

United Way of Tompkins County **Community Needs Assessment**

Compiled January/February 2025 by Director of
Community Impact Rebekah Hinton

*Updated April 2025

Introduction

Every two years, United Way of Tompkins County analyzes major need areas in our community to inform the establishment of our funding priorities. This report provides both quantitative and qualitative data on the following areas.

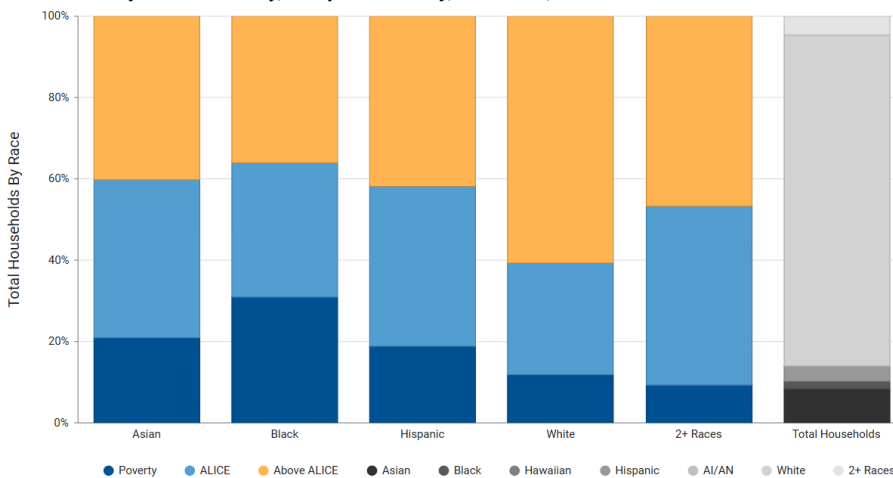
- Addiction/Substance Use
- Childcare
- Crisis/Abuse Intervention
- Employment
- Food
- Healthcare
- Housing
- Mental Health
- Student Success
- Transportation

These areas all fit within United Way Worldwide Impact Areas of Healthy Community, Youth Opportunity, Financial Security and Community Resiliency.

County Overview

According to the US Census Bureau, Tompkins County has 105,740 residents. The population is just over 72% White, about 4% Black, just under 7% Hispanic/Latine, about 10% Asian, and about 7% Other including Native American and Native Hawaiian (1).

The county's poverty rate is 15.9% (1). This number includes households living below the Federal Poverty Level of \$13,590 for a single adult and \$27,750 for a family of four. Another 23% of households are under the ALICE (Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed) threshold, which is \$35,568 for a single adult and \$79,572 for a family of 4 (2 adults and 2 children). The charts below provide more detailed information about who in our community is living either in poverty or below the ALICE threshold, and what different ALICE survival budgets look like for different household make ups (2).

Households by Race/Ethnicity, Tompkins County, New York, 2022


Household Survival Budget, Tompkins County, New York, 2022								
Monthly Costs and Credits	Single Adult	One Adult, One Child	One Adult, One In Child Care	Two Adults	Two Adults Two Children	Two Adults, Two In Child Care	Single Adult 65+	Two Adults 65+
Housing - Rent	\$890	\$870	\$870	\$870	\$1,055	\$1,055	\$890	\$870
Housing - Utilities	\$163	\$258	\$258	\$258	\$310	\$310	\$163	\$258
Child Care	\$0	\$391	\$1,042	\$0	\$781	\$2,146	\$0	\$0
Food	\$527	\$894	\$802	\$966	\$1,624	\$1,435	\$486	\$891
Transportation	\$425	\$559	\$559	\$666	\$1,076	\$1,076	\$361	\$537
Health Care	\$200	\$378	\$378	\$378	\$643	\$643	\$532	\$1,065
Technology	\$86	\$86	\$86	\$116	\$116	\$116	\$86	\$116
Miscellaneous	\$229	\$344	\$400	\$325	\$561	\$678	\$252	\$374
Tax Payments	\$444	\$869	\$1,028	\$518	\$1,178	\$1,510	\$509	\$856
Tax Credits	\$0	(\$302)	(\$302)	\$0	(\$713)	(\$603)	\$0	\$0
Monthly Total	\$2,964	\$4,347	\$5,121	\$4,097	\$6,631	\$8,366	\$3,279	\$4,967
ANNUAL TOTAL	\$35,568	\$52,164	\$61,452	\$49,164	\$79,572	\$100,392	\$39,348	\$59,604
Hourly Wage	\$17.78	\$26.08	\$30.73	\$24.58	\$39.79	\$50.20	\$19.67	\$29.80

Data from United For ALICE (2)

Addiction/Substance Use

In February of 2024, the Alcohol and Drug Council ceased operations, leaving a gap in the treatment space in the county. Brad Walworth, Communications Manager for Cayuga Addiction Recovery Services stated that CARS and REACH Medical continue to provide outpatient services for people with substance use disorders. Walworth also stated that a need among Tompkins County residents with substance use disorders is options for recovery support beyond treatment.

Opioids/Heroin

The use of opioids and heroin continue to be an issue in the community. The data below shows overdoses, deaths and naloxone administrations for 2023. (3)

Overdose deaths involving opioids	23
Emergency department visits involving opioids and/or heroin	79
Hospitalizations involving opioid related overdose	8
Naloxone administrations reported by EMS	79
Naloxone administrations reported by law enforcement	13
Naloxone administrations reported by registered COOP (Community Opioid Outreach Project) program	72

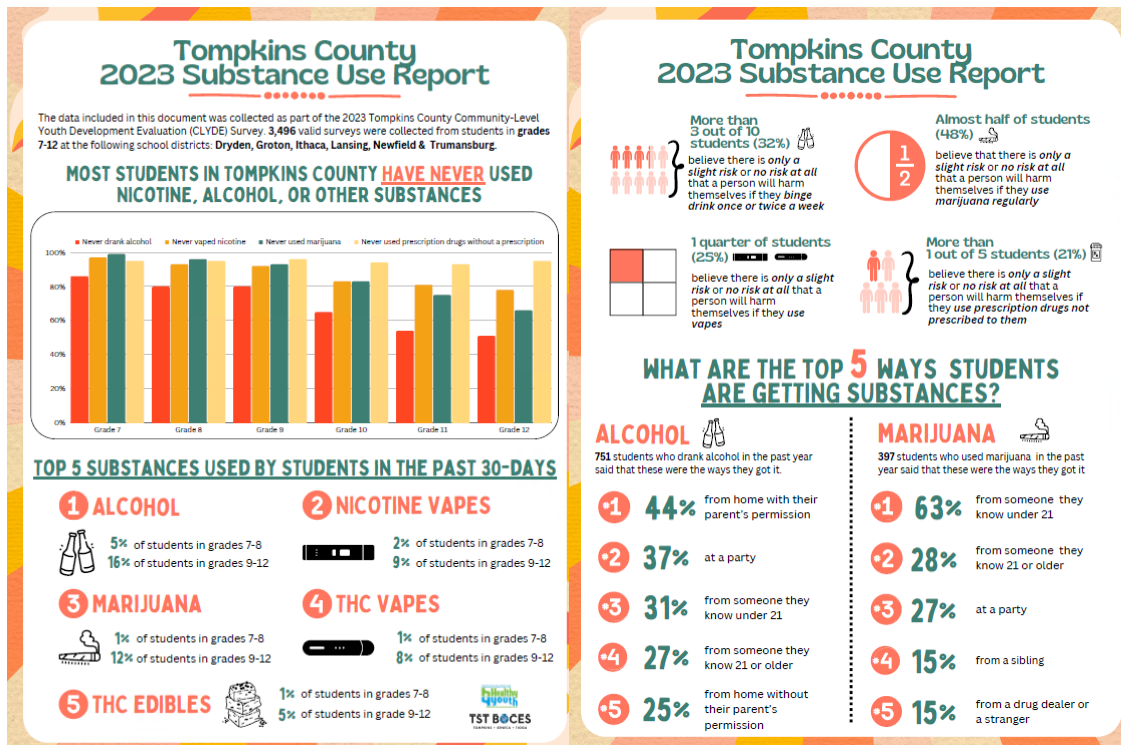
Data from NYS Dept of Health (3)

Other Substance Use

Little data was available on county level substance use outside of opioids. Some data on overdose deaths was found. In 2023, 11 individuals in the county died from an overdose of cocaine, and 16 individuals died from an overdose of stimulants (not cocaine) (4). Walworth stated that CARS has seen an increase in the use of cocaine in the county, and methamphetamines continue to be widely used substance as well.

Youth Substance Use

Youth data is collected through the Tompkins County Community-Level Youth Development Evaluation (CLYDE) Survey, and was provided by TST BOCES. According to the 2023 survey, at the time the information was collected 16% of high school students had used alcohol in the last 30 days, and 12% of students had used cannabis. See the below infographics for more information.



Childcare

According to the Child Development Council there are more than 3 children per available childcare spots overall in Tompkins County. The chart below shows the need for working families, but Child Development Council CEO Melissa Perry states that this still underrepresents the actual need, as families can require childcare for more than just work.

CHILD CARE SUPPLY AND DEMAND

The number of children needing care exceeds the number of formal spaces.

	Tompkins Under 6 years (Preschool)	Tompkins 6 - 12 years (Elementary)
Number of Children * (2023 est. census)	4591	5375
Labor Force Participation Rate*	64.1%	78.7%
Potential Demand for Working Families Only	2984	4230
Supply of Regulated Care	1516	1419
Gap Between Supply and Demand	-1468	2811

*American Community Survey – average estimates “All parents in family in labor force” in 2023. This data does not include families that need child care for other purposes.

**Child Care Supply Data from Child Care Facilities System/ NYS OCFS – Regulated care is either Registered or Licensed by New York State Office of Children and Family Services.

Chart Updated 1/15/2025

The market rates and actual costs for childcare have risen since the last community needs assessment was completed. Perry states that many providers need to charge market rate or higher to keep their businesses viable. “Market rates are not the same as true cost of care, which is significantly higher”, says Perry. The chart below provides information on market rates in the county.

DAY CARE CENTER				
	Age of Child			
	Under 1 ½ yrs	1 ½ - 2 yrs	3 – 5 yrs	6 – 12 yrs
Weekly	\$385	\$365	\$340	\$286
Daily	\$80	\$75	\$70	\$60
Part-Day	\$53	\$50	\$47	\$40

SCHOOL-AGE CHILD CARE				
	Age of Child			
	Under 1 ½ yrs	1 ½ - 2 yrs	3 – 5 yrs	6 – 12 yrs
Weekly	\$0	\$0	\$340	\$286
Daily	\$0	\$0	\$70	\$60
Part-Day	\$0	\$0	\$47	\$40

LEGALLY EXEMPT GROUP CHILD CARE				
	Age of Child			
	Under 1 ½ yrs	1 ½ - 2 yrs	3 – 5 yrs	6 – 12 yrs
Weekly	\$0	\$0	\$255	\$215
Daily	\$0	\$0	\$53	\$45
Part-Day	\$0	\$0	\$35	\$30

FAMILY DAY CARE HOME AND GROUP FAMILY DAY CARE HOME				
	Age of Child			
	Under 2 yrs	2 yrs	3 – 5 yrs	6 – 12 yrs
Weekly	\$315	\$300	\$285	\$270
Daily	\$65	\$63	\$60	\$55
Part-Day	\$43	\$42	\$40	\$37

INFORMAL CHILD CARE – STANDARD RATE				
	Age of Child			
	Under 2 yrs	2 yrs	3 – 5 yrs	6 – 12 yrs
Weekly	\$205	\$195	\$185	\$176
Daily	\$42	\$41	\$39	\$36
Part-Day	\$28	\$27	\$26	\$24

INFORMAL CHILD CARE – ENHANCED RATE				
	Age of Child			
	Under 2 yrs	2 yrs	3 – 5 yrs	6 – 12 yrs
Weekly	\$221	\$210	\$200	\$189
Daily	\$46	\$44	\$42	\$39
Part-Day	\$30	\$29	\$28	\$26

Child Development Council (5)

Data could not be found for staff retention rates at local childcares, but according to Perry childcare continues to be one of the lowest paying professions, and more individuals are leaving the sector to work in higher paying jobs.

Crisis/Abuse Intervention

The following data was provided by the Advocacy Center of Tompkins County. Almost all case numbers were down from 2022, with the exception of a slight increase in the number of child sexual abuse cases and forensic interviews for children. While some decreases in cases are shown from 2022, the number of cases in 2024, including the increase in case numbers for children, show the continued need for these services.

Indicator	2022	2024
Hotline calls	2,767	2,293
Adult cases of sexual assault (SA)	273	88
Adult cases of domestic violence (DV)	810	645
Youth cases of DV	N/A	21
Youth cases of SA	147	154
Forensic interviews for children conducted	64	71
Number of individuals that stayed in the AC shelter	54	39
Average shelter occupancy rate	70%	40%

Employment

As of November 2024 the unemployment rate in Tompkins County was 3% according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. This is lower than the state unemployment rate of 4.4 (8).

Despite a relatively low unemployment rate, many country residents still face employment prospects that do not meet their needs. As of the 1st of this year, the minimum wage in New York State is \$15.50 an hour, a full-time employee at this pay will gross \$32,240 a year (7). However, according to the Tompkins County Workers Center, the living wage in the county is \$24.82 an hour or about \$51,625 a year for a single individual (6). 39% of the population in the county lives at or below the ALICE threshold (2), demonstrating that the working portion of this population is receiving wages below the living wage.

Food

Food insecurity continues to affect residents of Tompkins County. Currently, 11.9% of the county is deemed food insecure (9). The average price of a meal in Tompkins County is \$4.70 (9), which is 17% more expensive than the national average (10).

As of 2022, 1/3 of food insecure individuals do not qualify for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formally food stamps) benefits (10). Income limits for SNAP benefits can be found in the chart below.

Income Guidelines for Households with Earned Income (no member 60 years or older nor disabled)

Family Size	Monthly Gross Income*	Annual Gross Income*
1	\$1,883	\$22,596
2	\$2,555	\$30,660
3	\$3,228	\$38,736
4	\$3,900	\$46,800
5	\$4,573	\$54,876
6	\$5,245	\$62,940
7	\$5,918	\$71,016
8	\$6,590	\$79,080
Each additional person	\$673 +	\$8,076 +

*Chart information is based upon SNAP Standards effective October 1, 2024.

New York State (11)

With the rise of the state minimum wage in 2025 to \$15.50 compared to the SNAP income limits and the actual cost of food in the county, it can be inferred that the number of food security individuals will continue to increase.

On top of the financial means to purchase food, there are multiple municipalities in the county without a grocery store, those municipalities being Newfield, Enfield, Caroline, the Town of Lansing, and Groton. For residents without transportation, the lack of a grocery store close to their homes can compound food insecurity.

Heath

Health Disparities

According to the New York State Department of Health, racial disparities are shown in almost all health indicators among Tompkins County residents. Black and Brown individuals on average have poorer health/health-outcomes than White individuals, with Black residents usually experiencing the worst outcomes. In 2022, 69.3% of deaths among Black residents and 58.8% of deaths among Hispanic residents were considered premature (under the age of 75), compared with White residents, where the rate was

39% (12). Please see the chart below for more information on health disparities including information on diabetes and prenatal care.

Health Indicator	White	Black	Asian/PI	Hispanic	Total
Total Population 2022	80,463	4,212	10,574	5,804	104,777
Percentage of births with adequate prenatal care	87.7%	72.1%	83.1%	79.3%	79.3%
Percentage of premature births (< 37 weeks gestation - clinical estimate)	6.5%	12.2%	2.9%	5.1%	6.2%
Diseases of the heart mortality per 100,000 population, age-adjusted	117.6	131.7	23.8	54.4	115.3
Diabetes mortality per 100,000 population, age-adjusted	18.2	50.7	27.8	Data N/A	19.1

NYS Dept of Health (12)

These numbers are made more stark considering Black and Hispanic/Latine individuals make up a small part of the total Tompkins County population.

Health Insurance and Health Care Costs

Tompkins County has relatively high insured rate among adults, 94.7% compared to 88.8% statewide (13). The rate of children with health insurance is slightly lower, 93.8% (14).

While local data could not be found, nationally, employer sponsored health insurance premiums continue to rise. Costs have risen about 14% in the last two years (15).

The Ithaca Health Alliance, which operates the Ithaca Free Clinic, serves residents who are uninsured or underinsured. In 2024 they had 684 unduplicated patients utilize their services.

Housing

Housing Costs

As of 2023, 58.5% of households in the county were deemed moderately cost burdened, meaning they pay over 30% of household income to housing costs. 37.9% were considered extremely cost burdened, spending 50% or more of household income on housing costs (16). Human Services Coalition of Tompkins County data shows that rents in the county are on average 44% more expensive than surrounding counties such as Broome.

The Housing Choice Voucher Program (also known as Section 8), provides vouchers to low income households to pay between 70%-100% of the household's rent, depending on income. According to Ithaca Housing Authority's Tenant Relations Coordinator Megan Wiiki, IHA currently has 1,067 vouchers issued to Tompkins County households, with 1,800 households on its voucher waitlist. Households on the waitlist can expect to wait 2-3 years for their application to get to the top of the list. Wiiki states the US

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awards IHA a certain amount each year to pay for vouchers, and due to the high cost of rent in the county this further limits the number of vouchers that can be issued, as they need to have enough funds to cover all the rent.

Homelessness

Currently, Tompkins County is without an organization to run the homeless shelter, and operations are being covered by the Department of Social Services and the county.

Adult Homelessness

On the Point in Time survey conducted on 1/25/24, provided by the Human Services Coalition of Tompkins County, there were a total of 165 unhoused adults (25 and older) in the county. Of those adults 13 had minor children with them. When considering these numbers, it is important to point out that this is most certainly an undercount of the total unhoused population, as point in time surveys are liable to miss individuals for a variety of reasons. These surveys also do not take into account other ways people find places to sleep while unhoused. A 2023 HSCTC survey of 74 unhoused individuals showed many doubled up in the homes of families or friends or “couch surfed”, floating around the homes of family and friends.

Youth Homelessness

Youth and young adult (under the age of 25) homelessness has a more broad official HUD definition than adult homelessness, and includes couch surfing and doubling up/overcrowding. Data on local homeless youth numbers was provided by Family and Children’s Service of Ithaca (F&CS) and The Learning Web.

F&CS’ Youth and Outreach program reported it worked with 33 unhoused youth under the age of 18 in 2024.

The Learning Web’s Youth Outreach program worked with at least 76 youth between the ages of 18-24 in 2024. Their total number served between the ages of 16-24 was 102 (Note-there is the possibility in overlap between minors served by F&CS and the Learning Web).

Racial disparities are shown within the population of unhoused youth in the county. Of the 102 total unhoused youth served by The Learning Web, over 77% identified as BIPOC. According to census data, only about 28% of the county identify as BIPOC (1).

Mental Health

Data on rates of mental illness in Tompkins County was not readily available. Some data was found in the Tompkins County Community Health Assessment. 21% of

respondents to a mental health survey cited in the health assessment reported having a major depressive disorder, and 13% reported poor mental health for 14 or more days in the last month (17).

There are 2 mental health organizations that accept Medicaid and state sponsored insurance in Tompkins County, F&CS and Tompkins County Mental Health (a department of Tompkins Whole Health).

In 2024, F&CS provided mental health services to 1,034 clients through a total of 33 providers. As of 1/31/25, they have 212 individuals on their waitlist. Tompkins Whole Health did not respond to requests for data.

Student Success

Tompkins County has an overall high school graduation rate of 87%. Based on 8th grade Math and ELA assessments, about 59% of Tompkins County 8th graders are proficient in reading and writing skills, and about 54% are proficient in math skills. (18)

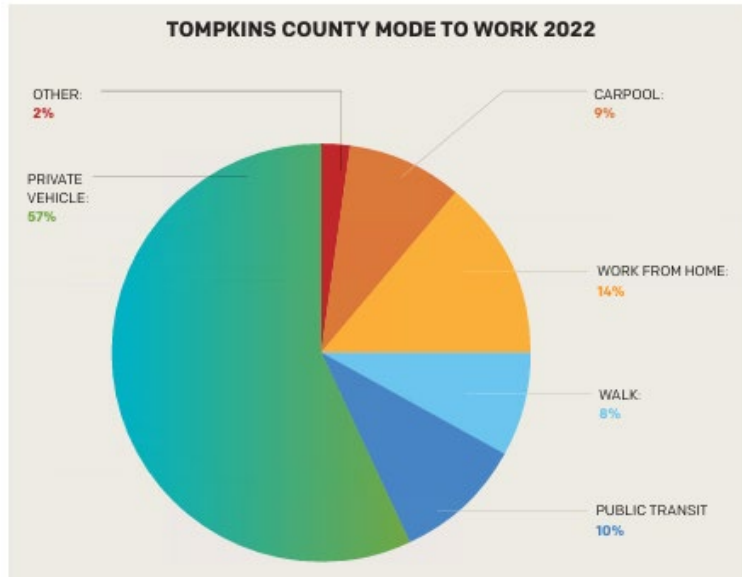
School District	ELA Proficiency*	Math Proficiency*	HS Graduation Rate
Dryden	59%	50%	86%
Groton	55%	50%	84%
Ithaca	63%	41%	86%
Lansing	57%	77%	90%
Newfield	60%	43%	82%
Trumansburg	60%	57%	91%

*Percentage of 8th grade students deemed proficient based on NYS assessments
 New York State (18)

While county graduation rates are positive overall, the fact that math and reading proficiencies are hovering in the 50%-60% range show a need for support to youth in these areas.

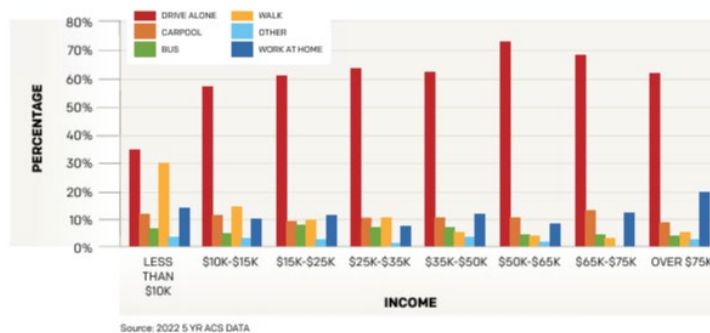
Transportation

According to the Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council, 57% of Tompkins County residents commute to work with a private vehicle, with only 10% using public transportation. Marginalized communities in the county including low-income community members walk, bike, carpool, and use public transportation to get to work at a much higher rate than White and/or wealthier residents (19). See the charts below for more information.

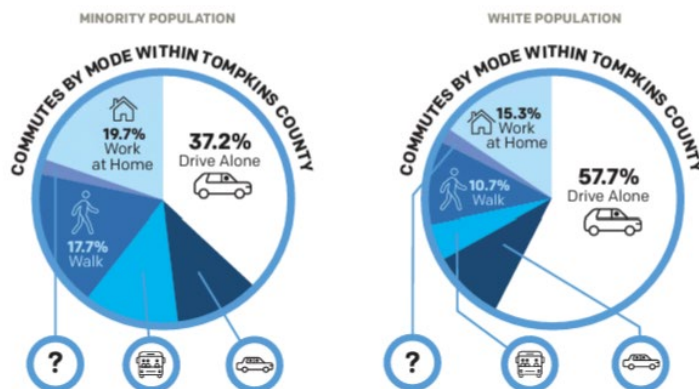


Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council (19)

HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY MODE TO WORK – TOMPKINS COUNTY NY 2022



COMMUTE MODE WITHIN TOMPKINS COUNTY 2022



Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council (19)

The Transportation Equity Needs Assessment conducted in 2023 found that of county residents who do use public transportation, 38% stated that buses do not run when needed. Out of 236 respondents who stated they have difficulty getting around on TCAT, 53 stated the routes are inadequate, 42 stated there were no buses when they needed

them, and 37 stated the reach of bus service is inadequate. A quote from one respondent sums up these issues many residents have with local public transportation. "I live on Lake Road. Many times I have to work until 8 pm and the bus only stops on Main Street and I have to walk 2 miles on a dark unlit road to get home".

Conclusions

While community need is shown in all areas of the assessment, there are specific issues that can be argued need more attention than others.

Childcare- Childcare costs and availability continue to put a strain on Tompkins County families. Without childcare, parents and guardians cannot easily work or attend school. Also, a lack of high quality early childhood education in the pre-school years can have negative effects on children's development.

Housing- Tompkins County continues to see extremely high rates of housing cost burdened households, exorbitantly high rents, and untenably low vacancy rates in low to moderate income housing. The high cost and low availability of housing exacerbates issues of homelessness in the county, where services are already in crisis mode due to the lack of an organization to run the emergency shelter.

Food- As food costs continue to rise and minimum wage outstrips SNAP benefit limits, food insecurity will continue to be a problem for Tompkins County residents. Our local food pantries such as Groton Community Cupboard are already reporting an increase in clients served.

Employment/Wages- As shown all throughout the needs assessment, costs in the county are high. Individuals and families cannot support themselves on the minimum wage of \$15.50 an hour. Were more workers in the county able to make a living wage, some of the problems they face found in this assessment (food, housing, and transportation costs) would be less of a burden.

Despite the highlight placed on these four areas, it is important to point out again that all ten areas reviewed show a need for support and fit within United Way Worldwide Impact Areas of Healthy Community, Youth Opportunity, Financial Security and Community Resiliency.

Acknowledgments and References

United Way of Tompkins County would like to thank the following organizations and coalitions for providing data found in this report. Child Development Council, TST BOCES, Advocacy Center of Tompkins County, Ithaca Housing Authority, Tompkins Whole Health, Family and Children's Service of Ithaca, The Learning Web, Human

Services Coalition of Tompkins County, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Ithaca Health Alliance, Cayuga Addiction Recovery Services, and The Transportation Equity Coalition. For more information or original source documents for any of the information provided by the above, please contact Rebekah Hinton at rhinton@uwtc.org. For information from all other sources please see referenced links below.

1

https://data.census.gov/profile/Tompkins_County,_New_York?g=050XX00US36109#populations-and-people

2 <https://www.unitedforalice.org/county-reports/new-york>

3 https://apps.health.ny.gov/public/tabvis/PHIG_Public/opioid-quarterly/reports/#state

4 <https://oasas.ny.gov/overdose-death-dashboard>

5 <https://www.childdevelopmentcouncil.org/parents/child-care-costs-and-financial-assistance/>

6 <https://www.tcworkerscenter.org/campaigns/living-wage-certification/>

7 <https://dol.ny.gov/minimum-wage-0>

8 https://www.bls.gov/eag/eag.ny_ithaca_msa.htm#eag_ny_ithaca_msa.f.2

9 <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2022/overall/new-york/county/tompkins>

10 <https://www.tompkinsfoodfuture.org/reports>

11 <https://www.ny.gov/services/apply-SNAP>

12 <https://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/community/minority/county/tompkins.htm>

13 https://hdpulse.nimhd.nih.gov/data-portal/healthcare/table?age=174&age_options=age_6&demo=00030&demo_options=insurance_12&healthcaretopic=040&healthcaretopic_options=healthcare_3&race=00&race_options=raceall_1&sex=0&sex_options=sex_3&statefips=36&statefips_options=area_states

14 https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/prevention_agenda/2013-2017/indicators/2013/p51.htm

15 <https://www.kff.org/health-costs/press-release/annual-family-premiums-for-employer-coverage-rise-7-to-average-25572-in-2024-benchmark-survey-finds-after-also-rising-7-last-year/#:~:text=Family%20premiums%20for%20employer%2Dsponsored,that%20premiums%20are%20up%207%25>

16 <https://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/All-Departments/Planning-and-Sustainability/Housing>

17 <https://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/All-Departments/Whole-Health/Community-Health-Reports>

18 <https://data.nysed.gov/profile.php?county=61>

19 <https://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/All-Departments/Ithaca-Tompkins-County-Transportation-Council/2045-Long-Range-Transportation-Plan>