 342 responses • Paying rent/mortgage/bills – 304 responses • Caregiving 1 + child – 264 responses • COVID-19 Testing – 245 responses <p>Other – 21 responses (see below summary table)</p> |

| Question 6, no social supports and what would have helped responses (88 responses): | |
|---|--|
| Spanish | English |
| no tengo familia y pocos amistades | I have no family and few friends |
| K siempre tubieramos trabajo para sostener a nuestras familia | That we would always have work to support our families |
| No kedarme sin trabajo | Not keeping me out of work |
| Más trabajo para pagar nuestros gastos | More work to pay our expenses |
| Tener más horas en el trabajo | Have more hours at work |
| Ayuda económicamente no tengo información kien me ayude | Financial help, I don't have information on who can help me |
| N/A | Friends |
| N/A | Having medical insurance |
| Ayuda económicamente y tener más informacion | Help financially and to have more information |
| Tener a mi familia cerca | Have my family close |
| K sus hijos tubieran mas trabajó | K her children had more work |
| tener gente de confianza con preguntas que tenga y apoyo para no sentirme tan aislada | have trusted people with questions and support so I don't feel so isolated |
| poder tener el apoyo de mi familia aqui si tuviese a mi familia viviendo aqui | to be able to have the support of my family here if I had my family living here |
| poder tener una ayuda economica o ahorros | be able to have financial aid or savings |
| informacion en espanol | Information in Spanish |
| buscar la cura | look for the cure |
| Tener a su familia cerca | Have your family close |
| N/A | <i>more medical help</i> |
| N/A | <i>more economic resources</i> |
| N/A | <i>help with the rent</i> |
| N/A | <i>not having lost my job</i> |
| N/A | <i>support from my family</i> |
| N/A | <i>having economic support</i> |
| N/A | <i>having people by my side and having a stable home to quarantine at</i> |
| N/A | <i>I do not have any family here</i> |
| N/A | <i>I am undocumented, not being afraid to ask for help would help during this pandemic</i> |
| Ayuda económicamente (x6) | <i>Help financially (x6)</i> |
| K siempre tubieramos trabajo para sostener a nuestras familia | <i>That we would always have work to support our families</i> |
| nose | <i>I don't know</i> |
| tener mas personas de confiasa | <i>Have more trusted people</i> |
| Más información para la comunidad | <i>More information for the community</i> |
| Saber adónde puedo pedir alguna ayuda | <i>Knowing where I can ask for help</i> |
| ayuda espiritual | <i>Spiritual help</i> |

| | |
|---|--|
| Estar más unidos como latinos para poder hacer valer nuestros derechos como inmigrantes ya que pagamos impuestos (x2) | <i>To be more united as Latinos to be able to practice our rights as immigrants since we pay taxes (x2)</i> |
| Atravesar x esto no tenemos apoyo económicamente para pagos y ayudas para facturas medicas | <i>Going through this, we do not have financial supports and aid to pay for medical bills</i> |
| Información en español | <i>Information in Spanish</i> |
| estar con mi familia (x2) | <i>To be with my family (x2)</i> |
| ayuda con dinero porque perdi mi trabajo (x3) | <i>Help with money because I lost my job (x3)</i> |
| Saber adónde dirigirnos si nos quedamos sin trabajo (x2) | <i>Knowing where to go if we are out of a job (x2)</i> |
| Más información para la comunidad (x2) | <i>More information for the community (x2)</i> |
| El pago de renta | <i>Rent payment</i> |
| participante indica que necesita ayuda economica por que al estar en cuarentena no pudo trabajar | <i>Participant indicates that he needs financial help because of being in quarantine, he was unable to work</i> |
| No creo que todos se están protegiendo como deberían | <i>I don't think everyone is protecting themselves as they should</i> |
| Una ayuda para Pagar renta | <i>a help to pay rent</i> |
| Tener ayuda | <i>have help</i> |
| sesoria financiera y spiritual (x2) | <i>financial and spiritual session (x2)</i> |
| mas informacion sobre el cuidado del medico | <i>more information about primary/doctor care</i> |
| Saber que hacer, a donde ir, pero sobre todo, sentirme segura de que si algo me pasa mis hijos estarán bien cuidados | <i>knowing what to do, where to go, but above all, feeling secure that if something happens to me, my children will be cared for</i> |
| No tenemos suficiente información en español | <i>we don't have enough information in Spanish</i> |
| tener mas libertad para salir | <i>Have more freedom to go out</i> |
| poder salir con mis amisteds | <i>To be able to go out with my friends</i> |
| no tengo familia aqui y no tengo muchas amistades (x2) | <i>More financial aid information (x2)</i> |
| Más ayuda económica saber aquí en acudir | <i>learn more about saving/economics</i> |
| Saber de más recursos económicos en mi comunidad | <i>resources in my community</i> |
| no estar en distanciamiento social con mi familia (x3) | <i>not be in social distancing with my family (x3)</i> |
| ayuda en general | <i>help in general</i> |
| algunas personas no respetan el distanciamiento social (x2) | <i>some people do not respect social distancing (x2)</i> |
| donde ir si tienes sintomas / no eh visto mucha informacion en espanol no mucha informacion en el idioma | <i>where to go if you have symptoms/I haven't seen much information in Spanish/not much information in my language</i> |
| Tengo miedo de salir y buscar ayuda. No me quiero enfermar | <i>I'm afraid to go out and seek help. I don't want to get sick</i> |
| a no sentir tanto estres | <i>Not to feel so stressed</i> |

| | |
|---|--|
| ayuda con alguien que me pueda traer comida y mandado a | <i>help with someone who can bring me food and groceries</i> |
| Ayuda con la renta | <i>help with rent</i> |
| Económicamente y física mente y moral | <i>Economically, physically, mentally, and morally</i> |
| mas doctores a donde acudir / mas servicios disponibles | <i>more doctors to go to/more services available</i> |
| Que no discriminen a la comunidad hispana | <i>That they don't discriminate against the Hispanic community</i> |
| Tener familia | <i>Have family</i> |
| Más información | <i>More information</i> |
| Algo de dinero | <i>Some money</i> |
| Sistema médico deficiente para hispanos inmigrantes | <i>poor medical system for Hispanic immigrants</i> |
| ir a la escuela con mis amigas | <i>Going to school with my friends</i> |

| Question 11, Because of COVID-19, I have experienced difficulty with Other: | |
|--|--|
| Spanish | English |
| Tube problemas con el pago de mis vacaciones no me pagaron trabajo x 5 años | <i>I had problems with the payment of my vacations, they did not pay me work x 5 years</i> |
| Pérdidas de trabajo y sin dinero para nuestros gastos si Sierran | <i>Loss of work and no money for our expenses if they close</i> |
| Ayuda económicamente | <i>Help financially</i> |
| al principio de la pandemia tuvieron problema con el trabajo y financieramente | <i>At the beginning of the pandemic, they had problems with work and financially</i> |
| Estresados x mm o salir al parke con mis hijos | <i>Stressed (???) or going to the park with my children</i> |
| Pérdidas de trabajo y sin dinero para nuestros gastos | <i>Job losses and no money for our expenses</i> |
| Acceso a más artículos de proteccion guantes cubrebocas ydesinfectantes | <i>Access to more protective items, gloves, masks, and disinfectants</i> |
| ir a la escuela con mis amigas (x2) | <i>Going to school with my friends</i> |
| Depression | <i>Depression</i> |
| No tuvimos trabajo por 1 mes | <i>had no work for 1 month</i> |
| No si a donde puedo ir para encontrar ayuda en cuidar a mi mamma | <i>yes, where can I go find help in taking care of my mom?</i> |
| Pago de renta | <i>paying rent</i> |
| Horas y diaade trabajo muy pocas | <i>very few hours and days of working</i> |
| Y enfermedad | <i>and sickness</i> |
| Pocas horas de trabajo | <i>few hours of work</i> |

VIII. 2023 COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

ADDENDUM

This addendum has been prepared by El Paso County (EPC) Department of Human Services (DHS) for the purposes of addressing items noted by the ROMA Certified Trainer and including data related to an informal survey conducted by EPC DHS staff to further include the voice of low-income individuals in El Paso County.

ROMA Certified Trainer Review Notes

One item of concern was that the causes and conditions of poverty were not separately addressed. Below is a summary of the causes and conditions of poverty for El Paso County:

CAUSES:

- The Living Wage for a family of four with two adults and two children with one adult working full-time (2,080 hours per year) is \$41.02 per hour, or \$85,321 per year. With the minimum wage at \$13.65 per hour, both adults would have to each work two full time jobs to meet that Living Wage number.
- The effects of COVID included high unemployment as businesses had to reduce hours, or close all together. While the unemployment rate has decreased, wages have not kept up with the cost of living/rate of inflation.
- There are higher rates of unemployment among people identifying as two or more races, Black or African American, and American Indian or Alaska Native, than those identifying as white.
- Housing costs in Colorado Springs are higher than the national average.
- Transportation – The geographic size of El Paso County is a challenge for efficient transportation connections. Individuals in rural areas without their own method of transportation are often unable to access needed services.

CONDITIONS:

- An estimated 9.6% of households have income below the federal poverty line, and approximately 12% of children under 18 live below the poverty level.
- Disparities persist by race and ethnicity. Poverty rates are twice as high for Hispanic/Latino residents compared with white residents.
- The populations experiencing homelessness in Colorado Springs is on par with other similarly sized cities but has been growing over time. Homelessness-related issues are among the most frequent complaints that the City receives.
- Poverty is distributed unevenly across El Paso County, with higher rates of household poverty in rural communities, southeast Colorado Springs, and older neighborhoods of Colorado Springs. Poverty rates are the highest in southeastern El Paso County.

In addition to the direct cause/condition relationships noted above, mental and physical health issues are conditions of poverty. The continual stress of being unable to be self-sufficient can take a toll on low-income individuals, leading to anxiety and depression, which in turn can affect physical health.

Another item of concern presented by our reviewer is that the representation of the public sector was unclear. Throughout the process of reviewing the Needs Assessment Report, the EPC CSBG Advisory Board has engaged in discussions regarding the findings presented. These discussions helped shape the informal survey presented below to gain additional information to determine if the Board was focused on the issues that are

affecting the low-income individuals in El Paso County. Three of the nine members of the Board represent the public sector as follows: lawyer, real estate professional and banker.

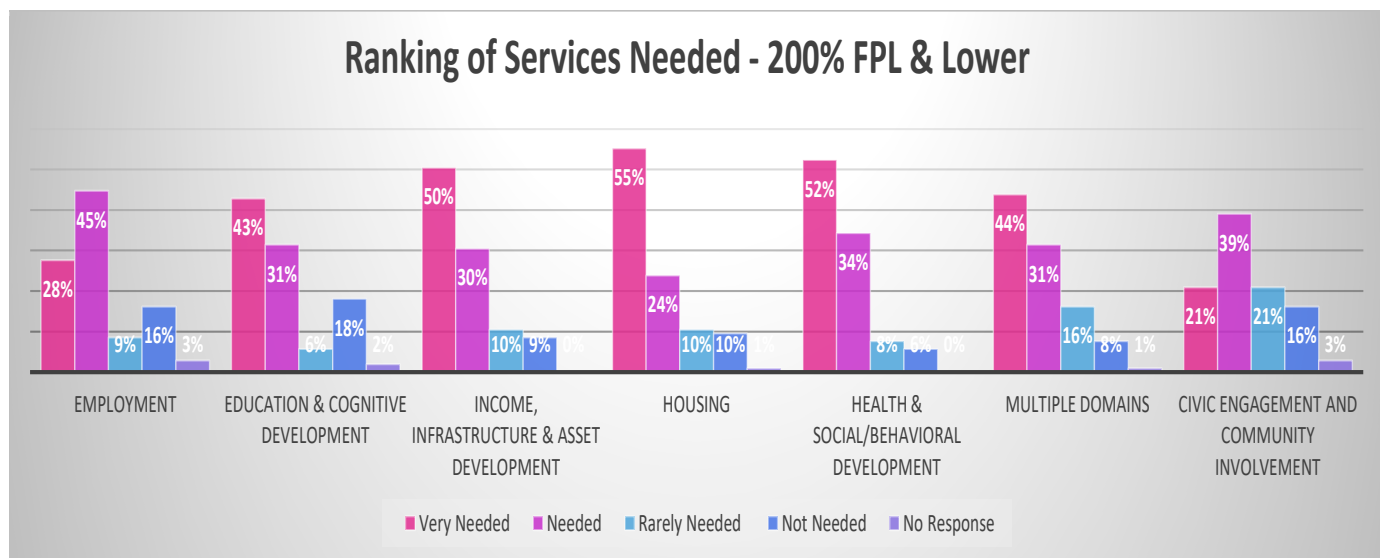
2023 Community Needs Assessment – Informal Survey

Information regarding Pikes Peak United Way 2-1-1 line was provided in the Needs Assessment Report to convey services requested by low-income individuals. While the 2-1-1 call line provides insight into needs of low-income individuals, it is generally individuals in crisis mode who utilize that service. The goal in administering this additional survey was to broaden input from low-income individuals.

In an effort to gain additional perspective from low-income individuals in relation to the needs of the community, a survey specifically designed for the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) was approved by the CSBG Advisory Board (Board). The survey questions are presented following this addendum.

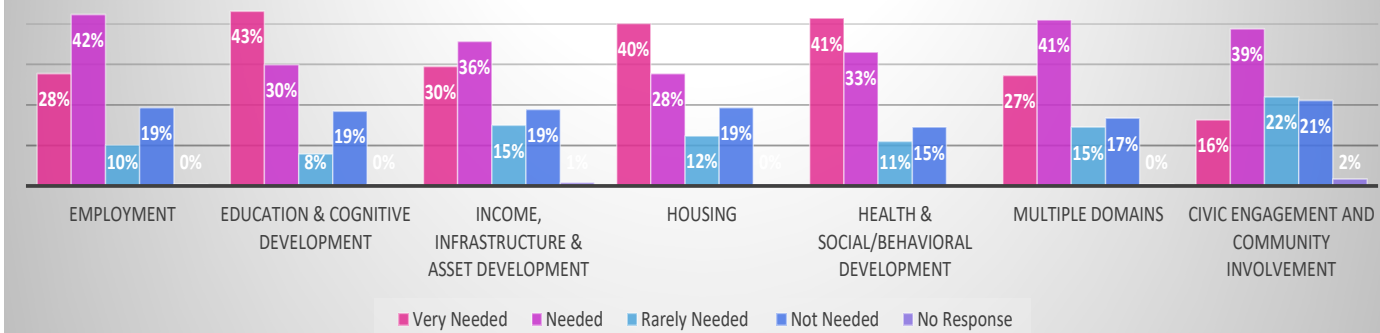
The survey was made available through Survey Monkey on the El Paso County CSBG website and was advertised on the County Facebook page. Additionally, the survey was provided to current subrecipients of the CSBG program to share with their staff and clients, as well as EPC CSBG Advisory Board members to distribute as they were able. The survey was released in February of 2023. As of May 24, 2023, three hundred and thirty-seven (337) responses had been recorded.

As this survey was available to all EPC residents, the responses were sorted according to household income and number of individuals in the household to determine the priorities of low-income individuals. Those under 200% of the Federal Poverty Level were considered low-income, as that is the current level of eligibility for CSBG funding. The summary report below was prepared to specifically review the Federal Domains for CSBG and the importance of those items to the respondents.



This chart shows how services were ranked by those at the 200% Federal Poverty Level or below (105 responses). The detailed definitions as presented in the survey are listed on the following page.

Ranking of Services Needed - Higher Income



This chart shows how services were ranked by those not living in poverty (227 responses). The detailed definitions as presented in the survey are listed on the following page.

Definition of Services:

Employment (including skills training, career counseling, resume development, interview training, job placement etc.)

Education & Cognitive Development (including Head Start, K-12 support services, financial literacy, school supplies, before and after school activities, summer education programs etc.)

Income, Infrastructure & Asset Development (including financial coaching and counseling, home-buyer counseling, small business start-up and development counseling and classes, child support payments, health issues, TANF, SNAP, micro-loans, business development loans etc.)

Housing (including financial coaching and counseling, rent payments, mortgage payments, deposit payments, utility payments, transitional housing placement, home repairs, weatherization services etc.)

Health and Social/Behavioral Development (including immunizations, physicals, vision and dental screenings, prescription payments, doctor visit payments, maternal/child healthcare, family planning classes, wellness classes, mental health assessments and counseling, domestic violence programs, substance abuse programs, prepared meals, parenting classes etc.)

Multiple Domains (including transportation (bus passes, auto purchase, repair), identification documents (birth certificate, driver's license), child and elder care, immigration support services, legal assistance etc.)

Civic Engagement and Community Involvement (including voter education and access, leadership training, citizenship classes, volunteer training etc.)

Below is a sample of responses to open-ended questions from those at or below the 200% Federal Poverty Level:

| Please list other services that you think would be beneficial in our county: | What types of services would assist you to become more self-sufficient? | What do you think El Paso County needs to do to provide a better life experience for you and your neighbors? |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open spaces, education for food stamps | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affordable housing and transportation for the blind would be great. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental health services that are appropriate and effective |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing for homeless | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More transportation, more bus routes, more frequency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More community events (garage sales, meet & greets at local |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | parks) Work with local businesses to host community events. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affordable housing, networking fairs to help people connect with multiple services in one place, community events | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Larger senior center, thus accommodating more senior activities and services, with a DHS office in the center. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address crime and homelessness, better social safety nets. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literacy programs for families with children, tiny home villages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transitional housing for families with mental health issues who struggle with stability. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better housing support (long term housing) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long covid resources and education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homeownership pathways | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More job training programs |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community center | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> JOB TRAINING! | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An easier way to access services |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More services for mental health | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community building events that offer networking opportunities between organizations, professionals, non-profits, small business, ... and individuals, a focus on getting to know each other and what our community needs and gives. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Availability for existing programs to accommodate individuals who are transportation impaired more online assistance |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing stability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short term financial assistance when involved with temporary health crisis | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community outreach to inform us what services are available |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental health services in elementary schools | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education to live within my means. Education for nutrition. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More low-income housing, public transportation, better schools (esp. paying teachers more) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affordable housing and transportation for low income, disabled and elderly. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affordable housing, employment training for livable wage jobs, and more post-secondary skilled labor training programs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better bus service, full day preschool and kindergarten, more school based before and after school programs, affordable childcare, affordable low-income housing, affordable low-income senior housing and assisted living. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affordable healthcare | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More help with utilities and housing expenses beyond rent/house payments | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voter education without political bias | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transportation to food banks for those who do not have vehicles. | | |

This summary shows that the needs of the community are varied. Civic Engagement & Community Involvement was the lowest rated need but was determined to be Very Needed or Needed by 55% of respondents. Health & Social/Behavior Development was the highest rated need with 74% of respondents rating it as Very Needed or Needed. The remaining categories are each rated as Very Needed or Needed by between 68% and 73% of the respondents.

Responses to the open-ended questions also demonstrates how varied the needs are in El Paso County. In addition to commonly cited needs of housing/utility assistance and employment services, including training and placement, broader community needs are presented, such as more community events and gathering centers to voter education and literacy programs.

These results provide additional support for the findings noted in the Community Needs Assessment Report. El Paso County is facing a growing number of individuals needing a variety of services to assist them in becoming self-sufficient. Unfortunately, many of the services desired are more immediate, such as food and housing assistance. Before an individual can navigate the available services to become self-sufficient, they need stable housing, and they need food. Without basic needs being filled, moving towards self-sufficiency is nearly impossible.

Survey

El Paso County (EPC) wants to hear from YOU! We would like to hear how we can better serve you. The feedback you provide will help guide EPC in making decisions in the use of resources that will best benefit our county’s citizens. The more information you can provide, the more useful the results will be. If you would prefer to participate in this survey, please visit WEBSITE ADDRESS. Please only respond once to this survey to provide the most reliable information. Thank you for your time in participating in this survey! This survey is open to El Paso County residents, only. Are you a resident of EPC? Y N Please provide your zip code. _____

1. Do you work for any of the following: (Unfortunately, this question was not included on the online survey)

- Charitable Organization _____
- Faith-based Organization _____
- Educational Organization _____
- Governmental Agency _____
- None of the Above _____

2. What is your annual household gross income?

- ___Up to \$10,000 ___10,001 to 20,000 ___20,001 to 30,000 ___30,001 to 40,000
- ___40,001 to 50,000 ___50,001 to 60,000 ___Over 60,000

3. How many people live in your household, including yourself? (Circle one)

- 1 2 3 4 5 6+

4. How many people in your household are:

- American Indian _____ White _____
- Asian _____ Multiracial _____
- Black or African American _____ Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origin _____
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander _____ Other race or ethnicity _____
- Prefer not to answer _____

5. Please rate the following services based on the level of need in El Paso County? (Place ‘X’ in the column you think applies.)

| | | | | | |
|--|--|---------------|------------------|--------|----------------|
| | | Not Needed | Rarely Needed | Needed | Very Needed |
|--|--|---------------|------------------|--------|----------------|

| | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Employment (including skills training, career counseling, resume development, interview training, job placement etc.) | | | | | |
| Education & Cognitive Development (including Head Start, K-12 support services, financial literacy, school supplies, before and after school activities, Summer education programs etc.) | | | | | |
| Income, Infrastructure & Asset Development (including financial coaching and counseling, home-buyer counseling, small business start-up and development counseling and classes, child support payments, health issues, TANF, SNAP, micro-loans, business development loans etc.) | | | | | |
| Housing (including financial coaching and counseling, rent payments, mortgage payments, deposit payments, utility payments, transitional housing placement, home repairs, weatherization services etc.) | | | | | |
| Health and Social/Behavioral Development (including immunizations, physicals, vision and dental screenings, prescription payments, doctor visit payments, maternal/child healthcare, family planning classes, wellness classes, mental health assessments and counseling, domestic violence programs, substance abuse programs, prepared meals, parenting classes etc.) | | | | | |
| Multiple Domains (including transportation (bus passes, auto purchase, repair), identification documents (birth certificate, driver's license), child and elder care, immigration support services, legal assistance etc.) | | | | | |
| Civic Engagement and Community Involvement (including voter education and access, leadership training, citizenship classes, volunteer training etc.) | | | | | |

6. Please list other services that you think would be beneficial in our county.

7. Have you applied for assistance from any agency within the last 2 years? This could include government agencies, non-profit agencies, and faith-based agencies. Y N
(If No, skip to Question #8 below)

- Did you receive the services for which you applied? Y N
- If not, please provide the reason(s) you were given for not receiving services:
- If yes, what type of assistance did you receive? Food, financial, educational, housing etc
- What barriers have you faced when attempting to access services?
- With which agencies have you worked?

- f. Did the services received provide long-term or short-term assistance?
- g. Were you satisfied with the service you received? Y N
- h. What could have been better?

8. Do you feel there are adequate resources to assist low-income individuals in your area? Y
N

9. Do you feel the resources that are available are what is needed in your area? Y N

10. What types of services would assist you to become more self-sufficient?

11. What do you think El Paso County needs to do to provide a better life experience for you and your neighbors?