

2022

Schoharie County
Community **Action** Program

Community Needs Assessment



Building stronger, healthier communities and empowering families that experience economic and social challenges through strategic partnerships, education, services, and compassion...



SCCAP Board of Directors Approved & Distributed

November 21, 2022

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Introduction

Community Action Agencies are charged by legislation to address the causes and conditions of poverty within their community with a focus on educating its community about economic barriers the low-income community faces and services available to address these barriers. Schoharie County Community Action Program, Inc. (SCCAP) is the designated Community Action Agency serving Schoharie County offering comprehensive services with funding from federal, state, and local sources. SCCAP integrates its services through seven direct-service delivery divisions that administer a diversity of child, youth, and family development; emergency assistance; health and safety; employment skills; and prevention programs geared toward individual and family self-sufficiency, employment, and community, economic stability.

Schoharie County is a rural county with limited resources; therefore, the agency seeks to develop and maintain strong relationships with area human service agencies and community groups to share resources and effectively coordinate services to meet the needs of target populations. Agency staff members actively participate in several coalitions, councils, and committees along with local governmental entities to maximize resources, coordinate service delivery systems and prevent duplication of services.

The community assessment analyzes both quantitative and qualitative information to determine primary community member concern, community trends and SCCAP's role with implementation of systems of support. This Community Needs Assessment (CNA) presents an overview of the current community concerns for the Schoharie County area as indicated by partner discussions, community surveys, member one-on-one feedback, and Census demographics.

SCCAP utilized the Comprehensive Community Needs Assessment Tool available through the New York State Community Action Association to provide demographic figures. Additionally, the content of the assessment includes demographic information obtained from the U.S. Census, American Community Survey, community partner and member surveys along with historic CSBG reported data. Based on the assessment results the board of directors will also determine where it will be appropriate to leverage its resources to best meet the need of its target population.

**Comprehensive Assessment tool can be found at: <https://nyscaa.engagementnetwork.org/community-needs-assessment/>*

SCCAP Corporation Profile

SCCAP was incorporated in 1965 to deliver assistance programs to the low-income community to alleviate the conditions and causes of poverty in response to Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty. SCCAP was the original service provider of senior meals, transportation, Head Start, health clinics and senior housing most of which later were brought under the administration of local government.

Long-standing programs have continued under SCCAP's administration such as Women, Infants and Children (WIC), Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) and emergency services provided with Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funds. SCCAP also is a subcontractor for Schoharie County Government in service delivery for Family Support Services, Skill Building, Supervised Visitation, Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), and youth development activities.

SCCAP has been instrumental in bringing new services to Schoharie County - Child & Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), Facilitated Enrollment**, youth mentors, Nutrition Outreach Education Program (NOEP)**, Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA), Displaced Homemaker Program (DHP), Child Care Resource & Referral (CCRR), Breastfeeding Peer Counselors, and childbirth education services. SCCAP has also been approved to provide Medicaid billable Home and Community Based Services.

***Due to changes at funding source level, program no longer administered by SCCAP.*

In compliance with legislation and the Community Services Block Program Informational Memorandum No. 82, SCCAP's Board of Directors is a tripartite board comprised of seven (7) members providing representation from the public, private, and consumer sectors.

Public Sector	Private Sector	Consumer Sector
<i>Earlin Rosa, Treasurer</i>	<i>Leo McAllister, Vice Chair</i>	<i>Pr. Ray Richards, Chair</i>
Shane Nickle	<i>Rhonda Ferris, Secretary</i>	Brenda Morissette
		Robin Ressler

Mission

Building stronger, healthier communities and empowering families that experience economic and social challenges through strategic partnerships, education, services, and compassion. (July 25, 2016)

Vision

We envision a SCCAP that is:

- A community educator on the barriers facing low-income families in achieving self-sufficiency,
- Abreast of changing community needs and expands/develops programs to meet those needs,
- Financially stable with a healthy financial reserve,
- Progressive in meeting the technological needs of the agency,
- And a leader in quality service delivery.

Values

As an organization, SCCAP values:

- Change: We value the ability of people to build on their strengths to move toward healthy interdependence.
- Respect: We value the preservation of personal dignity of our consumers, staff, board, and community.
- Innovation: We encourage innovation and commit to professional policies and principles that will meet the challenges of a changing environment.

Organization Structure

Agency activities are overseen by the agency's Executive Director who supervises department leadership and provides organizational and community leadership for the purpose of fulfilling the mission of the corporation.

The agency is composed of eight (8) departments - Administration, Community Engagement, Child Care Resource & Referral Center, Community Services, Employment Training Center, Energy Services, Family Support & Resource Center, and Healthy Families/WIC.

Each department is led by a director and staffed by appropriate service personnel. Department activities and outcomes are reported to the agency's Board of Directors monthly.

Schoharie County: General Characteristics and Geography Overview

Schoharie County is geographically a rural area comprised of 621 square miles located in the eastern mid-upstate corridor of New York State. It is bordered by Albany, Schenectady, Montgomery, Otsego, Delaware, and Greene counties. The 2016-2020 U.S. Census data placed the county's population at 29,714, which is a 9.3% decrease from the 2010 U.S. Census. Schoharie County's population density is 47.8 persons per square mile. Median household income for the period of 2016-2020 was \$58,926, a slight increase since the agency's last needs assessment (2019). The average number of persons per household in Schoharie County as of 2020 is 2.34. The county has 16 townships, 6 villages, and no cities. The County Seat is located in the village of Schoharie; however, the center of commerce, the hospital and SUNY Ag & Tech are located in the village of Cobleskill. More than 95% of the county's population is Caucasian and approximately 3.2% of the county's residents are veterans. The current unemployment rate in Schoharie County is 5.3%, which is lower than the New York State rate of 8.7%. The percentage of persons living at or below the poverty level is 3,471, or 11.6%, of which 764 are children ages 0-17. ¹



Assessment Timeline: Noteworthy Events

Notable events early in the period above were Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee (2011); natural disasters that impacted households across the county. After emergency response and post-hurricane clean up, many families rebuilt and sold their homes, moving out of county. Questions remain regarding recovery of the county and what the subsequent increase in households can be attributed to. ²

The COVID-19 pandemic is certainly another topic for consideration when assessing population and demographic trends. While data representing the full picture of impact is not yet available, qualitative data from a variety of stakeholders will be assessed.

SCCAP Needs Assessment Analysis and Objectives

Compilation and analysis of information for the Community Needs Assessment was coordinated by the agency's Community Engagement Director, Naomi Pickett, with oversight from Jeannette Spaulding, Executive Director and certified ROMA trainer. Results will be utilized in the development of the agency strategic plan. Surveys were provided to community members and partners at community events to reach a broad audience. Discussions by board members and staff were conducted with low-income community members and target demographics. The results from discussions and surveys were utilized to aid in identifying areas of community need, barriers to systems of support, and evaluation of agency community interaction.

The areas identified here will serve as the basis for agency goal development. The areas were defined as follows:

Employment - Overwhelming concern continues to be expressed regarding employment. Over 50% of survey respondents feel that the primary cause of unemployment in Schoharie County is low wages in the area. Other areas of concern regarding employment include:

- Lack of living wage employment opportunities within Schoharie County
- Lack of childcare options for working parents

Youth Opportunities and Services – Community members also noted concerns regarding the lack of opportunities for youth in Schoharie County. When asked about the challenges facing youth and services needed, 30-60% of respondents selected a combination of multiple answers. Of these responses, over 40% of respondents believed that the biggest challenges facing youth include lack of adult role models, lack of recreational opportunities outside of school, alcohol and drug abuse by youth and family

Surveys revealed additional information regarding community awareness of available resources.

The most utilized services were the Women's, Infants and Children (WIC); Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP); and emergency assistance with food, heat, shelter, and similar supports.

While the community knows of SCCAP's application-based services, many are not aware of the additional wrap-around supports which help families maximize their limited resources. For example, when asked to specify any community needs that are not being met by Schoharie County resources, respondents noted training and certification for childcare providers and job training, both offered at SCCAP and by various community partners.

Population Characteristics¹

Schoharie County's current total population is **29,714**. Population changes within the report area from 2010 – 2020 are shown below. During the ten-year period, the total population estimate for Schoharie County fell by 9.27% (3,035 persons), decreasing from 32,749 to 29,714.

Report Area	Total Population, 2010 Census	Total Population, 2020 Census	Population Change, 2010-2020	Population Change (%), 2010-2020
Schoharie County	32,749	29,714	-3,035	-9.27%
New York	19,378,088	20,201,249	823,161	4.25%
United States	312,471,161	334,735,155	22,263,994	7.13%

Age

Population age is a segment of demographic data that gives insight into the generational structure of our communities. The charts below show the changes in target age groups.

Report Year	2013	2017	2020
Under 5 years	1,530	1,390	1,340
5 to 19 years	4,825	4,347	5,522
20 to 24 years	3,703	2,196	1,944
25 to 34 years	3,259	3,259	3,259
35 to 44 years	3,833	3,344	3,232
45 to 54 years	4,978	4,522	4,061
55 to 64 years	4,881	4,929	5,032
Over 65 years	5,158	5,788	6,799

Ages 20-24 experienced a 48% (1,759 persons) decline from 2013-2020, accounting majorly for the change in ages 20-64. The 65 years and over population experienced a 32% (1,641 persons) growth, with the majority gained since 2017, which is consistent with aging population trends statewide. All other age categories have remained stable, experiencing no appreciable change.

Gender

0 to 4 (Male)	670
0 to 4 (Female)	670
5 to 17 (Male)	2088
5 to 17 (Female)	2090
18 to 64 (Male)	9422
18 to 64 (Female)	9450
Over 64 (Male)	2856
Over 64 (Female)	3519

Race

White, Caucasian	27,112
Black or African American	305
American Indian and Alaska Native	83
Asian	211
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	3
Some Other Race	304

Ethnicity

Hispanic or Latino	3.8%
White Alone, not Hispanic or Latino	92.2%

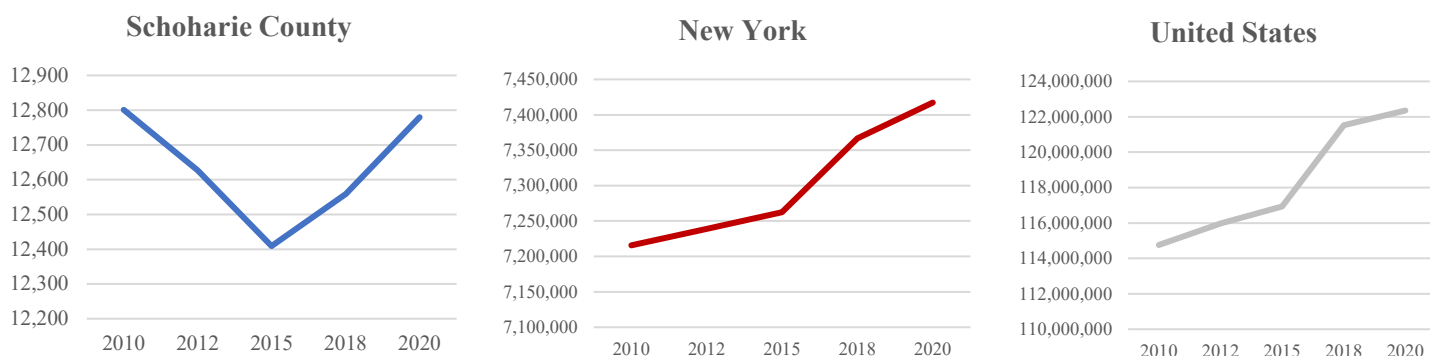
Schoharie County's population is primarily Caucasian (non-Hispanic) and the male-to-female ratio for most age groups is 1:1. There are more females than males in the over 64 population, the ratio being closer to 80:100.

Household and Family Types

Household composition and family structure data are important complements to overall population demographics because it gives insight into the complexity of living arrangements in the community and related disparities.

The charts below show the change in number of households in Schoharie County, New York, and the United States from 2010-2020.

Report Area	2010	2012	2015	2018	2020
Schoharie County	12,801	12,627	12,409	12,559	12,780
New York	7,215,687	7,238,922	7,262,279	7,367,015	7,417,224
United States	114,761,360	115,969,540	116,926,305	121,520,180	122,354,219



As seen in the corresponding graphs, New York and the United States follow similar trendlines in total household change from 2010-2020. However, Schoharie County shows a sharp decline in total households from 2010-2015 and a similarly sharp increase from 2015-2020.

Family Structure: Householder Type

Understanding family structure is vital to understanding the economic and social challenges residents of Schoharie County face. Transitions in family structure often have notable impacts on household stability (economic, social, and physical) and developmental outcomes in children. The table below shows the changes in family structure by household type from 2013-2020.

Report Year	Married Couple	Female, Spouse Absent	Male, Spouse Absent
2013	6,637	1,195	593
2017	5,916	1,266	746
2020	5,985	1,325	736

Since 2013, Schoharie County has seen:

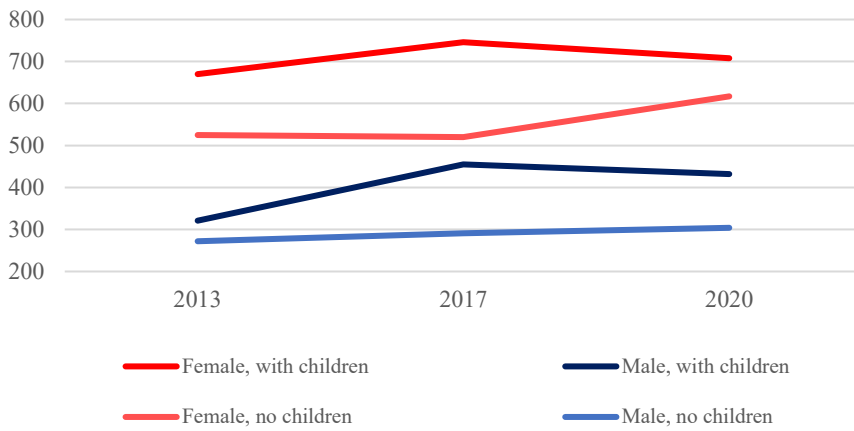
- 10% decrease in married couple families
- 11% increase in single female householders
- 25% increase in single male householders

While single female householders have seen a steady increase from 2013-2020, single male householders and married couple families reached upper and lower bounds in 2017, respectively.

Single Householders

The following graph shows trends related to the changes in male and female householders from 2013-2020. When discussing family structure and household type, gender and presence of children is important to consider as social-emotional needs and impacts for both caretakers and children are assessed.

Single Householders 2013-2020



Since 2013, Schoharie County has seen:

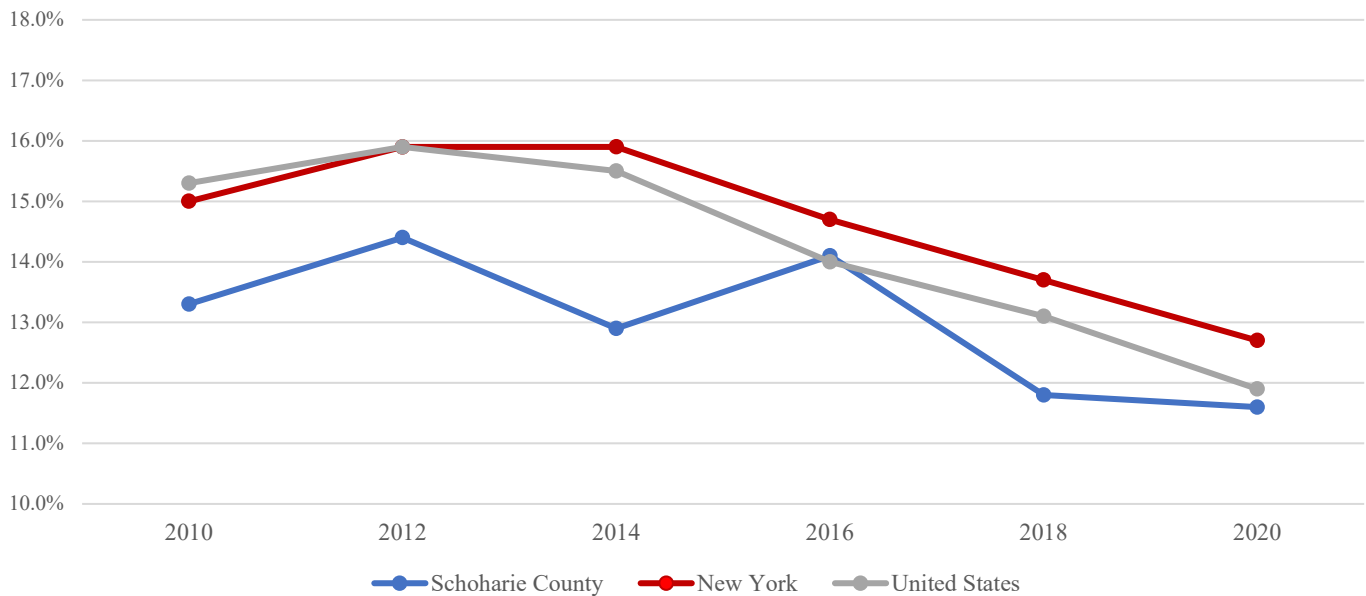
- 35% increase in male householders with children
- 11% increase in female householders without children after 2017
- A slight* increase in female householders with children, followed by a decrease
- A slight* increase in male householders without children

**Slight increases are non-appreciable in the context of this assessment.*

Poverty in Schoharie County

Results from our Community Needs Survey revealed that 86.4% of survey respondents believe that poverty is a pressing issue in Schoharie County, with 64.4% rating the problem as significant or extremely significant. The graph below shows poverty rate change in Schoharie County, New York, and the United States from 2010-2020.

Poverty Rate Change

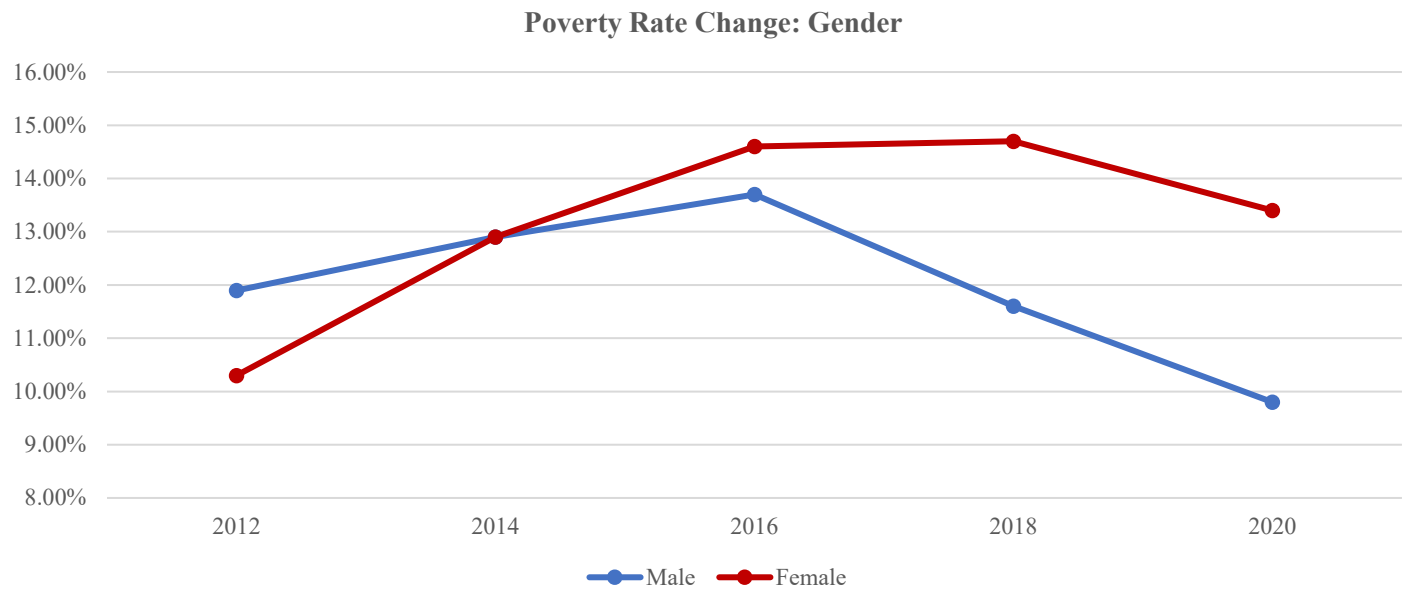


Since 2010, New York and the United States have followed similar trendlines related to poverty rate change. However, poverty rate change in Schoharie County is seemingly erratic from 2010-2016, followed by a significant decline and plateau after 2018.

Poverty by Demographic

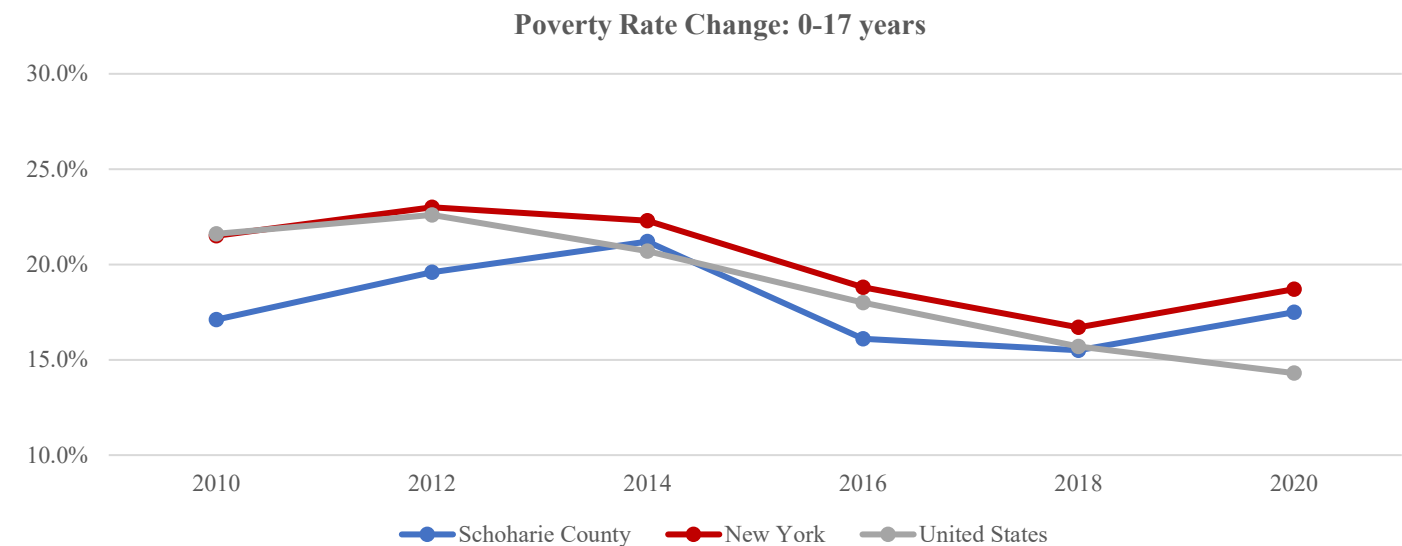
Understanding the poverty picture in various demographic categories gives insight into what disparities exist and why they exist. Below are graphs showing poverty rate change by gender, age, race/ethnicity, and household type.

Poverty by Gender



From 2012-2016, both male and female poverty rates increased, with female poverty increasing at a much faster rate and surpassing male poverty between 2014 and 2016. After 2016, there is a general decrease in both male and female poverty with male poverty decreasing at a faster rate.

Poverty by Age



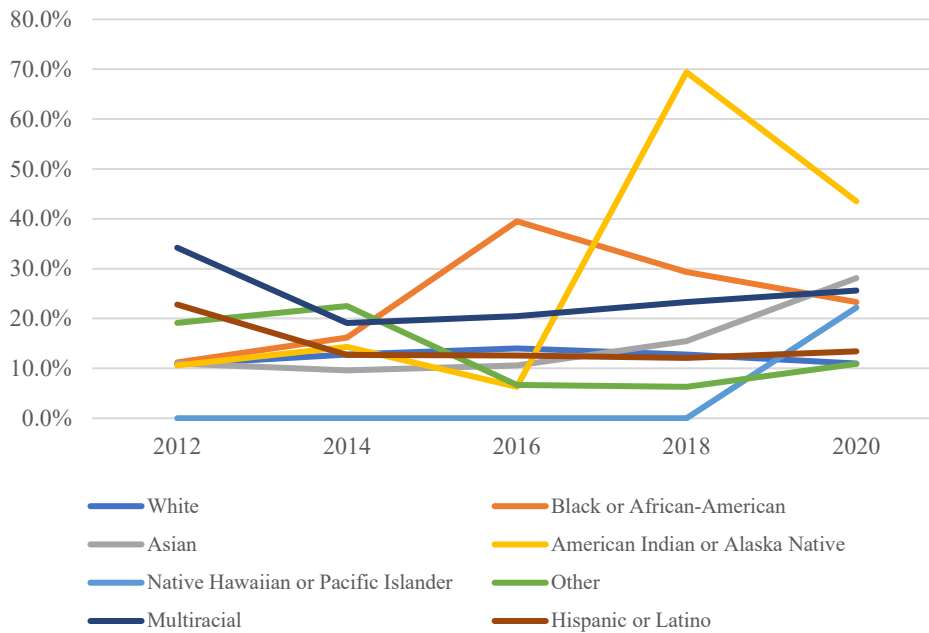
Child poverty rate in the United States experienced a slight increase from 2010-2012 but has seen a steady decrease through 2020. Schoharie County child poverty rate experienced a faster increase in child poverty than New York from 2012 to 2014 but follows a similar trendline from 2014-2020.

Poverty rate in the 65+ population has followed a steady decline since 2012.

Poverty by Race & Ethnicity

The graph below shows poverty rate change according to race and ethnicity.

Poverty by Race/Ethnicity

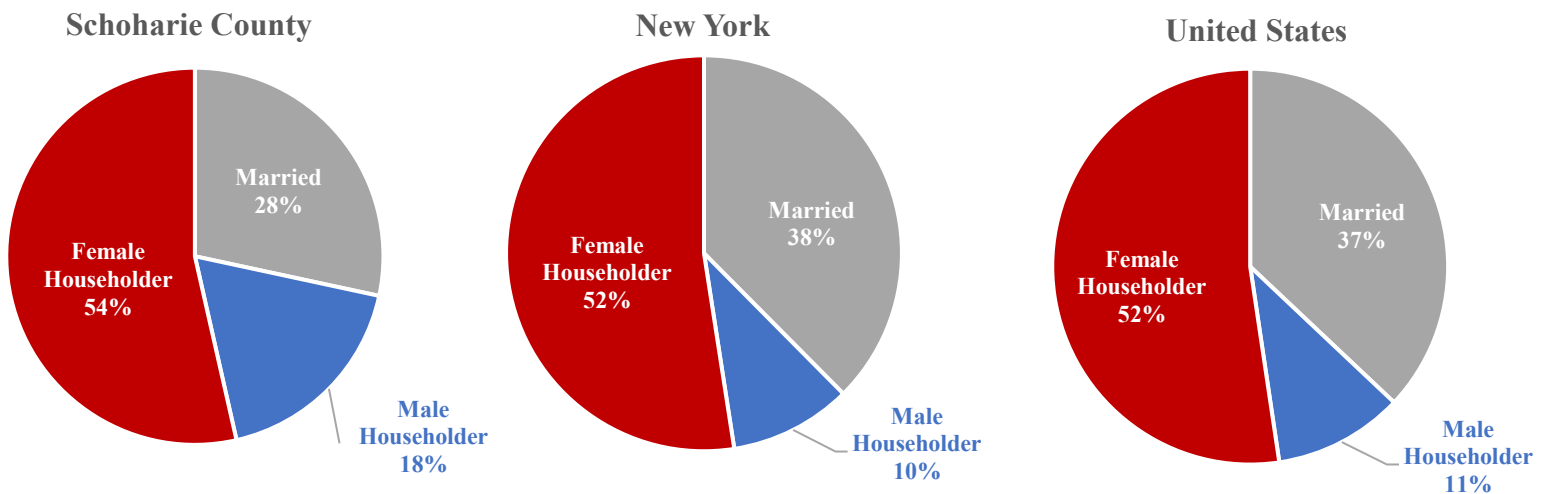


Since 2012, Schoharie County has seen:

- Poverty in Black/African American individuals reaching a high of 39.5% in 2016
- No appreciable change in white/Caucasian poverty.
- A rapid increase in poverty among Asian individuals after 2018.
- Poverty among multiracial individuals reaching a low in 2014, with a plateau following.
- Poverty among Hispanic or Latino individuals (in combination with any race) poverty reaching a low in 2014, with a plateau following.
- Poverty among American Indian/Alaska Native individuals reaching a high of 69.4% (34 people) in 2018.

It is important to note that, because certain racial/ethnic groups comprise a small fraction of Schoharie County's population, a minute change in number of individuals could result in a large poverty rate change.

Poverty by Household Structure



Schoharie County's poverty rate in married couple households is lower than the rate in New York and the United States. There is no appreciable difference in female householder poverty rate. Male householder poverty rate is approximately 8% higher in Schoharie County as compared to New York and the United States.

Looking at poverty rates in households with children:

- 2.4% of married couples with children experience poverty, 1.3% of those households with children under 5.
- 20.4% of female householders with children experience poverty, almost half (43%) with children under 5.
- No data is available surrounding poverty rates of male householders with children.

Poverty and ALICE

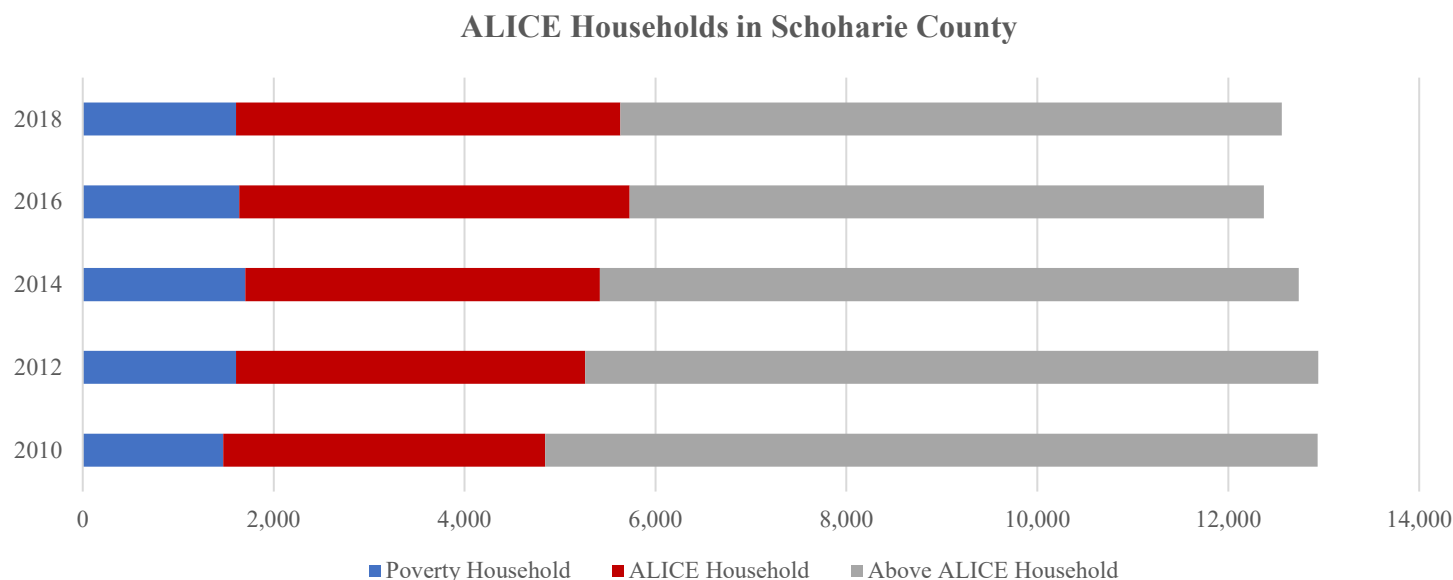
In 2009, a pilot project launched in Morris County, New Jersey spearheaded research to raise awareness about a huge but hidden segment of our community that is struggling to afford necessities, despite earning an income above the federal poverty level. This group is referred to as ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed).

ALICE households:

- Include workers whose wages cannot keep up with the rising cost of goods and services,
- Often include those who are working two or more jobs and still cannot pay their bills,
- Include family members who need care assistance, which challenges their caregivers to find adequate work,
- And live paycheck to paycheck and are forced to make impossible choices: pay the rent or buy food - receive medical care or pay for childcare - pay utility bills or put gas in the car.

Poverty rate in Schoharie County has not strayed far from an average of 13%, however, an average 29% of households are considered ALICE. From 2010-2020, anywhere from 39% - 47%* of households were not able to afford a basic level of living.

The graph below depicts household makeup in Schoharie County by financial category (poverty, ALICE, above ALICE).



*Sum of maximum/minimum poverty rate and ALICE values

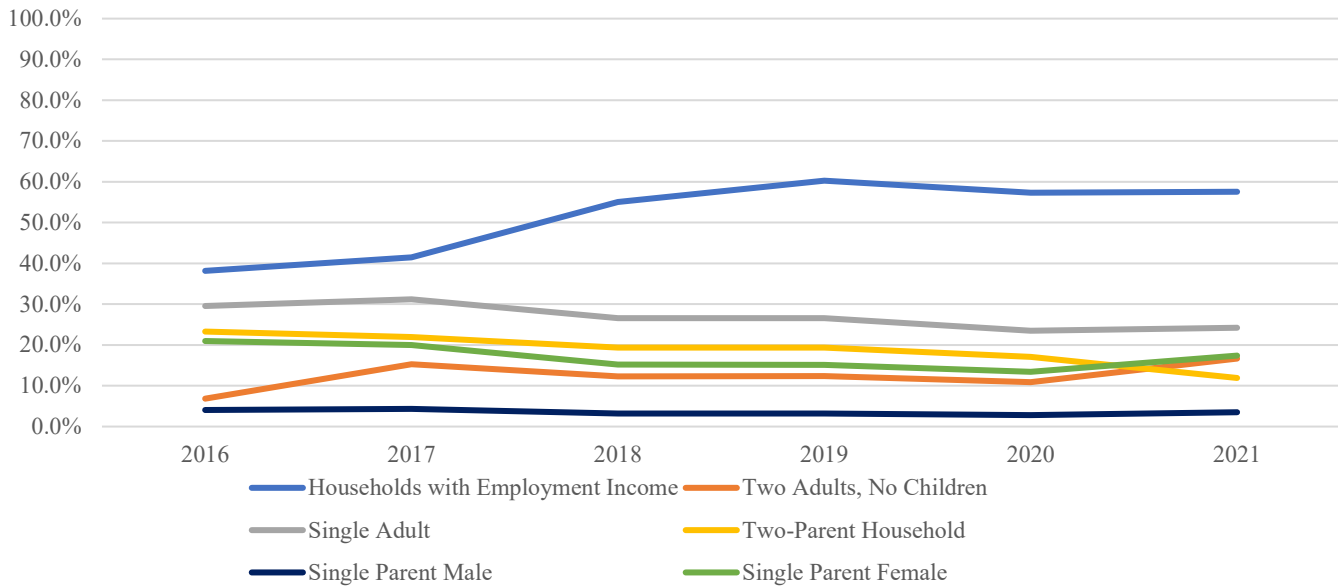
This pilot project has grown into a national movement, founded by United Way of Northern New Jersey and supported by United Way chapters across the United States, shedding light on a group usually left in the dark during conversations about poverty and quality of life.³

SCCAP Service Population

The following graph shows the changes in population served, in relation to household structure and income source. SCCAP serves low-income individuals and families in Schoharie County, excluding a small number of service delivery programs without income eligibility requirements. Understanding financial position and household makeup provides greater perspective regarding the root causes of the economic and social hardships of the population served.

It is important to consider that the statistics used to create the following visual were calculated using characteristics self-reported by clients during the intake process. Rates are also relative to the number of families served at SCCAP, not total Schoharie County Population.

SCCAP Service Population



From 2016-2017, the number of families served increased by 12% and has since stabilized through 2021.

From 2017-2019, SCCAP saw a 19% increase in families with employment income utilizing supportive services. This cohort is equally distributed between employment income only and employment income combined with other income and the rate stabilized through 2021.

Since 2017, SCCAP has seen an approximate 10% increase in the number of two-adult households without children, with the fastest rate of increase after 2021. There has also been an approximate 6% decrease in the number of single adults utilizing supportive services.

Based on the data reported through client intakes, the makeup of SCCAP's service population has not varied greatly, except for a large increase in the number of employed families seeking support in meeting basic needs.

Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) and Maslow's Hierarchy

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

This assessment will use Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs – a theory that suggests human needs are hierarchically organized and basic physiological and safety needs (e.g., food, shelter, clothing, employment, etc.) must be met before psychological needs (e.g., friendship, sense of connection, self-esteem, etc.) can be met – as a framework for defining what constitutes fundamental human requirements and how we address them.⁴



CSBG Background

As mentioned previously, Community Action agencies were established as a result of President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty in 1964. The Community Services Block Grant was previously known as the Economic Opportunity Act, a funding source for Community Action Agencies and Programs. From 1974 – 1981, The Economic Opportunity Act was replaced by the Community Services Act and then the Community Services Block Grant.

While the name by which the funding was recognized and the relationship between agencies and the federal government were amended, the purpose and mission of these funds remained the same; *“to stimulate better focusing of all available local, state, private, and federal resources upon the goal of enabling low-income families and individuals... to attain the skills, knowledge, and motivations and secure the opportunities needed for them to become self-sufficient.”*

CSBG Funding and Service Domains

CSBG funds are foundational revenue at SCCAP, thus our assessment, planning and implementation, evaluation, and reporting processes are structured to reflect the service domains put forth in CSBG Guidelines.

These service domains include:

- Immediate stabilization services related to employment and income, housing and safety, and nutrition,
- And social-emotional support services related to education and family structure and support.

When assessing needs in our community, immediate stabilization needs are considered parallel to basic needs, and social-emotional needs are considered parallel to psychological needs. Needs are assessed and interventions are considered on both the household and community levels.

The complexity of individual and family circumstances makes a direct hierarchical approach to addressing needs nearly impossible. However, it is necessary to recognize that households require safety and stability before self-sufficiency and meaningful engagement with their communities can be achieved.

Identified Needs: Individual and Community Level

Community members were given the opportunity to give feedback to the agency as part of assessment planning through surveys at local outreach events. As an agency, SCCAP sought community perspectives on the causes of unemployment and poverty, challenges faced by both youth and adults, gaps in Schoharie County resources, and potential pandemic impacts on these categories. The table below summarizes the needs identified by the public.

Survey responses revealed a variety of needs perceived in the community, but the common theme among identified needs continues to be affordability of basic needs in Schoharie County and social-emotional challenges and opportunities for youth and families.

Related quantitative data – such as agency utilization rates, U.S. Census data, and survey responses – will be analyzed alongside qualitative data from providers in the community to investigate the root causes and impacts of current Schoharie County conditions.

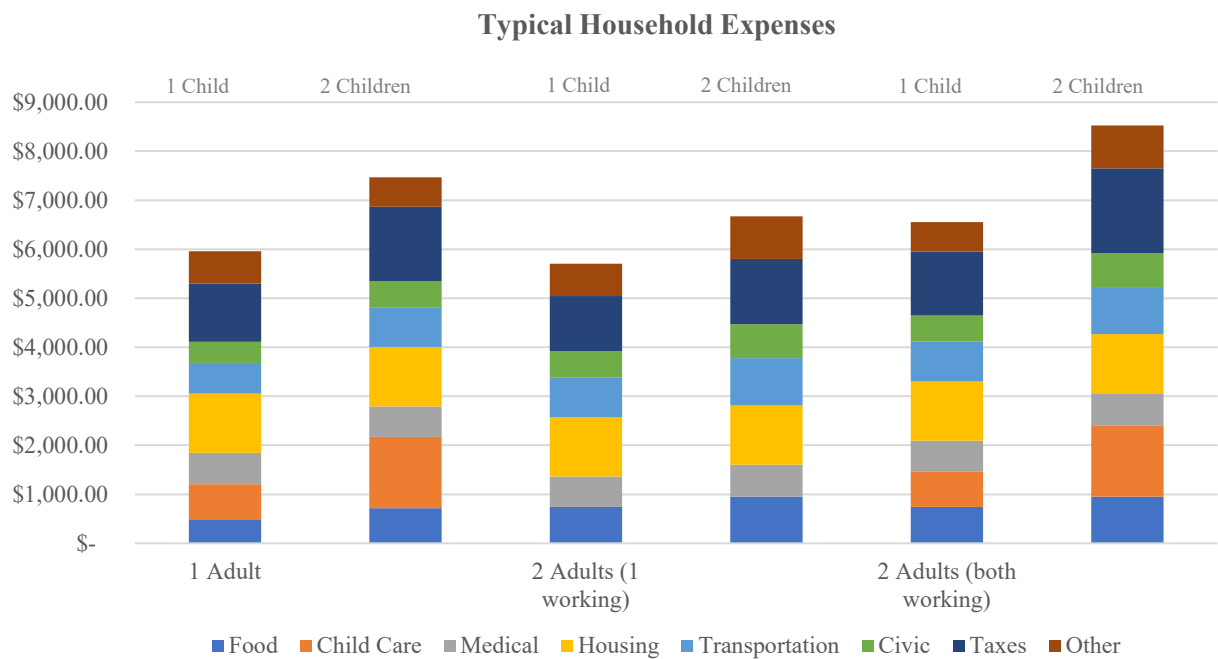
Immediate Stabilization Needs		Social-Emotional Needs	
<i>Individual</i>	<i>Community</i>	<i>Individual</i>	<i>Community</i>
Families are unable to pay their bills.	Job opportunities available do not pay a living wage.	Families struggle with alcohol and drug abuse.	There is a lack of mentoring and recreational opportunities outside of school for youth.
Individuals struggle to provide food for their families.	There is a lack of childcare opportunities in the community.		
Individuals lack the education needed to obtain jobs in Schoharie County.			

Immediate Stabilization Needs: Individual and Family

“Families are unable to pay their bills.”

The chart below shows the breakdown of typical monthly household expenses, specific to Schoharie County related to household structure, number of children, and employed adults. The average household size in Schoharie County is 2.34 persons and a large percentage of those households are led by a single householder, so the data below reflects multiple permutations of what household structure could be for the typical Schoharie County family.

The sum of total expenses for basic needs ranges anywhere from \$5,500 - \$8,500 a month. This equates to a wage between \$18.93 – \$43.13 per hour per working adult to cover these expenses. The lower bound value of this range is the living wage for a household with two employed adults and one child. The upper bound value is the living wage for a single adult with two children.



It is important to consider that the living wage model is an alternative measure of basic needs; one that is a step up from poverty designations, but still does not budget funds for emergency expenses, recreation, or growth of personal wealth (e.g., savings accounts, retirement, purchasing a home, etc.). The measure of living wage is closely related to the percentage of ALICE households in Schoharie County; individuals earning a living wage can provide their household with basic needs for survival but are toeing the line of instability with any loss of income. They are also restricted in any opportunities to build personal and generational wealth.⁵

A closer look at the breakdown of expenses by household gives greater insight into the financial choices working families are forced to make. Expenses requiring the largest amount of household dollars include childcare, housing, and taxes. While housing is traditionally one of the largest expenses for families, taxes and childcare are two categories that also consume large amount of a household budget, regardless of family size. The estimated expense for taxes includes Federal and State taxes (income, payroll, estate, etc.). Property and sales taxes are included in the typical expense estimates for housing and other necessities. A significant decrease in population can account for factors such as increased local and school taxes and families are held in positions where they may sacrifice income to save on childcare costs.

Most human services and supportive programs include eligibility guidelines related to income and the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). As of January 2022, The following chart shows the income guidelines for SNAP, WIC, and CSBG programs (including but not limited to rent and utility assistance, and food pantry assistance) as of January 2022.

Income Eligibility by Household (HH) Size		
	Two Person Household	Three Person Household
SNAP (130% FPL)	\$ 1,984.00	\$ 2,495.00
WIC (185% FPL)	\$ 2,823.00	\$ 3,550.00
CSBG (200% FPL)	\$ 3,052.00	\$ 3,838.00

These thresholds represent the maximum amount of income a household can receive a month and still qualify for services. Typical expense estimate for a two-adult household with one child and one working adult is between \$5,000 and \$6,000, with qualifying income falling between \$2,500 and \$3,800. Feedback from members of the community reveals that there are families in Schoharie County facing financial hardship whose income exceeds the Federal Poverty Levels for various stabilization services and the data above reinforces this feedback.

Living wage, actual wages paid, and typical expenses for households in Schoharie County will continue to be discussed in further detail related to identified needs.

“Individuals struggle to provide food for their families.”

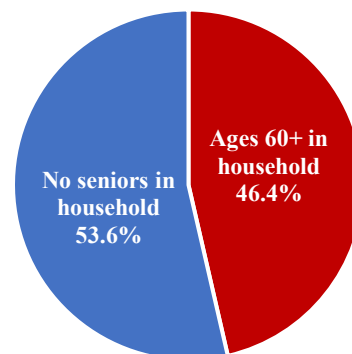
In Schoharie County, 11.7%, or 208 households, receive SNAP benefits. Of the households receiving SNAP benefits, 55.6% (105 households) had at least one employed adult and 17.6% (42 households) had 2 or more employed adults in the last 12 months.

Compared to New York State, less households in Schoharie County receive SNAP benefits (NYS Rate: 15%) but there is a non-appreciable difference in the percentage of employed SNAP recipients.

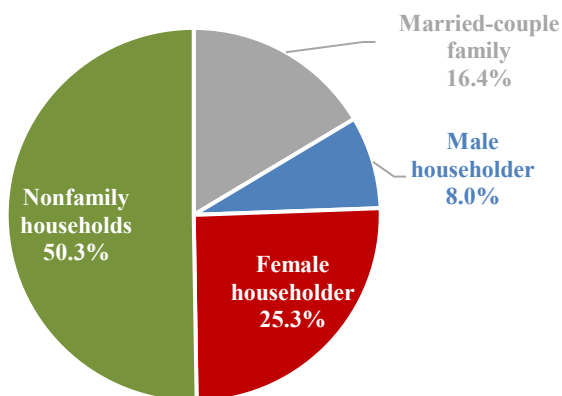
Of total households receiving SNAP benefits in Schoharie County, 46.4% of these households have at least one senior aged 60+.

Stabilizing and meeting the basic needs of senior households can look different than it does for working adults and young families with children. While seniors still face challenges in meeting their everyday needs, these challenges tend to be more fixed than in other populations.

SNAP Recipients

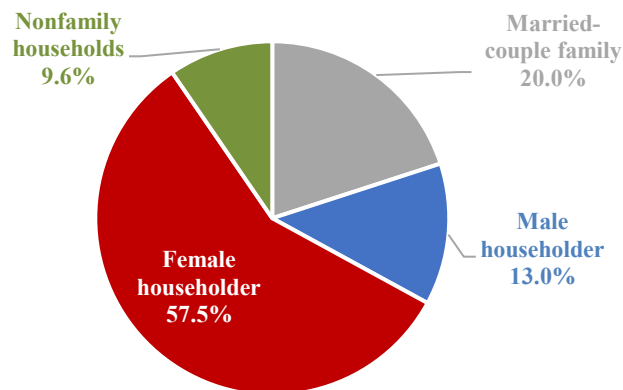


SNAP Recipients: Householder Type



Most SNAP recipients in Schoharie County are non-family households. The U.S. census defines a non-family household as **a householder living alone (a one-person household) or where the householder shares the home exclusively with people to whom he/she is not related.** While we see a high prevalence of non-family households receiving SNAP benefits, a small portion of those households include children under 18. This suggests that nonfamily recipients of SNAP are cohabitating adults or single adults.

SNAP Recipients: Children under 18

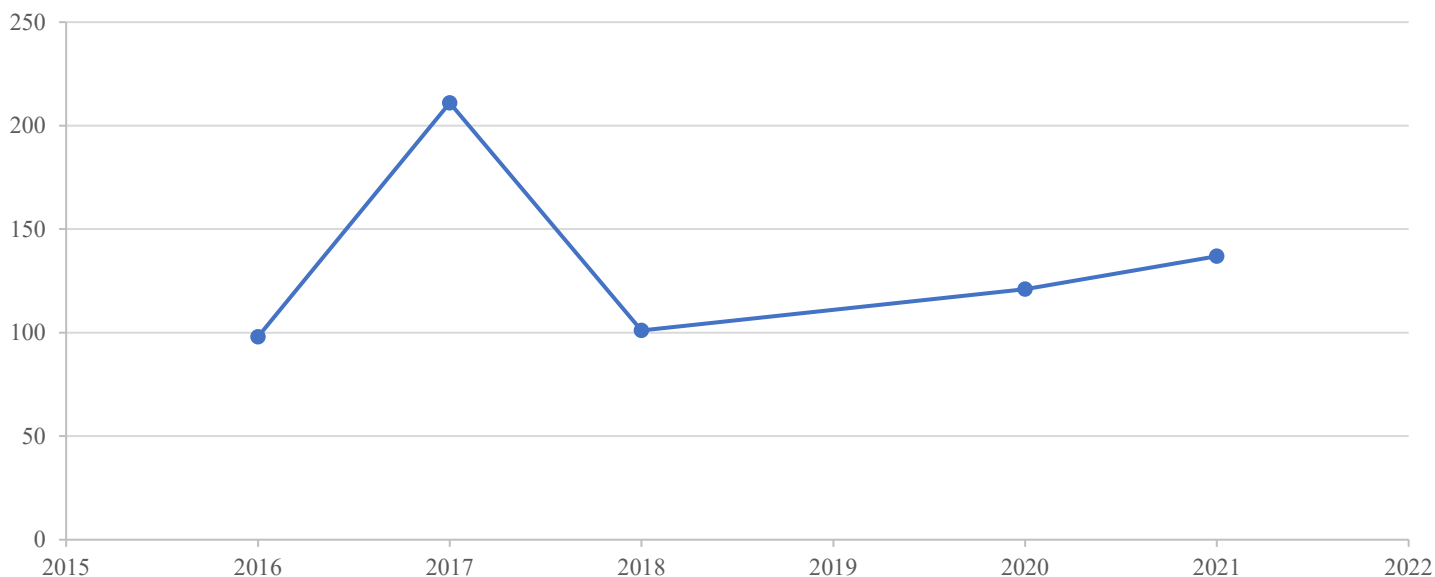


Female householders are the next highest in prevalence at 25.3%, more than half with children under 18. Single male householders and married couple families make up approximately 30% of SNAP recipients in Schoharie County and less than a third of these households include children under 18.¹

This suggests that single adults and single female householders with children struggle on a continual basis to provide food for their households.

The following data explores food pantry utilization which shows a different perspective on food insecurity – more emergent in nature.

Food Pantries Distributed



From 2016 - 2017, there was a large increase in the number of households receiving food and personal care packages which could potentially be attributed to the food pantry reopening in July 2016. This significant increase was followed by a decrease of the same rate, suggesting that the reopening and related advertising/outreach resulted in broader community awareness and utilization.

From 2018-2021, there was a gradual increase in food pantry utilization. It would be expected that the onset of the pandemic and related inflation resulted in greater community need. However, the increased rate of utilization was, and continues to be, less significant than expected. This could be attributed to the widespread efforts in community response such as mass food distributions and school district food distribution efforts while implementing remote learning.

Emergent needs and related services, such as food insecurity and pantry distribution, will continue to be monitored in the changing climate of the COVID-19 pandemic as larger emergency response efforts in the community become less frequent.

“Individuals lack the education needed to obtain jobs in Schoharie County.”

In 2018, Schoharie County, in partnership with Fairweather Consulting & EDR, compiled an economic development strategy to provide a long-term approach in supporting economic growth. While the scope and discipline of the completed analysis differs from the purpose of this assessment, data elements referenced provide insight into educational attainment of the workforce and opportunities for growth in Schoharie County.

The “middle skills” workforce and related professions comprise most of the workforce and employment opportunities in Schoharie County. “Middle skills” workers are defined as high-school completers to those with an associate degree and they often fill positions in industries including construction, manufacturing, retail, warehousing, and food service. This group is also referred to as “maintainers”; their professions build and maintain economic activity and educate the workforce.

In 2020, 67.1% of individuals in Schoharie County were considered maintainers. Of this employable population, 43.1% are employed, leaving 24% unemployed. Factors related to the causes of unemployment and poverty will be explored further on the community level.¹

Immediate Stabilization Needs: Community

“There is a lack of childcare options in the community.”

Schoharie County is considered a “Child Care Desert,” meaning there are not enough licensed and registered child day care slots in our area. While there have been initiatives through the Office of Children and Family Services to combat this challenge, families are still pressured in finding suitable childcare while they are at work. Looking at data regarding average household size and number of children in households with employed caregivers will give us a general idea of the childcare gap in Schoharie County.

The total population of children under 5 years old in Schoharie County is 1,340 persons. Almost half (46.6%) of households in Schoharie County include 2 working adults and of those households, 41.1% (1,159 households) include children 5 years old or younger. Schoharie County has 19 licensed and registered childcare providers with a combined capacity of 504 children. Two childcare providers offer care during non-traditional hours (weekends, second shift, etc.) as a result of funding received in September 2022. Since 2015, Schoharie County has added 4 new providers, each with a capacity of 6-12 children. However, in that same period, 2 centers lost the ability to accept referrals and there was one complete closure.

As a complement to availability, it is also important to consider affordability of childcare. With an average household size of 2.34 and an average family size of 2.83, it is reasonable to assume that a typical household in Schoharie County could consist of a single head of household or two-parent household with 1 or 2 children. There is a non-appreciable difference in average family size between two parent and single head households. Typical expenses and wages for Schoharie County were analyzed previously and the following charts show the breakdown related to typical childcare expenses in the area and reported costs from the public.

	1 Adult		2 Adults (1 working)		2 Adults (both working)	
	1 Child	2 Children	1 Child	2 Children	1 Child	2 Children
Typical Childcare Expense (Monthly)	\$ 726.17	\$ 1,452.25	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 726.17	\$ 1,452.25

The above table shows typical childcare expenses related to household structure for the region, according to the MIT Living Wage Calculator. However, qualitative feedback from community members reflects slightly higher rates. For example, costs at one of the larger centers in Schoharie County range from \$804.00/month for one child to \$1,900.00/month for two children. Variables to consider when looking at costs are child age and number of days in attendance.

In 2020, the Child Care Council of Cornell Cooperative Extension, in partnership with the Mohawk Valley Regional Economic Development Council completed a study titled “The Impact of Child Care on Working Families in the Mohawk Valley,” in which Schoharie County was included. The purpose of this study was to collection feedback surrounding the experience of local employed adults as it relates to childcare.

Notable findings* for Schoharie County include:

- 64% of HR and Management professionals have had an employee approach them with childcare related issues.
- 21% of HR and Management professionals had a prospective employee turn down a job offer for childcare related reasons.
- 38% of respondents reported difficulties in arranging childcare.
- 21% of respondents reported difficulties affording childcare.
- 35% of respondents reported being late to work because of childcare issues, 30% have had to miss work altogether.
- 78% of respondents have, at one point or another, discussed childcare related issues with a colleague.
- 22% of respondents have worried about having to quit their job to care for their children.⁶

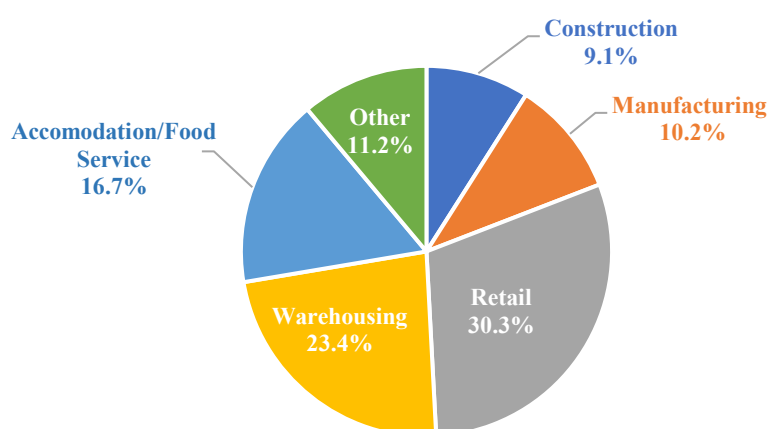
*All findings are self-reported through survey responses.

“Job opportunities in Schoharie County do not pay a living wage.”

Assessing wages paid is a necessary complement to assessing the educational attainment of the workforce in Schoharie County. As stated previously, a large majority of the employable population in Schoharie County has sufficient education to fill opportunities in the industries present in the area. Of the 67.1% of High School to Associate Degree completers, 24% are unemployed.

Potential causes of unemployment can include lack of sufficient and affordable transportation and lack of childcare options in the area. For the unemployed population, there are supportive services available related to re-entering the workforce and stabilizing families without an earned income. Previous sections explored access and affordability of childcare, as well as householder ability to afford a basic level of living for their families. While the challenges faced by the unemployed population seeking stability are no less important than the challenges faced by working families, the goal of this section of the assessment is to investigate the financial hardships faced by working families and identify why Schoharie County is losing such a large percentage of its young adult population.

Employment by Industry



Building on opportunities and challenges identified in the Fairweather Consulting & EDR study, the data to the left provides insight into industry and employment spectrum in Schoharie County.

Most maintainers, or middle skills workers, in Schoharie County work in retail, accommodation/food services, and warehousing.

The table below compares living wage numbers to actual wages paid in Schoharie County.

Schoharie County Living Wage (per working adult)⁵	\$ 69,158.50
Median Household Income - New York State	\$ 71,117.00
Median Household Income - Schoharie County	\$ 58,926.00
Median Household Income - Middle Skills	\$ 40,666.00
Average Salary by Industry	
Construction	\$ 98,229.00
Manufacturing	\$ 40,666.00
Retail	\$ 27,723.00
Warehousing	\$ 48,862.00
Accommodation/Food Service	\$ 18,705.00

To summarize previous findings related to employment and income:

- 67.1% of Schoharie County's employable workforce is "middle skills" educated.
- "Middle Skills" industries comprise most employment opportunities in Schoharie County and show potential in the realm of economic development.
- Of the "middle skills" employees in Schoharie County, 70.4% work in retail, accommodation/food service, and warehousing.

According to the 2016-2020 American Community Survey and resulting summary statistics:

- Median household income in Schoharie County falls more than \$10,000/year short of what is considered living wage.
- This gap is even greater among the majority of "middle skills" industries, ranging from \$20,296 - \$50,453/year.
- Average salaries in the construction industry exceed median household income and living wage for Schoharie County, however, less than 10% of the middle skills workforce in Schoharie County works in construction.

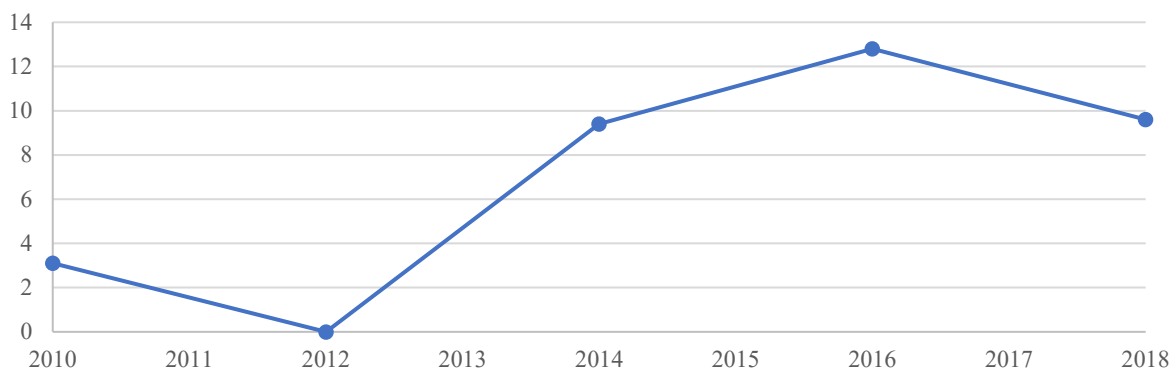
While there are variables for consideration including income dispersion among industries, part-time vs. full-time employment, and exact living wage related to household structure, there is a gross disparity between the cost of living in Schoharie County and what employed adults earn.

Social-Emotional Needs: Individual and Family

"Families struggle with alcohol and drug abuse."

Schoharie County has seen major increases in substance abuse and overdose related crises and fatalities, with rates increasing by 200 - 300% from 2010 – 2013. The increased rate has been sustained from 2013 – current (no reliable data was reported in 2012).⁷

Overdose Related Fatalities



While this large increase can be partially attributed to greater reporting buy-in in recent years, it is also important to consider community contexts and their impacts on substance abuse.

Providers addressing substance abuse in Schoharie County include Bassett Medical Center, Schoharie County Mental Health and Chemical Dependency Clinics, and the Schoharie County Council on Alcoholism and Substance Abuse, Inc. (SCCASA). Qualitative feedback was collected from local providers and stakeholders related to the successes and challenges experienced in connecting individuals to care.

Successes:

- Local providers are timely in enrolling new clients and accepting referrals.
- Engagement between Schoharie County providers is positive and efficient.
- Increased buy-in for reporting supports providers and the community at-large in understanding the true picture of substance abuse in Schoharie County.

Challenges:

- Schoharie County is a large geographical area - with providers concentrated in one area of the county - resulting in transportation and access barriers for community members in need.
- Schoharie County currently does not have any inpatient resources, which can result in at-risk individuals returning to living arrangements with potential triggers for substance use and abuse.
- There continues to be a community-wide stigma related to mental health and substance use, resulting in a lack of incident reporting, exclusion from narratives related to community development, and hesitation to self-refer to supportive resources.
- There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated substance abuse related incidents.

COVID-19 Considerations

As one provider stated, “the opposite of addiction is connection, not sobriety.” The pandemic resulted in increased isolation and potential mental health impacts for the community at-large, but the impacts experienced by at-risk individuals in the community are particularly of interest.

One provider saw a 30% increase in new and existing client interactions at the on-set of the pandemic.

Schoharie County saw substantial increases in both domestic violence incidents and alcohol sales at the height of the pandemic; both results of increased isolation and risk factors for substance use and abuse. Appointments and interactions with providers went remote as the community adjusted to the shift to a virtual world. While telehealth is considered a potential solution for those facing transportation challenges, providers consistently noted a lack of meaningful connection in virtual interactions.

Caregiver Roles and Substance Abuse: Gender Considerations

While we are seeing an increase in single male householders and males taking on caregiving roles in general, females still outnumber men as caregivers in both married-couple families and households with a single female head. There is no data to confirm that fatalities and suspected overdoses disproportionately affect one gender as compared to the other, however, there is anecdotal evidence suggesting that systems in place have disproportionate consequences related to gender.

Providers have recounted experiences in which both adults present in a household struggle with substance use disorder, a female self-refers for support, and children are removed and placed in the care of the male. On the contrary, in circumstances where the male self-refers for support, children are not immediately removed.

While we do not yet have concrete evidence proving that gender has a direct relationship with severity of consequences and legal action, it is important to consider provider experiences related to gender as disparities and needs are assessed in a community where household structures and caregiver roles continue to shift.

Social-Emotional Needs: Community

“There is a lack of recreational opportunities outside of school for youth.”

According to our most recent Community Needs Survey, residents believe the COVID-19 pandemic had the largest impact on youth services when compared to other services in Schoharie County. Conversations with local providers revealed that these consequences were not unexpected, but rather exacerbated by pandemic circumstances.

One provider stated “...the pandemic highlighted a lot of issues that Schoharie County is no stranger to, while expediting the consequences of the disparities our communities face. Youth have taken a huge hit to their mental health that often reflects the mental health issues their parents and/or guardians are experiencing.”

The COVID-19 pandemic turned broadband access into a necessity, increasing social media use and unrestricted access to information for youth. Subsequently, many households were forced into social isolation and negative developmental impacts related to isolation (e.g., substance abuse, negative social-emotional behaviors) were perceived to be most prevalent in the at-risk families served.

It is often the case that a lack of supportive services is a consequence of community capacity. Community capacity can be defined as *the interaction of human, organizational, and social capital existing within a given community that can be leveraged to solve collective problems and improve or maintain the well-being of a given community.*

Capacity concerns in Schoharie County include:

- A lack of mental health providers for youth, both in and out of school
- High turnover rates among providers due to living wage gaps
- Inadequate data collection systems
- Pressure to offer high quality services without sufficient funding for implementation and delivery
- Inability to implement collaborative ideas and plans shared among service providers

Lack of capacity coupled with changes in regulatory protocols and government funding has resulted in providers struggling to adapt as they seek new solutions and processes to meet the needs of local youth.

Schoharie County is fortunate to have groups such as the Human Services Coordinating Council (HSCC) and Long-Term Care Council, whose missions are to consider the service-related needs of the residents of Schoharie County and seek ways of collaborating to avoid duplication of services and share program related information. Currently, there is no such group for providers of youth services. Provider feedback revealed that a similar group, combined with a county-wide marketing initiative, could facilitate organizational collaborations and development of best practices, and increase household utilization of supportive services.

Executive Summary

To remain aligned with agency’s mission of *“building stronger, healthier communities and empowering families that experience economic and social challenges through strategic partnerships, education, services, and compassion,”* SCCAP collected and analyzed data from a variety of stakeholders with the goal of identifying community needs and understanding stakeholder perspectives.

After the completion of this assessment, the results will be utilized to form the foundation of the strategic planning goals based on the ROMA dimensions of family, community, and agency. In keeping with assessment findings, SCCAP will continue to maintain a strong presence on state and local boards, committees, coalitions, and similar decision-making bodies in support of raising community awareness of SCCAP’s services and its mission to address the causes and conditions of poverty.

SCCAP is an active member of the Human Services Coordinating Council (HSCC) which keeps the agency engaged with other county human service providers. HSCC provides an excellent venue to inform other service providers of SCCAP’s services and for SCCAP to remain informed of other services for referrals. SCCAP will continue to pursue opportunities for involvement in similar groups.

The lack of employment opportunities and low wages continue to be primary concerns for survey respondents. The CSBG Work Plan includes outcomes directly connected to these concerns by offering employment and computer skills training, resume development, and job search assistance for community members. The CSBG Work Plan outcomes also reflect activities which provide wrap-around support services to alleviate barriers for the low-income community in their pursuit of economic stability and security. SCCAP is co-located with the Workforce Solutions Center to provide a comprehensive approach in employment skill development and job search activities. SCCAP also provides trainings to the public at large and the business community as a cost-effective fee-for-service option. The Executive Director serves on the Workforce Development Board of Directors thereby staying part of the community employment conversation.

The lack of social-emotional services for youth and families was also noted as a primary concern among survey respondents. The CSBG Work Plan includes outcomes directly connected to these concerns by including services related to family skill building, relationship maintenance, and esteem building opportunities. As a “family focused, child-centric” organization, SCCAP is committed to supporting social-emotional development, with the goal of equipping youth and families with the skills to be successful contributors to their community. The Family Support and Resource Center Director serves on a variety of committees related to crisis intervention and support including Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). The Child Care Resource and Referral staff are involved with the Early Care and Learning Council (ECLC) and the Schoharie County Youth Bureau. Committee memberships ensure the agency remains involved in related conversations.

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Information not cited within the report was obtained from community member/partner discussions and surveys, CSBG Annual Program Reports, and customer satisfaction surveys.