

# Tompkins Community Action, Inc.

## Community Needs Assessment

### 2024-2027



***Approved by:***

*Policy Council: 12.10.2024*

*Board of Directors: 12.12.2024*

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## Introduction

Tompkins Community Action, Inc. is a private, not-for profit charitable organization with grassroots beginnings in 1964. Originally, Tompkins County Economic Opportunity Corporation or EOC, as it was known until the official corporate name change to Tompkins Community Action in 1999, began as a local coalition of concerned community members who wanted to improve the lives of low-income families in Tompkins County. Formally incorporated in 1966, the agency became part of a national and state network of community action agencies. From a small not-for-profit human service agency, with a yearly budget of approximately \$25,000 and a staff of 3.5 employees in 1966 operating two programs, EOC transformed itself and has grown into Tompkins Community Action (TCAction), a large, multi-faceted community action agency. TCAction currently implements twenty-one programs that serve low-income individuals and families. Our programs are strengthened by many community collaborations and partnerships. As one of the county's larger employers, TCAction has over one hundred staff who assist 5,000 low-income individuals yearly through a wide variety of programming.

As mandated by federal legislation, a tri-partite board of directors governs TCAction. Nine members represent the target sector (low-income), public sector (elected officials) and community sector. Additionally, the Head Start Policy Council comprised of community members and Head Start Families served by TCAction provide guidance about Head Start Programming. The Board of Directors and Policy Council each meet monthly to ensure that the voices of low-income residents are included in TCAction's decision-making process.

Today, our mission statement guides our work, *"Tompkins Community Action collaborates with individuals and organizations to sustain and improve economic opportunity and social justice for families and individuals impacted directly or indirectly by poverty."* TCAction operates through an integrated and coordinated services delivery system housed through three program focused departments: Community Services, Family Services, and Housing Services.

Our **Community Services** programs work to alleviate food insecurity in the community by operating an *Emergency Food Pantry Program* and the annual *Victory Garden Project*. Our community partners include the Food Bank of the Southern Tier, Friendship Donation Network, Food Distribution Network and Cornell University Horticulture Department. Our *Emergency Food Pantry* philosophy is centered on customer choice and includes options such as fresh produce and dairy as well as low sodium, gluten free, and dairy free choices. Our pantry provides delivery options to those referred to us with a documented barrier to picking up the pantry order themselves. The *Victory Garden Project* provides households with vegetable plants, donated by Cornell University, to grow at home or in a community garden each year in early spring. This two-day event brings volunteers from Cargill who assist with program activities.

Our **Family Services** programs provide enrolled children and families with educational programming, supportive services, referrals, and socialization opportunities to develop and enhance families' goals and objectives.

*Head Start / Early Head Start Program* supports pregnant women, newborns, and children up to 5 years old in both classrooms and families' homes with 31 classrooms countywide including our collaboration with the Ithaca School District serving as our delegate. Children and families receive high quality developmentally appropriate education and individualization to enhance learning and community resources to prepare our children for a lifetime of learning. By implementing High Scope curriculum, all programming focuses on the five domains identified to meet School Readiness Goals to prepare children for kindergarten.

*Primary School Family Support Program* supports children transitioning to kindergarten through second grade. Family Partners provide support, resources, and referrals to build strong school relationships by working directly with families through home visits and resource referrals. Family networking events further connect parents to the community and development and education goals for their child.

Our **Housing Services** programs strive to meet the housing needs of our community members with programs that focus on safe, affordable, and appropriate housing for all. We offer both rental assistance programs and permanent supportive housing programs.

Our Rental Assistance programs provide rental subsidies to income-eligible households across Tompkins County. The programs include the Housing Choice Voucher Program and sub-programs including Making Moves Voucher Mobility Program, Family Self Sufficiency and Home Ownership Option and the Tenant Based Rental Assistance Program.

The *Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP)*, formerly known as Section 8 Rental Assistance, assists very low-income families, the elderly, and people with disabilities to afford decent, safe, and sanitary housing in the private market. Housing assistance is provided on behalf of the family or individual, based on the household size and income. Housing Quality Standard Inspections are conducted before subsidy starts and annually thereafter to ensure that the housing unit meets health and safety standards.

The *Making Moves Program* is a voluntary housing mobility program that provides one-on-one assistance to both tenants and landlords, along with financial incentives and security deposits for voucher holders with children in the household. Making Moves is designed to help families find stable housing in designated Well-Resourced areas that provide access to better schools, employment opportunities and other supports.

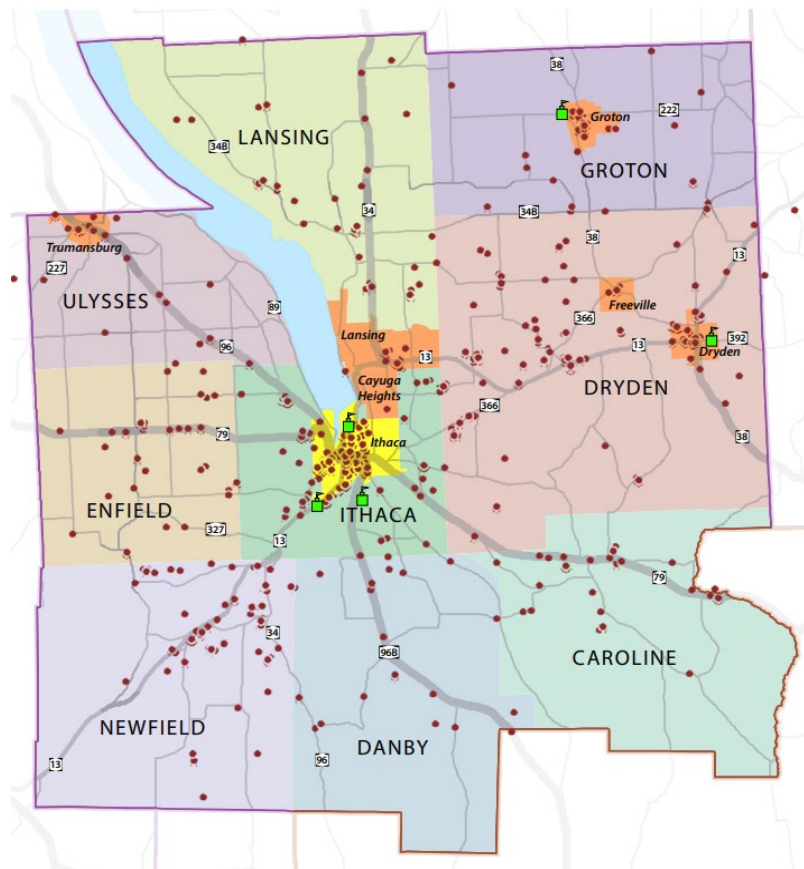
The *Family Self- Sufficiency (FSS) Program* is a voluntary program available to current voucher holders. FSS is a five-year goal driven program that provides support to help participants increase income and achieve self-sufficiency.

The *Homeownership Program* helps first time homebuyers purchase a home of their own by making monthly subsidy payments towards qualified homeownership expenses rather than rental assistance.

The *Tenant Based Rental Assistance Program* provides short-term financial assistance and supportive services, up to 24 months, to households experiencing homelessness. This program mirrors the HCVP to ensure a smooth transition when the household reaches the top of the HCVP waiting list.

Our *Supportive Housing Programs* serve the most vulnerable individuals and families experiencing homelessness. As a member of the Tompkins County Continuum of Care, we offer permanent housing options using a Housing First philosophy. Each household has a twelve-month lease agreement with supportive services focused on housing stability goals. There are six program sites located in the City of Ithaca: Chartwell House, Magnolia House, Corn Street Apartments, Amici House, Ithaca Arthaus and Asteri Ithaca.

TCAction programs work together to support households living in poverty using a trauma informed approach to help remove barriers to resources and additional supports. We work closely with community partners and stakeholders to meet the needs without providing duplicate services.



*Households served across Tompkins County by TCAction.*

## Purpose

TCAction completes a Community Needs Assessment every three years to identify key findings relating to the causes and conditions of poverty in Tompkins County. The Community Assessment satisfies organizational standards outlined by funders and helps us to collect information about our community in a meaningful way. The assessment process collects information from consumers, the entire community and various stakeholders. In addition, data and reports are collected from local, State and National sources. Additionally, this assessment satisfies the Head Start Program Performance Standard 1302.11.

This Community Needs Assessment will be utilized by TCAction program leadership and governing boards to better understand the needs of our consumers and the larger community. The assessment assists our stakeholders and governing boards to identify trends and gaps in services to set meaningful goals during our strategic planning process. The assessment provides essential information about the community as well as specific conditions of poverty which the organization needs to understand to adjust program implementation to best meet the changing and emerging needs of the community.

This **2024-2027 Community Needs Assessment** will be distributed to our community partners and stakeholders as a PDF document. Additionally, this final report will be shared on social media and available on our website.

## Methodology

TCAction utilized multiple avenues to collect data and information to inform this report. Sources include the U.S. Census Bureau and American Survey data, local data reports and reports from various advocacy groups. In addition, as a Community Action Agency (CAA), TCAction has access to the National Community Action Partnership and New York State Community Action Association data reports related to poverty. Local reports are collected from community partners related to the domains being investigated: childcare, education, food and nutrition, housing, transportation, health services and employment. The list of data sources can be found at the end of this document in the appendix.

As in the past, TCAction staff gathered qualitative information from our community at large, consumers, and stakeholders using large group brainstorms and online surveys. This qualitative information is combined with the quantitative data and is analyzed to determine trends and gaps.

## Key Findings Summary

As a result of this process the following key findings were identified:

**Childcare-** there are not enough affordable childcare options in Tompkins County, especially care for children birth to three years old

**Education-** standardized testing in Public Schools demonstrate that school readiness could be improved

**Food & Nutrition-** many eligible households are not accessing SNAP Benefits to supplement their food budget in Tompkins County

**Housing-** there are not enough available housing units for any income level in Tompkins County, this shortage creates high rent prices and competition for available units that create additional barriers to those with low income creating housing instability and homelessness

**Transportation-**there is not a comprehensive transportation system that meets the needs of the entire County

**Health Services-** there are insufficient health care providers to serve the needs of the residents of Tompkins County

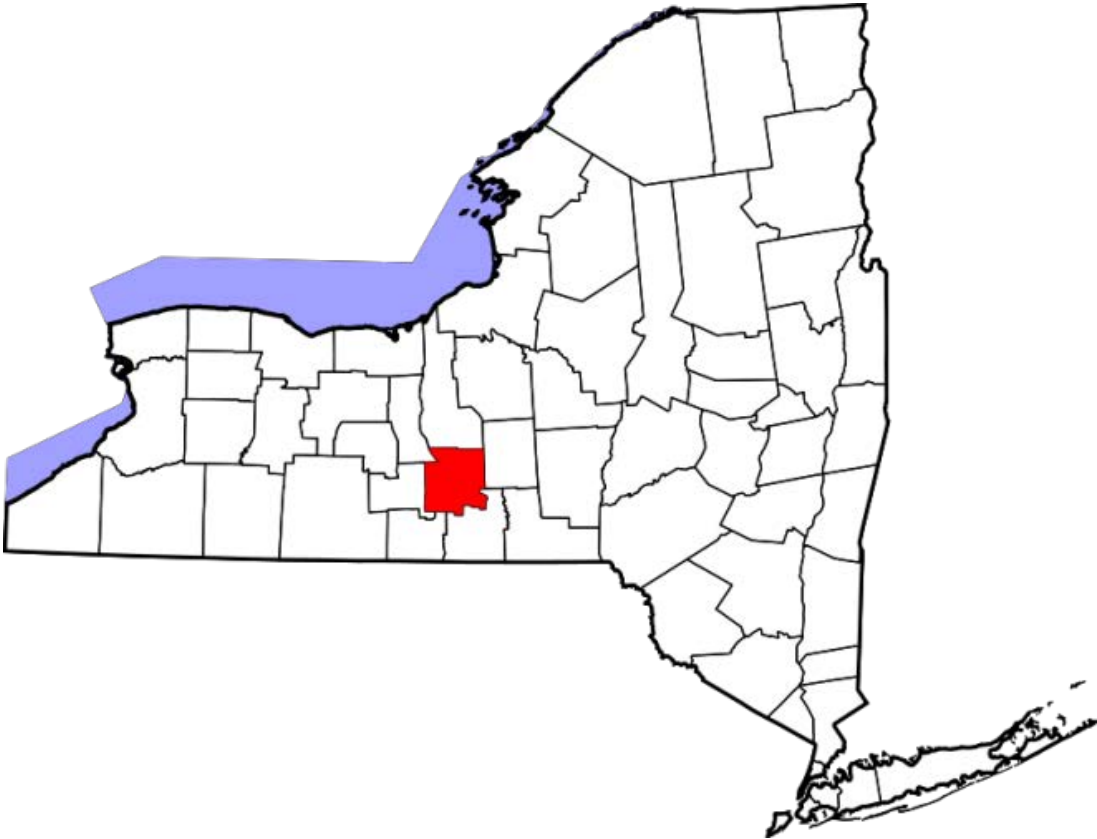
**Employment-**in general the wages do not meet the cost of living in Tompkins County

Additionally, it is evident, as it is across New York State and the Nation, there is disparity in wealth and opportunities across Tompkins County for marginalized households.

## Community Profile- Tompkins County

Located in the Finger Lakes Region of Upstate New York, Tompkins County contains a mixture of natural areas, an urban center, rural towns, and internationally renowned academic institutions. Tompkins County covers 474.64 square miles.

Tompkins County is geographically grouped as part of New York’s Southern Tier. Tompkins County is Congressional District 19 and the 52<sup>nd</sup> State Senate District. It is bordered on the north by Cayuga County; on the south by Tioga County; with Cortland County to the east and Schuyler County to the west. Tompkins County is located within 250 miles of the Northeast’s major metropolitan areas. Tompkins County is located 60 miles southwest of Syracuse, and 60 miles north of the Pennsylvania/New York border. State routes 13 and 79 connect the county’s one city, nine towns, and six villages with major eastern cities across the state.



*Tompkins County is highlighted in red.*



## Demographics

According to the *U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2018-22* five year estimates the total population of Tompkins County is 102,555. This creates a population density of 216 people per square mile surpassing the national average of 94 people per square mile. The City of Ithaca is the urban center of the county surrounded by small towns and rural areas. In 2020, 105,740 total county population, 59,102 or 55.89% of the population is classified urban while 46,638 or 44.11% is rural. The City of Ithaca is the main urban hub of the County while the remaining areas are rural with small town centers. These rural areas do not provide the amenities that are found in the City of Ithaca, requiring residents to travel into Ithaca for essential shopping, services and employment. The chart below demonstrates the population breakdown of urban versus rural living in Tompkins County and provides a New York State and National comparison.

Report Area	Total Population	Urban Population	Rural Population	Urban Population, Percent	Rural Population, Percent
Tompkins County, NY	105,740	59,102	46,638	55.89%	44.11%
New York	20,201,249	17,665,166	2,536,083	87.45%	12.55%
United States	331,449,281	265,149,027	66,300,254	80.00%	20.00%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 2020.



Population Living in Rural Areas, Percent by Tract, US Census Bureau 2020



The chart below shows the population distribution statistics related to gender in comparison to New York State and the Nation. Tompkins County's gender distribution is similar to New York State and the Nation with females just over 50% of the population.

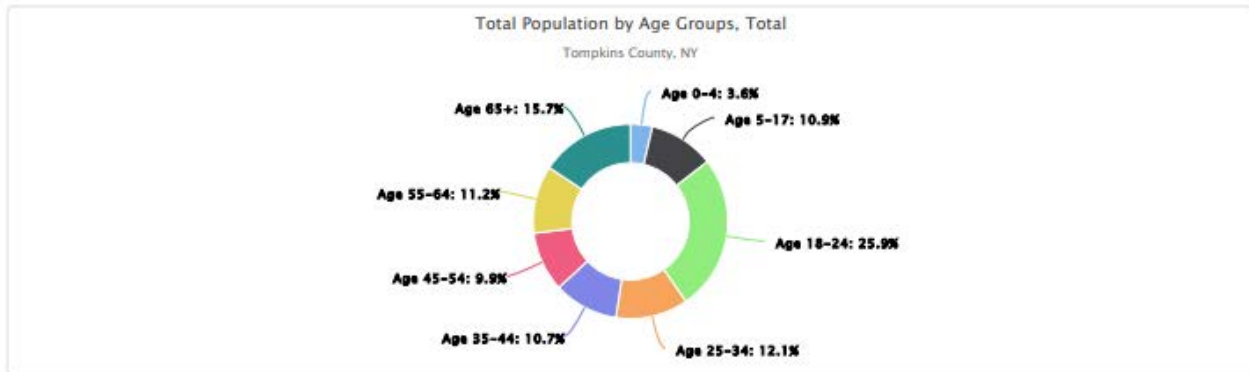
Report Area	Male	Female	Male, Percent	Female, Percent
Tompkins County, NY	50,314	52,241	49.06%	50.94%
New York	9,781,286	10,213,093	48.92%	51.08%
United States	164,200,298	166,897,295	49.59%	50.41%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-22.

The chart below shows the population distribution by age in comparison to New York State and the Nation.

Report Area	Age 0-4	Age 5-17	Age 18-24	Age 25-34	Age 35-44	Age 45-54	Age 55-64	Age 65+
Tompkins County, NY	3,728	11,142	26,529	12,369	11,001	10,170	11,537	16,079
New York	1,121,872	3,006,571	1,844,128	2,872,414	2,544,459	2,528,667	2,673,984	3,402,284
United States	19,004,925	54,208,780	31,282,896	45,388,153	42,810,359	41,087,357	42,577,475	54,737,648

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-22.



As a center for higher education with Tompkins Cortland Community College, Ithaca College and Cornell University, it is not surprising that 25.9% of the population falls between the ages of 18-24. The other age groups demonstrated are similar between 10.9%- 12.1%, leaving the second largest age range 65 years and older at 15.7%, still well below the 18-24 age range.

In Tompkins County, according to the *US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2018-22* less than 10% of the population has non-citizen status. The chart below demonstrates the comparison between Tompkins County, New York State and the Nation.

Report Area	Native	Born in a US Territory	Born Abroad to US Citizens	Naturalized	Non-Citizen	Non-Citizen, Percent
Tompkins County, NY	87,901	216	1,142	5,192	8,104	7.90%
New York	14,975,080	263,919	246,444	2,687,645	1,821,291	9.11%
United States	280,288,133	2,074,396	3,453,993	23,666,167	21,614,904	6.53%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-22.

According to *Tompkins County Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA)*, English is the primary spoken language across the county, with the most common non-English speaking households speaking Chinese (including Mandarin and Cantonese 3.97%) or Spanish (2.68%).

According to the most recent *American Community Survey* estimates, 20.23% of all occupied households in the report area are family households with one or more child(ren) under the age of 18. As defined by the US Census Bureau, a family household is any housing unit in which the householder is living with one or more individuals related to him or her by birth, marriage, or

adoption. A non-family household is any household occupied by the householder alone, or by the householder and one or more unrelated individuals. As you can see by the chart below, Tompkins County households with children are lower than that of New York State and nationally. This could be due to the high number of college students in the community.

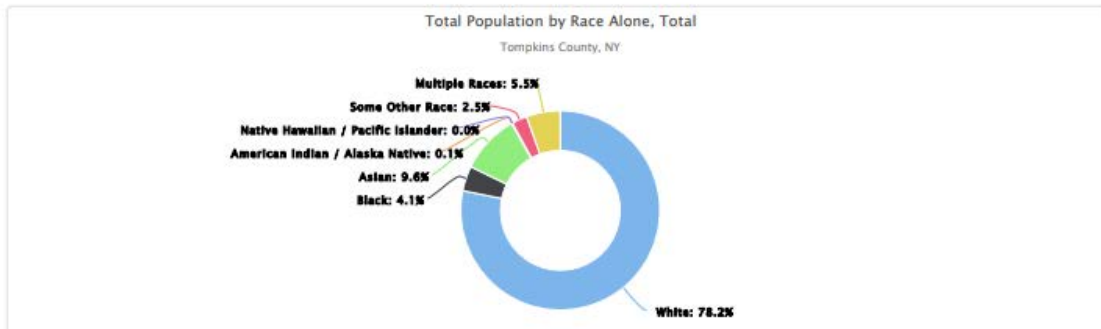
Report Area	Total Households	Total Family Households	Families with Children (Age 0-17)	Families with Children (Age 0-17), Percent of Total Households
Tompkins County, NY	42,984	21,506	8,695	20.23%
New York	7,604,523	4,735,000	2,133,417	28.05%
United States	125,736,353	81,432,908	37,622,481	29.92%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-22.

The chart below shows the population by race in comparison to New York State and the Nation. Tompkins County is predominately white as demonstrated by the chart.

Report Area	White	Black	Asian	American Indian / Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	Some Other Race	Multiple Races
Tompkins County, NY	80,182	4,158	9,871	143	20	2,538	5,643
New York	11,749,652	3,011,116	1,767,598	93,384	9,120	1,878,496	1,485,013
United States	218,123,424	41,288,572	19,112,979	2,786,431	624,863	20,018,544	29,142,780

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-22.



The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires an annual count of homeless households utilizing the shelter system and those who are unsheltered called a Point in Time Count. During the 2022 Point in Time Count, conducted during the last week of January 2022, there were 111 households utilizing the emergency shelter and twelve (12) households unsheltered. This is a total of 152 people. There were ten (10) children age 0- 18 being sheltered. There were fifteen (15) young people age 18- 24 sheltered and two (2) were unsheltered during the annual count. According to the NYS Department of Education, during the 2022-2023 School Year, 2% or 227 students were experiencing homelessness across the county. The most current Tompkins County Youth Services Department Tompkins County Profile released in 2021, identified sixty-three (63) children age 0-17 in foster care.

## Employment and Income

The unemployment rate (3.9%) and labor force count (47,600) in Tompkins County remain historically low as demonstrated by the New York State Department of Labor chart below:

Category	Jul 2024	Jul 2023	Jul 2019	Net '23-'24	% '23-'24	Net '19-'24	% '19-'24
Resident Civilian Labor Force	47,600	48,400	49,400	-800	-1.7%	-2,000	-4.0%
Employed	45,800	46,800	47,400	-1,000	-2.1%	-1,800	-3.8%
Unemployed	1,900	1,600	2,000	300	18.8%	-100	-5.0%
Tompkins County Unemployment Rate	3.9%	3.3%	4.0%	0.6		-0.1	
NYS Unemployment Rate	4.9%	4.2%	4.1%	0.7		0.8	
US Unemployment Rate	4.5%	3.8%	4.0%	0.7		0.5	

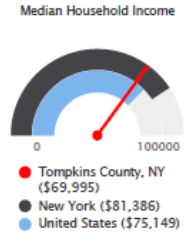
One trend of note is that since 2019 there have been less people participating in the labor force. In Tompkins County, this can be attributed to Baby Boomers retiring and low retention rates of students graduating from area institutions such as Cornell University, Ithaca College and Tompkins Cortland Community College.

According to the US Census, the most common employment sectors for those who live in Tompkins County are Educational Services (18,261 people), Health Care & Social Assistance (4,851 people), and Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services (4,420 people). Other entry level positions in the service industry include hospitality and retail.

In 2022, the median household income was estimated at \$69,995. This is an 8.92% increase from 2021 mainly contributed to population loss according to the US Census and not an increase in actual household income. The chart below demonstrates County, State and National Average and Median Household Income. Tompkins County falls under the average household income and median household income when compared to State and National data.

Report Area	Total Households	Average Household Income	Median Household Income
Tompkins County, NY	42,984	\$98,898.09	<b>\$69,995</b>
New York	7,604,523	\$120,882.76	\$81,386
United States	125,736,353	\$105,833.04	\$75,149

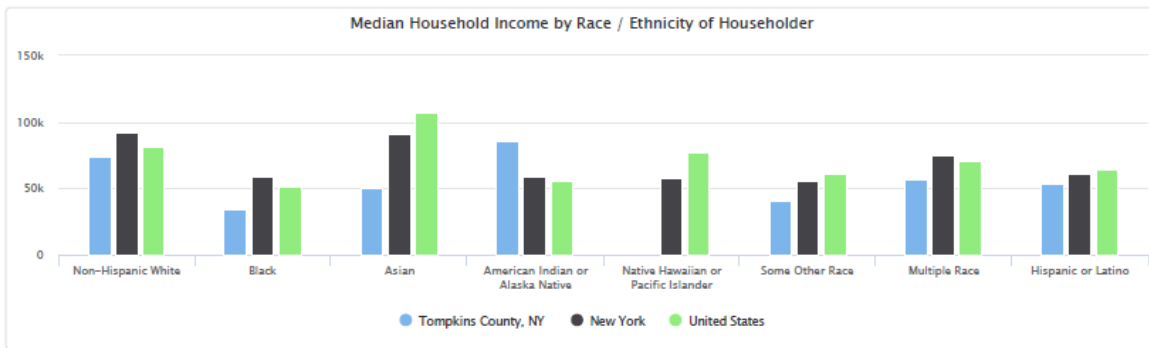
Note: This indicator is compared to the state average.  
 Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-22.



The chart below shows the median household income of Tompkins County by race/ethnicity of the household. The median household income is \$69,995 for the county. The Non-Hispanic White and American Indian or Alaska Native median household incomes are above the median level while Black household median household income is less than half the average median with Asian and Hispanic or Latino households still falling well under the average median.

Report Area	Non-Hispanic White	Black	Asian	American Indian or Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	Some Other Race	Multiple Race	Hispanic or Latino
Tompkins County, NY	\$73,968	\$34,569	\$50,625	\$86,389	No data	\$41,083	\$57,431	\$54,018
New York	\$92,218	\$58,805	\$91,254	\$59,483	\$57,817	\$55,421	\$74,254	\$61,135
United States	\$81,423	\$50,901	\$107,637	\$55,925	\$76,568	\$61,851	\$70,596	\$64,936

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-22.



The *Alternatives Federal Credit Union 2023 Living Wage Study Report* confirmed that the current cost for a single person working full time to live in Tompkins County is \$38,373/ year or \$18.45 per hour in a 40-hour work week. In 2022, it was determined to be \$16.61 but increased to \$16.84 using an updated methodology that uses datasets with a more geographically appropriate spending data that captures the difference between Tompkins County and the rest of the state rather than datasets with statewide or national consumer estimates. This is roughly a 9.6% increase from 2022 to 2023. The wage study includes housing, transportation, food, health care, savings, recreation, communication, miscellaneous and taxes for a single person household. This means that families with young children have an even higher cost of living.

The living wage in Cayuga County is \$15.11; in Cortland County, \$16.24; in Tioga County, \$16.23; in Chemung County, \$16.23; in Schuyler County, \$15.67; and in Seneca County, \$14.99. These

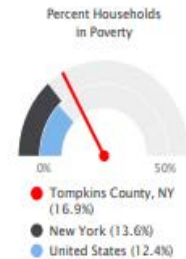
are all substantially lower than the \$18.45 calculation for Tompkins County but higher than the relevant state minimum wage of \$14.20 *Alternatives Federal Credit Union 2023 Living Wage Study Report*. Consequently, there are a significant number of people who work in Tompkins County but live in neighboring counties and commute to work.

## Households In Poverty

According to the *New York State Community Action Association (NYSCAA) Poverty Reports (2022 & 2023)* the poverty rate in 2022 was 17.5% in Tompkins County. In 2023 the rate dropped slightly to 16.9%. Considering a population of roughly 105, 638 this means that 15,445 individuals live in poverty. Of those 15,445, individuals 1,635 are under 18 years old (11.4%) and 819 are adults 65 and older (5.4%). The chart below demonstrates that in 2023 the number of households living in poverty in Tompkins County is higher than both the state and national levels.

Report Area	Total Households	Households in Poverty	Percent Households in Poverty
Tompkins County, NY	42,984	7,251	16.9%
New York	7,604,523	1,034,018	13.6%
United States	125,736,353	15,616,265	12.4%

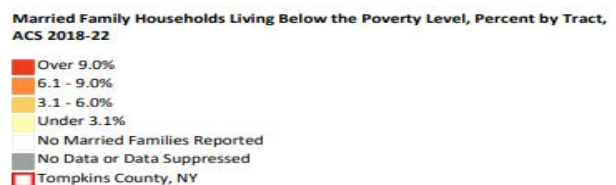
Note: This indicator is compared to the state average.  
Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-22.



In 2024 the poverty rate dropped to 16.0%. Considering a population of roughly 102,555, this means that 14,232 individuals live in poverty. Of those 14,232 individuals, 1,601 are under 18 years old (11.3%) and 891 are adults 65 and older (5.7%). This reduction seems not to be related to people moving out of poverty, rather a total population decline in the county and a shift in the ages of those living in poverty. As we take a closer look, using the chart below, at the households living in poverty, families with female heads of households with children make up about 64% of families in poverty. This is significantly higher than that of married couples or single male head of households.

Report Area	Total Families	Families in Poverty Total	Families in Poverty Married Couples	Families in Poverty Male Householder	Families in Poverty Female Householder
Tompkins County, NY	21,506	1,036	276	101	659
New York	4,735,000	461,391	174,777	47,888	238,726
United States	81,432,908	7,151,167	2,666,469	783,254	3,701,444

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-22.



Public Assistance income is available to households with income less than 125% of the Federal Poverty Level Guidelines through General Assistance and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). Determination of eligibility and ongoing assistance is determined by the Tompkins County Department of Social Services. Approximately, 1,103 households or 2.57% of the county population receive these benefits. Public Assistance regulations require regular and ongoing certifications to maintain benefits. The typical general assistance grant for a household of one (1) person is \$4,800 annually. The TANF assistance grant for a family of two (2) is \$4,967 annually.

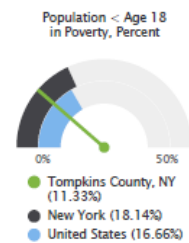
According to the *New York State Community Action Association 2023 Tompkins County Poverty Report*, there is a high percentage of households who are Asset Limited, Income Constrained and Employed (ALICE). ALICE families make more than the Federal Poverty Level but fall below the ALICE Threshold. The ALICE threshold is an income at which individuals and families can afford their basic needs. The ALICE Threshold is based on budgets that include costs for everyday essentials like housing, transportation, food and childcare.

The *2023 Tompkins County Poverty Report* shows that 20.5% of the Tompkins County population live below the ALICE threshold. This translates to 44,469 households living in conditions of economic stress. In 2024, data shows a 23.1% or 42,108 households are struggling to stretch their resources to meet their basic needs.

According to the *US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-22*, in Tompkins County 11.33% or 1,601 children aged 0-17 are living in households with income below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).

Report Area	Total Population	Population < Age 18	Population < Age 18 in Poverty	Population < Age 18 in Poverty, Percent
Tompkins County, NY	88,751	14,130	1,601	11.33%
New York	19,516,967	4,049,636	734,756	18.14%
United States	323,275,448	72,035,358	12,002,351	16.66%

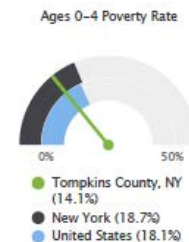
Note: This indicator is compared to the state average.  
Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-22.



Population and poverty estimate for children age 0-4 are shown below. According to the *US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-22*, an average of 14.1% percent of children lived in a state of poverty during the survey calendar year. The poverty rate for children living in the report area is less than the national average of 18.1%.

Report Area	Ages 0-4 Total Population	Ages 0-4 In Poverty	Ages 0-4 Poverty Rate
Tompkins County, NY	3,647	515	14.1%
New York	1,096,204	205,516	18.7%
United States	18,654,535	3,369,529	18.1%

Note: This indicator is compared to the state average.  
Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-22.



The charts below provide a breakdown of poverty by race in Tompkins County.

Report Area	Non-Hispanic White	Black or African American	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	Some Other Race	Multiple Race
Tompkins County, NY	10,146	846	15	2,031	15	224	955
New York	1,156,701	597,402	19,507	238,648	2,241	405,465	235,698
United States	21,525,577	8,519,391	608,547	1,897,150	103,050	3,652,060	4,215,809

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-22.

Report Area	White	Black or African American	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	Some Other Race	Multiple Race
Tompkins County, NY	13.96%	34.96%	11.72%	27.31%	75.00%	24.97%	18.43%
New York	10.08%	20.52%	21.50%	13.82%	26.54%	21.98%	16.18%
United States	10.09%	21.46%	22.60%	10.12%	16.97%	18.57%	14.76%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-22.

By comparing the population by race alone, you can see the disparity clearly. While White makes up 78.18% of the total population, only 13.96% of white people are living in poverty. By contrast Black or African American is 4.05% of the county population while 34.96% of Black or African American people are living in poverty. Asian makes up 9.63% of the total population while 27.31% of Asians living in poverty. The American Indian or Alaska Native make up .14% of the total population with 11.72% American Indian or Alaska Native are living in poverty. This trend continues for “some other race” and “multiple race” making up only a small portion of the total county population but a large percentage of the poverty.

According to the October 2024 *Raising New York From Barriers to Opportunity: Confronting Systemic Barriers to Early Childhood and Poverty- Reduction Programs*: “Today, far too many New York families do not benefit from local, state, and federal support they need to raise healthy and thriving children due to systemic barriers standing in their way. These hurdles are especially steep for people of color, immigrants, and other historically marginalized groups. It is part of the reason why New York has one of the worst child poverty rates in the nation, with nearly one in five kids experiencing poverty, and nearly one in four for Black and Latinx children.”



## Domains- Areas of Interest

This report provides a community profile and in-depth details about seven domains. These domains are areas of interest that inform us of the conditions in our community. The domains included in this report include *Childcare, Education, Food & Nutrition, Housing, Transportation, Health Services and Employment*. By reviewing the qualitative data alongside the data reports for our community, we can determine trends in relation to the current community needs. Using the information, it is possible to identify strategies that could be prioritized and identify any new initiatives that fall under our organization’s mission.

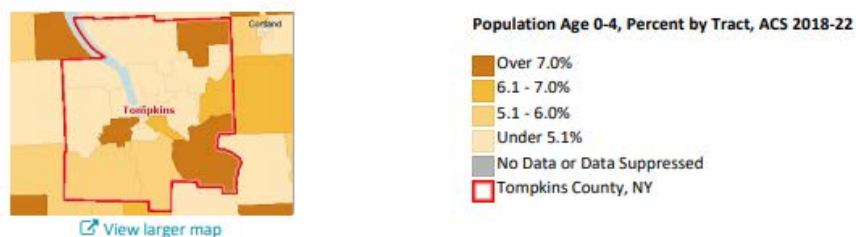
Earlier in this document, general community information was shared, as we get into the domains, we can see how barriers are exacerbated for those living in poverty. Each domain will provide data, survey information and TCAAction program information.

## Childcare

Of the estimated 102,555 total population in Tompkins County, an estimated 3,728 are children under the age of 5, representing 3.64% of the population. This data is based on the latest *US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-22*. The chart below shows a comparison between the County, the State and the Nation. The County population of 0-4 years is lower than the state and national percentages however, the barriers to securing and affording childcare in Tompkins County remains challenging.

Report Area	Total Population	Population Age 0-4	Percent Population Age 0-4
Tompkins County, NY	102,555	3,728	3.64%
New York	19,994,379	1,121,872	5.61%
United States	331,097,593	19,004,925	5.74%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-22.



According to the *2023 American Community Survey 1 Year Estimates* an estimated 1,550 women between the ages of 15 to 50 years old had a birth in the past twelve (12) months in Tompkins County.

Parents and guardians of children 0-4 have unique childcare needs. To maintain employment, full time childcare is needed at least until the child enters elementary school. Tompkins County is fortunate to have an extremely robust Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) program. Groton, Dryden and Newfield are NYS designated poverty zones and with that expanded funding have

substantially increased UPK availability for Pre-K age services. The Ithaca City School District (ICSD), with the highest concentration of children living in poverty, voted in 2015 to provide UPK programming to all 4-year-old applicants living in poverty.

The affordability and availability of childcare in New York demonstrates a crisis. More than 60 percent of the State is considered a childcare desert, meaning that there are three or more children under the age of five waiting for every one available slot. (*Raising New York From Barriers to Opportunity*) The childcare crisis is evident in Tompkins County when looking at availability and affordability.

The number of children needing care exceeds the number of licensed slots in Tompkins County. According to the US Census, there are roughly 4,121 children under the age of 5 residing in Tompkins County. Based on the Labor Force participation rates of working parents with young children there are approximately 3,288 children under the age of 5 years old needing care. The *Tompkins County Profile, prepared by Tompkins County Youth Services Department, 2021*, confirms that in 2020 there were 3,085 regulated childcare spaces across 85 sites for children 5 years old and under in Tompkins County. This leaves an estimated gap of 240 childcare spaces for children age 0-6 years old. In 2020, for families living in poverty, there were a total of 38 legally exempt childcare slots for subsidized children. There are 3 children under 6 years old for every 1 childcare slot available in Tompkins County. (*2023 Child Care in New York State, DOL*).

The chart below demonstrates a snapshot of available slots in July 2024 as determined by the Office of Children and Family Services Licensed Child Care Providers. These openings, totaling 62, do not meet the level of need for childcare in the County.

<b>Tompkins County Location</b>	<b>Infants (0-18 months)</b>	<b>Toddlers (18-36 months)</b>	<b>Pre-School (3 – 5 years)</b>
Dryden	2	4	4
Groton	1	3	3
Ithaca	9	10	12
Lansing	1	2	2
Newfield	1	1	1
Trumansburg	1	2	2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>24</b>

Tompkins County families, like others around the nation, rely on a network of informal care options (family, friends, neighbors, nursery schools, etc.) to meet their childcare needs. According to family surveys, more and more caregivers are sharing the load with partners by working alternating shifts, relying upon multiple caregivers, or one parent /guardian not working to meet their families’ needs.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) determined that childcare should take up less than 7% of a family’s annual income. The average annual cost of full-time childcare is estimated at \$24,620 for infant care, \$21,160 for toddler care, and \$19,128 for pre-school care

in Tompkins County. The NYS Office of Children and Family Services issued *Child Care Assistance Program Market Rates 2022* in June 2022, for Tompkins County:

**GROUP 2 COUNTIES:** Columbia, Erie, Monroe, Onondaga, Ontario, Rensselaer, Schenectady, Tompkins, Warren

<b>DAY CARE CENTER</b>				
	<b>Age of Child</b>			
	<b>Under 1 ½ yrs</b>	<b>1 ½ - 2 yrs</b>	<b>3 – 5 yrs</b>	<b>6 – 12 yrs</b>
Weekly	\$340	\$320	\$300	\$265
Daily	\$70	\$68	\$64	\$57
Part-Day	\$47	\$45	\$43	\$38

<b>SCHOOL-AGE CHILD CARE</b>				
	<b>Age of Child</b>			
	<b>Under 1 ½ yrs</b>	<b>1 ½ - 2 yrs</b>	<b>3 – 5 yrs</b>	<b>6 – 12 yrs</b>
Weekly	\$0	\$0	\$300	\$265
Daily	\$0	\$0	\$64	\$57
Part-Day	\$0	\$0	\$43	\$38

<b>LEGALLY-EXEMPT GROUP CHILD CARE</b>				
	<b>Age of Child</b>			
	<b>Under 1 ½ yrs</b>	<b>1 ½ - 2 yrs</b>	<b>3 – 5 yrs</b>	<b>6 – 12 yrs</b>
Weekly	\$0	\$0	\$225	\$199
Daily	\$0	\$0	\$48	\$43
Part-Day	\$0	\$0	\$32	\$29

<b>FAMILY DAY CARE HOME AND GROUP FAMILY DAY CARE HOME</b>				
	<b>Age of Child</b>			
	<b>Under 2 yrs</b>	<b>2 yrs</b>	<b>3 – 5 yrs</b>	<b>6 – 12 yrs</b>
Weekly	\$300	\$285	\$269	\$240
Daily	\$60	\$60	\$57	\$50
Part-Day	\$40	\$40	\$38	\$33

<b>INFORMAL CHILD CARE – STANDARD RATE</b>				
	<b>Age of Child</b>			
	<b>Under 2 yrs</b>	<b>2 yrs</b>	<b>3 – 5 yrs</b>	<b>6 – 12 yrs</b>
Weekly	\$195	\$185	\$175	\$156
Daily	\$39	\$39	\$37	\$33
Part-Day	\$26	\$26	\$25	\$21

<b>INFORMAL CHILD CARE – ENHANCED RATE</b>				
	<b>Age of Child</b>			
	<b>Under 2 yrs</b>	<b>2 yrs</b>	<b>3 – 5 yrs</b>	<b>6 – 12 yrs</b>
Weekly	\$210	\$200	\$188	\$168
Daily	\$42	\$42	\$40	\$35
Part-Day	\$28	\$28	\$27	\$23

(22-OCFS-LCM-14, June 3, 2022, page 16)

According to this chart, the cost for an infant is estimated at \$17,680 annually (\$340/week), while care for a 3–5-year-old is estimated at \$15,600 annually (\$300/week). This is slightly under the local averages for the top childcare centers in Tompkins County. Childcare costs in

New York State rank as one of the highest in the nation. Tompkins County, although not the highest in New York State, clearly surpasses the rate of care in surrounding rural areas.

The *Women’s Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor Fact Sheet, January 2023, Childcare Prices in Local Areas, Initial Findings from the National Database of Childcare Prices* confirms that “Childcare prices are untenable for families across all care types, age groups and county population size.” Unlike public school education where taxes cover the greatest share of the cost, or higher education where grants, loans, taxes, and parent fees pay for the cost, childcare is largely supported by parents alone. Except for limited scholarships and childcare subsidies for the lowest income families, parents pay anywhere from 10% to 40% of their income in their children’s earliest years.

The Child Care Assistance Program administered through the Tompkins County Department of Social Services provides childcare subsidies to working families who earn up to 300% of the Federal Poverty Level for their household size. The subsidies can help pay childcare providers for the time that parents/caretakers are at work or engaged in other qualifying activity, plus reasonable travel time each way.

Parents indicate that the top three most important considerations in finding childcare are quality, cost, and the teacher. When asked to identify the most important indicator of quality, parents ranked the relationship with the teacher as the most important, followed by the environment and the experience level of the teacher. A shrinking portion of low-income families have access to regulated childcare. Quality matters to parents, but the high cost of childcare, in combination with dissatisfaction with the quality of childcare, and the lack of flexibility in arrangements is causing many families to opt out of regulated childcare programs. It is estimated that one-third or more of the children in Tompkins County are in unregulated care.

Our **Head Start and Early Head Program** provides the only no cost option for childcare for families with children 0- to 5 years in Tompkins County. In addition to childcare services the program provides comprehensive education, health, nutrition, parent involvement and family support services and serves very low-income children and their families. In 2023, 170 children and families were enrolled in Head Start (HS) and 106 infants, toddlers or pregnant woman participated on the Early Head Start (EHS) program: totaling 258 families for the program year.

The chart below demonstrates the 2023 program enrollment by location in Tompkins County:

Tompkins County Sites	# of Classrooms	# of Children Served
Groton	2 (HS) 2 (EHS)	25 (HS) 16 (EHS)
Dryden	2 (HS) 1 (EHS)	30 (HS) 10 (EHS)
Ithaca	4 (HS) 5 (EHS)	64 (HS) 41 (EHS)
Home Based Program		36 (EHS)
Delegate	11 (HS)	51 (HS)
Pregnant Women		3 (EHS)

Below is a chart that demonstrates Early Head Start and Head Start Program demographics over the past three program years.

<b>Ages of children</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
Less than One-year olds	29	24	22
One-year olds	40	34	48
Two-year-olds	74	70	33
Three-year-olds	83	89	27
Four-year-olds	77	48	111
<b>Primary Language of Children at Home</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
English	280	237	242
Spanish	11	7	10
Central/South America			
Caribbean Languages			
Middle Eastern/South Asian Languages	14	2	7
East Asian Languages		6	15
Native North American/Alaskan Native Languages			
Pacific Island Languages			
European and Slavic Languages	2	3	2
African Language			
Other Languages	8		
Unspecified Languages		14	14
<b>Race of Children</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
American Indian/Alaskan native	0	1	1
Asian	11	18	22
Black	31	39	56
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander			2
White	191	173	137
Bi Racial or Multi-Racial	19	38	49
Other Race	1		0
Unspecified Race	62		9
<b>Ethnicity of Children</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
Hispanic or Latin Origin	32	43	45
Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino Origin	283	226	222

In the 2023-2024 program year, there were 41 children referred for an evaluation to determine eligibility under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Twenty-three children completed the evaluation process and twenty- one children were diagnosed with a disability under IDEA. These children were supported in the program with individualized plans and support.

TCAction’s Head Start Program staff participate in an annual program assessment. Here is a summary of the strengths, challenges and community limitations that were identified during the 2023 assessment:

Strengths of Enrolled Families (*as reported by Family Services Staff*):

- Advocating for their child’s education
- Utilizing local Food Networks & Food Banks
- Accessing community services
- Strong parent interest in their child’s education
- Resourcefulness

Challenges of Enrolled Families (*as reported by Family Services Staff*):

- Transportation
- Stable, Affordable Housing
- Lack of Child Care for children birth to 3 years old
- Difficulty with Child Behaviors at Home
- Accessing Dental Services
- Food Insecurity

Survey results from the *Stakeholder Survey* indicate that childcare is currently a high priority concern facing low-income families and households in Tompkins County as well as an area of need within the next three years as well.

Survey results from the *Community Partner Survey* indicate Childcare (75%) is a pressing need for families with low incomes in Tompkins County.

Survey results from the *Community Member Survey* indicate that only 20% of the respondents had children in the household under 18 years and reported that childcare was not an issue.

## Education

Tompkins County Schools include the following districts: Ithaca City Schools, Trumansburg, Dryden, Groton, Newfield, George Junior Republic, and Lansing. There are six private schools and one Charter School. Additionally, Tompkins Seneca Tioga BOCES serves 900 students within the districts by providing programs such as Adult Education, Career and Technical Education, Exceptional Education, TST P-TECH Academy, and the Regional Alternative School. Each public school district in the County offers Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) to households within their district and each year additional UPK classrooms are added to meet the community need. These UPK classrooms across Tompkins County provide care for most of the four-year-old children.

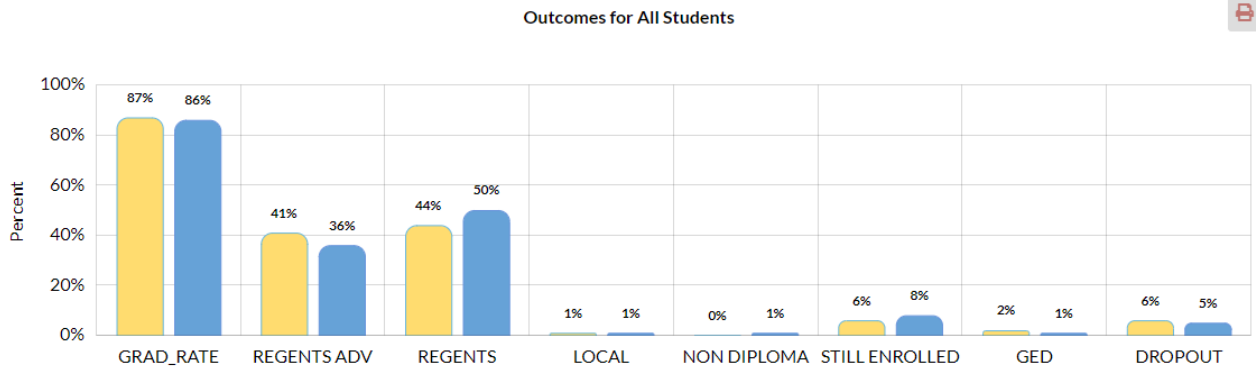
During the 2022 – 23 School year there were 9,757 students enrolled in K – 12 with a graduation rate of 87% in Tompkins County. According to the NYS Department of Education, during the

2022-2023 School Year, 44% or 4,245 students qualified as economically disadvantaged across the county. Tompkins County enrollment in Pre-K to 12 has been steadily decreasing across districts, falling under 10,000 students after COVID and remaining under that each year since 2021. (*New York State Education Department*).

All Districts experienced an increase in students being homeschooled since the 2009-2010 school year in grades K-6 (*New York State Education Department*). This trend continued and was exacerbated by COVID. Homeschooling continues to grow locally, in the 2022-2023 school year, 300 children K-6 were homeschooled. In the spirit of parents wanting to keep children together, younger children were kept home as well, rather than enrolled in childcare centers.

According to the *New York State Education Department* data is reported by educational institutions to the State Education Department throughout the school year and available for verification by districts until the close of the state data warehouse in August. District superintendents certify data is accurate in September.

The chart below is the report for Tompkins County on the data.nysed.gov website for the 2022-23 school year. 6% of the students reported were still enrolled beyond four years, 2% of students obtained a GED and 6% were reported as dropping out. The yellow bar demonstrates Tompkins County, and the blue bar demonstrates New York State.



There are three Higher Education Institutions within Tompkins County: Ithaca College, Cornell University and Tompkins Cortland Community College providing instruction to 24, 796 students in the 2022-23 academic year.

## TOMPKINS COUNTY HIGHER EDUCATION ENROLLMENT (2022 - 23)

### UNDERGRADUATES

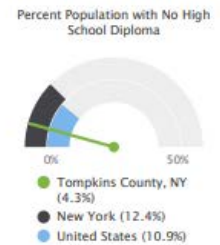
SUBGROUP	FULL-TIME	PART-TIME	TOTAL
All Students	21,170	3,626	24,796
» Degree/Certificate Seeking	20,971	722	21,693
Non-Degree/Non-Certificate Seeking	199	2,904	3,103
» Gender			
» Race and Ethnicity			

[data.nysed.gov](https://data.nysed.gov)

Educational attainment shows the distribution of the highest level of education achieved in the county and helps schools and businesses to understand the needs of adults, whether it be workforce training or the ability to develop science, technology, engineering, and mathematics opportunities. Educational attainment is calculated for persons over 25 years old and is an estimated average for the period from 2018 to 2022. In Tompkins County, 24.6% of residents over 25 years old have at least a college bachelor's degree, while 17.0% stopped their formal educational attainment after high school.

Report Area	No High School Diploma	High School Only	Some College	Associate's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Graduate or Professional Degree
Tompkins County, NY	4.3%	17.0%	12.6%	8.6%	24.6%	32.9%
New York	12.4%	24.9%	15.0%	8.8%	21.6%	17.2%
United States	10.9%	26.4%	19.7%	8.7%	20.9%	13.4%

Note: This indicator is compared to the state average.  
Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-22.



Public school standardized tests define student performance across New York State. Below is a chart from the *Tompkins County Profile* outlining student performance on testing from 2016-2019 by school district. The Tompkins County 3<sup>rd</sup> grade average improved from 2016-2019 in both English Language Arts and Math.



**Tompkins Student Performance on Spring Standardized Tests**

3rd Grade Students Meeting NYS Standards*						
	English Language Arts			Math		
	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Dryden	45%	37%	36%	59%	51%	65%
Groton	26%	36%	31%	40%	50%	35%
Ithaca	38%	53%	55%	58%	63%	64%
Lansing	50%	42%	57%	57%	59%	62%
Newfield	36%	43%	30%	44%	50%	44%
Trumansburg	30%	51%	37%	44%	57%	53%
<b>Tompkins County</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>59%</b>
NY public schools	43%	51%	52%	48%	54%	55%

8th Grade Students Meeting NYS Standards*						
	English Language Arts			Math		
	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Dryden	26%	30%	32%	6%	11%	21%
Groton	31%	27%	32%	7%	3%	16%
Ithaca	60%	64%	57%	23%	35%	21%
Lansing	50%	49%	62%	21%	38%	42%
Newfield	22%	33%	38%	6%	18%	10%
Trumansburg	63%	63%	43%	6%	5%	3%
<b>Tompkins County</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>20%</b>
NY public Schools	45%	48%	48%	22%	30%	33%

\*NYS Education Dept.'s goal is for schools to have 90% of students at or above standards.

The *Council on Children & Families- Kids' Well Being Indicators Clearinghouse (KWIC)* education indicators look at academic performance; percent of students scoring at or above proficiency in third and fourth grade English Language Arts (ELA), and eighth grade math. While less than half (47.2%, 2018-19 data) of Tompkins third graders meet the mark for ELA, it is an improvement from the 2015-16 baseline of 43.7%. The current statewide rate is 52.3%. This is an indicator that school readiness could be improved.

Standardized math testing demonstrates that only 20.4% of eighth graders meet the learning standard, essentially unchanged from the baseline of 19.6%. The current NYS rate is 33.2%. TCAction's Early Head Start and Head Start Programs promote school readiness goals and support cognitive development while preparing children for the K-12 school system using an approved curriculum of math, science, literacy and social emotional components.

In Tompkins County, high school students have an opportunity to enroll in courses at Tompkins Cortland Community College and obtain an associate's degree at the same time as their diploma. This provides a cost-free start to higher education opportunities. Although not all students obtain their associate degree, many take college level courses that can be considered when transferring to college after graduation.

College Initiative Upstate (CIU) is a learning community of students, educators, and volunteers who are working together to build pathways to and through college for people who

are court-involved or formerly incarcerated, people in a stable place in their recovery, or low-income people looking for college prep and support. CIU provides a supportive learning community for first time students or returning students.

Survey results indicate from all three of our online surveys (*Community Partner, Community Member and Stakeholder*) that K- 12 or higher education is not a high priority concern facing low-income families and households in Tompkins County at the time of the survey. Currently, available resources seem to be meeting the needs of the community.

It can be noted that based on Elementary School testing, Early Head Start & Head Start Programs could assist to improve testing scores noted above utilizing the curriculum designed to promote school readiness.

## **Food & Nutrition**

According to the *Tompkins County Community Food System Plan: Food System Baseline Assessment (September 21, 2021)* Tompkins County is a hub for the region with many more food outlets than our neighboring counties. Tompkins County hosts many farmers markets, numerous CSA's, many restaurants, a cooperative food store in addition to several regional and national food retailers. Even with all these options, the average meal in Tompkins County is 17% more expensive than the national average. One third of food insecure residents earn too much to qualify for public food assistance programs yet struggle to stretch a limited food budget. *Tompkins County Community Food System Plan: Food System Baseline Assessment (September 21, 2021)*

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) issues electronic benefits that can be used like cash to purchase food and are available to households with an income of 200% of the Federal Poverty Level Guidelines. SNAP helps low-income working people, senior citizens, the disabled and others feed their families. Eligibility and benefit levels are based on household size, income and other factors. The current monthly benefit allowances according to the *New York State Office of Temporary & Disability Assistance* include the following:

Maximum SNAP Benefit Allowances

Household Size	Maximum Allotment*
1	\$292
2	\$536
3	\$768
4	\$975
5	\$1,158
6	\$1,390
7	\$1,536
8	\$1,756
For each additional member	\$220 +

The table below shows that according to the *US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-22*, 3,448 households (or 8.02%) received SNAP payments during 2018-2022. During this same period there were 5,717 households with income levels below the poverty level that were not receiving SNAP payments.

Report Area	Households Receiving SNAP Total	Households Receiving SNAP Percent	Households Receiving SNAP Income Below Poverty	Households Receiving SNAP Income Above Poverty	Households Not Receiving SNAP Total	Households Not Receiving SNAP Percent	Households Not Receiving SNAP Income Below Poverty	Households Not Receiving SNAP Income Above Poverty
Tompkins County, NY	3,448	8.02%	1,534	1,914	39,536	91.98%	5,717	33,819
New York	1,113,122	14.64%	514,761	598,361	6,491,401	85.36%	519,257	5,972,144
United States	14,486,880	11.52%	6,332,769	8,154,111	111,249,473	88.48%	9,283,496	101,965,977

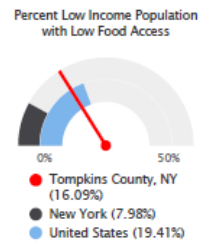
Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-22.

In Tompkins County there are only eighty (80) SNAP Authorized Retailers. SNAP is not always accepted at farmer markets. This limits the availability of fresh produce for low-income households.

According to the *USDA Food Access Research Atlas*, 16.9% of the county’s low income report low food access. Low food access is defined as living more than 1 urban mile or 10 rural miles from the nearest food retailer.

Report Area	Total Population	Low Income Population	Low Income Population with Low Food Access	Percent Low Income Population with Low Food Access
Tompkins County, NY	101,564	34,408	5,535	16.09%
New York	19,378,102	5,788,309	462,046	7.98%
United States	308,745,538	97,055,825	18,834,033	19.41%

Note: This indicator is compared to the state average.  
Data Source: US Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, *USDA - Food Access Research Atlas*, 2019.



Additionally, this *USDA Food Access Research Atlas* demonstrates that 23,460 individuals are living in food deserts across five (5) census tracts across Tompkins County. Low food access is exacerbated by transportation barriers. In Tompkins County, 5.4% of the population qualifies as having limited access to healthy foods. By comparison, the NYS rate is 2.4%. (*Tompkins County Whole Health, Community Health Assessment 2022-2024, Community Health Improvement Plan 2022-2024*)

In the 2021/2022 school year, according to the *KWIC County Report* ([https://www.nyskwic.org/get\\_data/county\\_report.cfm](https://www.nyskwic.org/get_data/county_report.cfm)) 3,960 students were eligible for free or reduced-price meals (41%). When school is in session school breakfast and lunch programs help to supplement the household food budget for low-income households. In 2022, according to the *KWIC County Report* ([https://www.nyskwic.org/get\\_data/county\\_report.cfm](https://www.nyskwic.org/get_data/county_report.cfm)) 2,387 children (15.7%), birth to 17 years receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Benefits.

Many households utilize **TCAction's Emergency Food Pantry** to stretch food dollars each month. Households can request food every other week. Food boxes are prepared with fresh produce, breads, frozen, canned and dry goods based on household size. The pantry also offers hygiene products, cleaning supplies and pet supplies as they are available. Adult and children size diapers are available upon request. In 2022, TCAction's Emergency Food Pantry served households 2,923 times (2,349 children; 4,775 adults; and 543 Seniors- duplicated). In 2023, the Emergency Food Pantry served households a total of 3,093 times (2426 children; 4,415 adults; and 624 Seniors- duplicated).

According to data shared by the *Food Bank of the Southern Tier*, in 2023 food pantries in Tompkins County show a 19% increase in requests for food compared to 2022. During the first two quarters, from January to June 2024, pantries across Tompkins County show an increase of 21% compared to the same period in 2023. According to the *Tompkins County Emergency Food Pantries and Meal Sites* list created by the Food Bank of the Southern Tier, there are twenty-two food pantries across the county and two organizations providing meal service in the City of Ithaca. Most households utilize multiple pantries to meet the food needs of their household.

Survey results from the *Community Partner Survey* indicate about one quarter of the respondents feel that food assistance is currently a priority concern facing low-income families and households in Tompkins County and was identified as an area of need within the next three years by one third of the respondents.

Survey results from the *Stakeholder Survey* indicate that food assistance is currently a high priority concern facing low-income families and households in Tompkins County as well as an area of need within the next three years as well.

Survey results from the *Community Member Survey* indicate that food assistance is currently a high priority concern facing low-income families and households in Tompkins County as well as an area of need within the next three years as well. Twenty-five percent of those participating in the survey reported using food pantries to meet household needs. Responses indicate that 26.76% of respondents skipped a meal or cut the size of a meal due to not having enough food resources. The top two reasons for not having enough food were they "could not afford more" or "did not have a way to go buy food." In the past twelve months 24.64% of the survey takers accessed a food pantry.

This qualitative data supports that many eligible households are not accessing SNAP Benefits to supplement their food budget in Tompkins County. This is in addition to having barriers such as transportation to shop for food or pick up from a pantry option.

## **Housing**

The *Tompkins County 2022 Housing Snapshot* outlines the following trends and conditions:

- Rent levels in Tompkins County greatly exceed those in neighboring counties
- Home prices have increased dramatically since 2019. From 2019-2022 the median sale price increased from \$230,000 to \$325,000, this is an increase of 41.3%
- Housing affordability remains a serious issue
- Homelessness has increased in recent years
- Inflationary pressures and financing costs will challenge housing production and affordability in coming years as local developers face high construction loan interest rates, labor shortages and dramatic increases to materials and labor costs

As of 2022, there are 46,728 housing units within Tompkins County. Most housing units were built before 1960 with the median year of 1974. According to the Tompkins County Department of Assessment determined that 1,453 homes met the definition of “poor” or “fair” in 2022. Homes in poor condition show obvious signs of deterioration for their age and require renovation. Homes in fair condition show some signs of deterioration for their age and require considerable work.

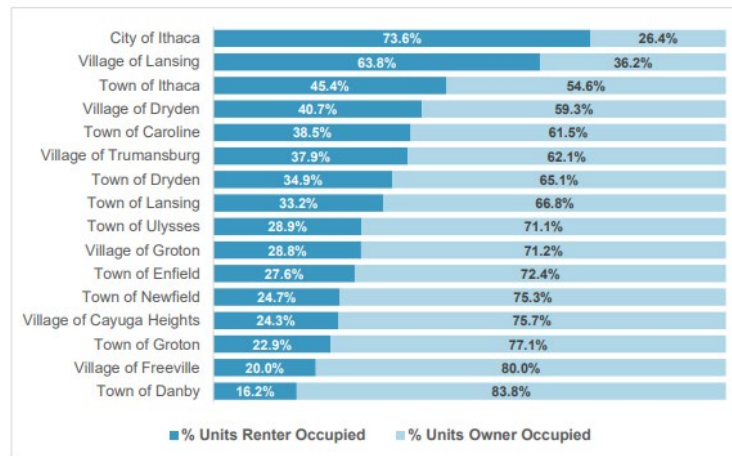
<b>Year Constructed</b>	<b>Number of Units</b>
Before 1960	16,404
1960-1979	10,447
1980-1999	11,940
2000-2010	3,603
2010-2019	4,167
After 2020	167

Considering that a significant portion of the housing units are aging, Tompkins County estimates approximately a third of the housing stock has one or more substandard conditions. Older homes are typically energy inefficient, and repairs tend to be expensive making it challenging for homeowners with lower incomes to keep up with the repairs. In the rental market, owners typically need to increase rents to cover expenses. These repairs include items such as lead paint remediation and poor indoor air quality issues that increase the likelihood of health conditions if left unaddressed.

Responses from the *Community Member Survey* indicate that 61.11% of respondents reside in housing that needs minor repairs, and 23.61% report major repairs are needed. Additionally, responses from that same survey indicate that 34.25% of respondents reported needing home repairs with 20.29% skipping home repairs within the past twelve months.

The chart below from *Tompkins County 2022 Housing Snapshot* demonstrates the breakdown of owner-occupied units and rental units across the county. A significant portion of homes in the city and town of Ithaca as well as the Village of Lansing are rental units. This is likely because of

the high number of college students seeking off campus housing. The larger homes that could be rented by families are divided into student rentals where rents can be much higher.



Source: American Community Survey 2017-2021 5-Year Estimates, Table DP04

There are 23,328 owner occupied units across the county. When looking at the breakdown of owner-occupied by race only: 90% white, 4.2% Asian, 3.3% multiple races, 1.1% black and .3% some other race. This is a stark example of the racial inequities in home ownership.

Even with significant rental unit supply, the rental vacancy for Tompkins County consistently remains below 5-8% which is considered the healthy range. In 2019 the rate was at 4% and dropped to 2.9% in 2021 and in the fourth quarter of 2023, 2.1%. This extremely low vacancy rate confirms a housing shortage for renters. This type of condition with low inventory contributes to the demand forcing higher housing costs, reducing affordability.

The rents across the county are extremely high, even more so in the City of Ithaca. Tompkins County has been designated as a metropolitan area for HUDs calculation of Fair Market Rents. Unlike a typical metropolitan area, Tompkins County does not have a mass transit system that meets the needs of rural areas and the City of Ithaca. The costs of rent and transportation push households living in poverty away from the city and into the rural areas of the county.

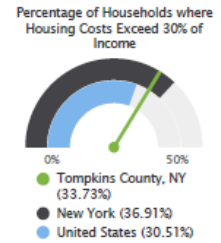
TCAAction conducted a rent study and confirmed there had been about a 26% increase in average rents in Tompkins County from 2021 to 2022. As of March 2023, average rents increased by 14.6% since 2022. This chart demonstrates the average rent in the City of Ithaca in 2022 and 2023.

Bedroom size	0	1	2	3
2022 Average Rents	\$1699	\$1805	\$1999	\$2417
2023 Average Rents	\$1452	\$1985	\$2545	\$2742

Low wages and high housing costs leave renters experiencing cost burden, meaning they spend more than 30% of their incomes on rent and utilities. The households where housing costs are 30% or more of total household income in the county is 33.73%, roughly 14,500 households, struggling with rent or mortgage costs.

Report Area	Total Households	Cost-Burdened Households	Cost-Burdened Households, Percent
Tompkins County, NY	42,984	14,499	33.73%
New York	7,604,523	2,807,057	36.91%
United States	125,736,353	38,363,931	30.51%

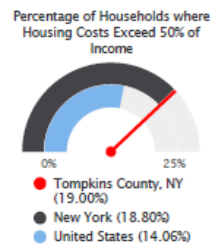
Note: This indicator is compared to the state average.  
Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-22.



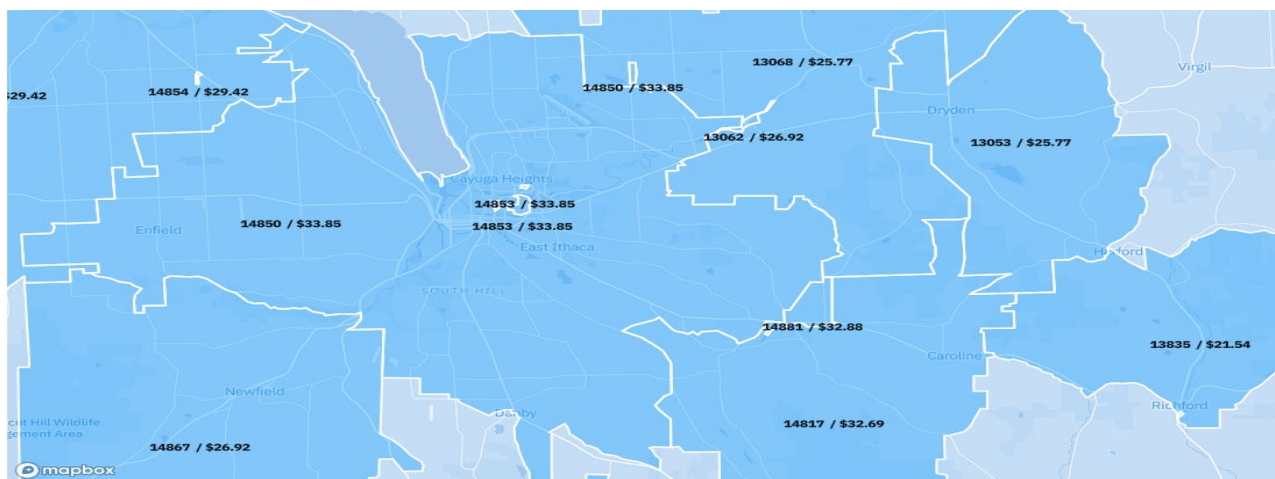
Even more troubling is the number of households experiencing severe cost burden, meaning that 50% or more total household income is needed for housing costs for owners and renters. 19% of households are experiencing severe housing cost burden which is slightly higher than the State of New York and significantly more than the Nation.

Report Area	Total Households	Severely Burdened Households	Severely Burdened Households, Percent
Tompkins County, NY	42,984	8,166	19.00%
New York	7,604,523	1,429,384	18.80%
United States	125,736,353	17,679,129	14.06%

Note: This indicator is compared to the state average.  
Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-22.



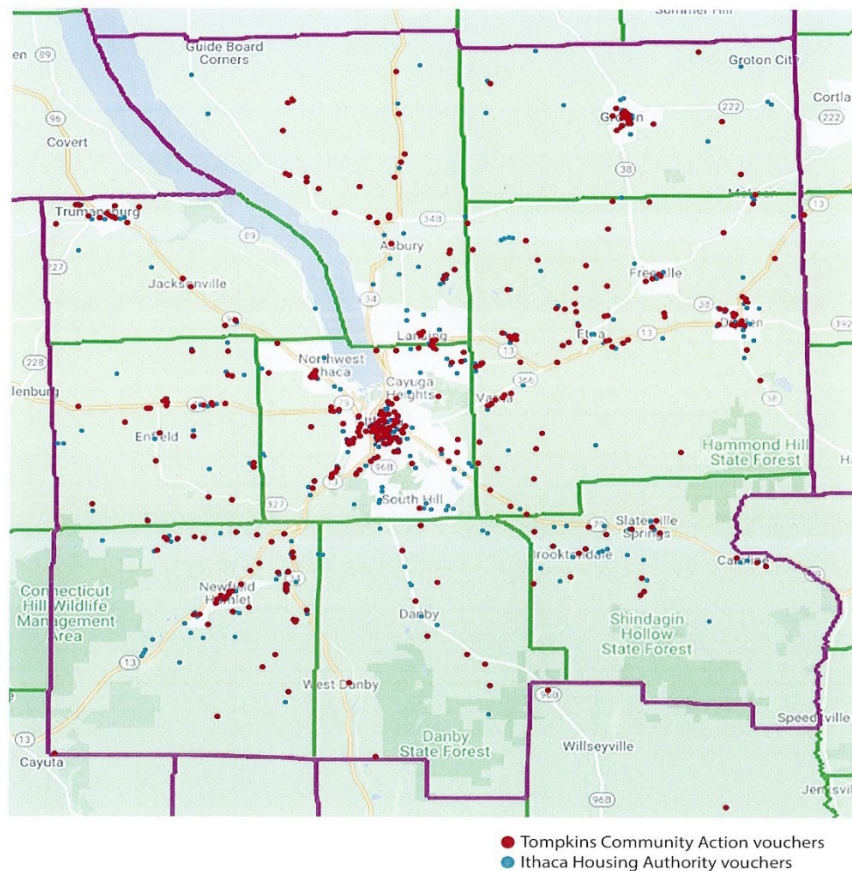
According to the *National Low Income Housing Coalition's Out of Reach 2022 Report*, the housing wage needed in Tompkins County for a two-bedroom unit ranges between \$25.77 to \$33.85 per hour, 40 hours per week, 52 weeks per year. At minimum wage, a person would need to work two full time jobs to meet the housing wage without a subsidy. The map below demonstrates the wages needed to afford housing across the County.



Many low-income households seek rental assistance programs to obtain and maintain rental housing in Tompkins County. There are a few housing programs in the community that offer short- and long-term housing assistance programs. The largest long term assistance program would be the Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP), formerly known as Section 8 Rental Assistance Program. In Tompkins County, HCVP is administered by two organizations: Ithaca Housing Authority (IHA) and TCAction. Both programs have waiting lists ranging from twenty-four (24) to thirty-six (36) months.

TCAction serves 1195 voucher holders throughout the county including some project-based units in Tompkins County as well as Cortland County. IHA serves 1048 voucher holders across the County. Additionally, within the City of Ithaca, IHA offers Public Housing and Project Based Housing options that have an application process and a waiting list. There are 235 public housing units located at Titus Towers for elderly and/or disabled households. These unit subsidies are tied to the building. IHA also hosts Project based units, which is also rental subsidy tied to the unit for the first twelve months. The current portfolio includes eighty-two (82) units at Northside Apartments, ten (10) units at Overlook Terrace and twenty-six (26) units at Southview Gardens. These units are also located within the City of Ithaca.

### Section 8 Housing Vouchers in Tompkins County, NY





In addition to the housing supply and affordability issue, the community also struggles with a growing unhoused community. According to the *Homeless and Housing Needs Assessment for Tompkins County* presented in 2022 by Horn Research, the emergency shelter system is insufficient in size to meet the needs of unhoused people. Additionally, the county’s lack of affordable housing options contributes to long shelter stays and frequent returns. The annual *Point in Time Count*, conducted during the last week of January, across the United States, was completed in Tompkins County on January 26, 2022. During that count it was confirmed that six (6) families and one hundred five (105) households without children were in the shelter on that date. These numbers do not include transitional housing programs or couch surfing situations. The chart below provides an overview of the 2022 *Point in Time Count*. The emergency shelter operates rooms at the shelter building and overflow in motels within the county. Transitional housing options are short term housing programs allowing assistance up to twenty-four months maximum. Unsheltered options include encampments, vehicles, parking garages, vacant buildings and other areas not meant for human habitation.

Date of PIT Count: 1/26/2022

Population: Sheltered and Unsheltered Count

**Total Households and Persons**

	Sheltered			Unsheltered	Total
	Emergency	Transitional	Safe Haven		
Total Number of Households	111	14	0	12	137
Total Number of Persons	126	14	0	12	152
Number of Children (under age 18)	10	0	0	0	10
Number of Persons (18 to 24)	15	11	0	2	28
Number of Persons (over age 24)	101	3	0	10	114

As we have seen through the data discussed in this section, the low vacancy rate, the high rent costs, and the insufficient housing supply have a compounding effect on the homeless rates in Tompkins County.

Each of the **TCAction Supportive Housing Programs** partner rental subsidies based on income and household size with supportive services that focus on housing stability goals. Housing stability goals include paying rent on time and following the terms of the lease to maintain housing as well as working on other personal goals related to health, employment, or education. The goal of Supportive Housing is to not return to homelessness at program exit. TCAction provides Permanent Supportive Housing options at six (6) project sites in the City of Ithaca creating 135 units of supportive housing.

The barriers to housing for households with low incomes are exacerbated by the high rents and lack of available units. It is nearly impossible to find rental housing without subsidy as a low-income person in Tompkins County. If it is possible, it is likely that is substandard housing.

Survey results from the *Stakeholder Survey* indicate that housing that is affordable is currently a high priority concern facing low-income families and households in Tompkins County as well as an area of need within the next three years as well.

Survey results from the *Community Partner Survey* indicate that Affordable Housing (75%) and Homeless Services (45%) are pressing needs for individuals and families with low incomes in Tompkins County. In the *Tompkins County Whole Health Local Services Plan 2024-2028*, Goal #2 Housing: Promote a housing first approach that increases the availability of affordable emergency and supportive housing that best meets the needs of the individuals who require intensive, specialized community-based interventions for stabilization and recovery across the mental hygiene system.

Responses from the *Community Member Survey* indicate that housing that is affordable is currently a high priority concern facing families and households in Tompkins County as well as an area of need within the next three years as well. Additionally, responders reported that home repairs were also a high priority concern now as well as within the next three years.

## **Transportation**

The Tompkins County Transportation Equity Coalition conducted a county-wide *Transportation Equity Needs Assessment* in 2022-2023 to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the current transportation system in Tompkins County. The primary goals of the study were to understand the experience of the underserved, provide an opportunity for the underserved to participate in research and decision making, and provide a framework for developing and identifying transportation services and solutions that will serve the entire county. Per the full report, key findings identify barriers such as 46% of low-income people responding there were “no buses when needed.” Other impacts from barriers included “stress” and “limited autonomy” resulting in “late/missed appointments.”

Cornell Cooperative Extension’s Way2Go Program provides information on transportation options across Tompkins County. Materials provide information on Bike Share options, buses, taxis, Ubers, ride shares and car rentals.

Tompkins County has one main public transit provider, Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit (TCAT) who provides bus services to the entire county. Most routes run frequently in the City of Ithaca and Cornell University however, rural routes are lacking. The reduced routes are due to low ridership numbers and a driver shortage.

Community members receiving Medicaid have the option of using a “Medicaid cab” to get to medical appointments if they make the request for transportation two days ahead of time.

There are no emergency transportation options resulting in a high usage of ambulance calls for transportation to address immediate emergencies.

Personal transportation certainly makes it easier to maintain appointments and employment in the rural areas of the county. Of the 42,984 total households in the county, 5,708 or 13.28% are without a motor vehicle based on the latest 5-year *American Community Survey* estimates. The average commute time, according to the *American Community Survey*, for Tompkins County is on average 20.21 minutes compared to the national average commute time of 26.66 minutes.

According to the *Tompkins County Community Food System Plan: Food System Baseline Assessment (September 21, 2021)* a spectrum of transportation-related issues disrupt food access and security, including not owning a vehicle, lack reliable access to a vehicle or ride, inaccessibility of bus routes and times, the hardship of transporting groceries on a bus and limited food delivery.

Responses from the *Stakeholder Survey* indicate transportation is currently an area of pressing need for individuals and families with low income in Tompkins County and expect it to continue to be a need in the next three years.

Responses from the *Community Member Survey* indicate 21.92% of the respondents had transportation needs within the past twelve months, 11.59% report transportation needs that were not met.

Responses from the *Community Partner Survey* indicate 35% of the respondents feel that transportation is a pressing need at this time, and 36.84% report transportation will be a high need people with low-income face in the next three years as well.

Transportation barriers have ripple effects for employment, food security and access to services in Tompkins County. The impact of these barriers can be far more challenging for the low-income residents.

## **Health Services**

According to the *US Census Bureau, Small Area Health Insurance Estimates 2021*, 94.44% of those between the age of 18-64 have health insurance. This leaves approximately 5.56% without health insurance coverage. During this same period, the number of uninsured children in the County was 2.49%, this is lower than both New York State and the National percentages. The number of uninsured children has steadily decreased since 2013.

Overall, Tompkins County residents have health insurance coverage which reduces barriers to healthcare access such as primary care and specialty care. TCAction hosts an insurance navigator through Southern Tier Independence Center (STIC) at the main office location. The navigator is on site during business hours and will meet with people to enroll in health insurance or answer questions about current coverage.

A more significant barrier is access to Health Care providers which includes Primary Care Providers, Dental Providers, and Mental Health Providers. Below is a chart that identifies care options in Tompkins County.

<b>Provider Type</b>	<b># of Facilities</b>	<b># of Providers</b>
Primary Care	28	118
Dental	8	26
Mental Health	11	307

As of 2023, there is one Federally Qualified Health Center serving Tompkins County. The Family Health Network of Central New York provides health care to vulnerable populations by using extra funding from the federal government to promote access to care in areas designated as medically underserved. In Tompkins County, the Family Health Network has offices in Ithaca and Groton.

In general, most Health Care Providers schedule appointments out six months or more, some providers are not accepting new patients at all. As a result, the hospital and emergency department become the primary care location for general illness which creates a burden on the health care system and the patient.

In 2020, approximately 64.90% of adults (18+) in Tompkins County reported having been to the dentist or a dental clinic within the last year. (*CDC, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System*). Dental Health Care Providers are located around the county in Trumansburg, Groton, Ithaca and Freeville.

The mission of the Tompkins County Mental Health Services Department is to meet the needs of the residents of Tompkins County in the areas of mental health, developmental disabilities, and chemical dependency by providing prevention and early detection, comprehensively planned care, treatment, and rehabilitation services. The Mental Health Clinic has same-day appointments available during Open Access hours. Open Access provides services to anyone working or living in Tompkins County by completing intake packets and the initial appointment the same day on a first come, first served basis. Additionally, the Mental Health Clinic provides Adult Therapy and Children & Youth Therapy options as well as Forensic Services, Psychiatric Services, Medication Therapy and Long Acting Injectables.

Recently the national #988 number for individuals to call when experiencing a mental health crisis became available in Tompkins County. In the *Tompkins County Whole Health Local Services Plan 2024-2028*, a priority area was identified as the need for a comprehensive crisis response for individuals with mental hygiene service.

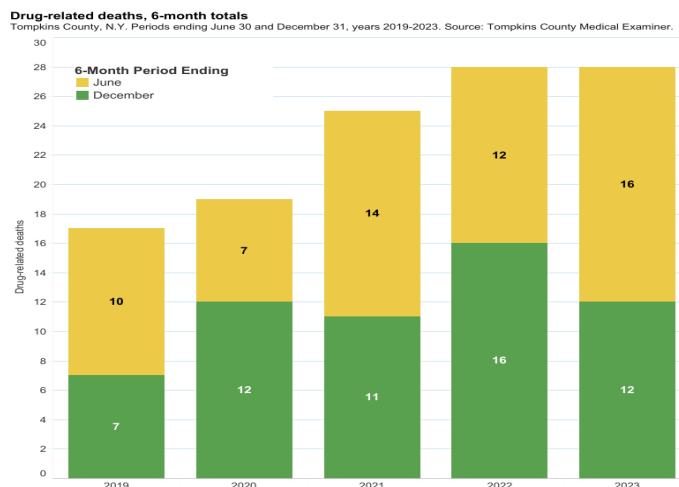
According to the *TC Whole Health Community Health Assessment 2022-2024*, from 2010 to 2019 cancer and heart disease have shared the number one cause of death in the County.

Prevention activities including education and prescreening are extremely important. Social determinants of health are non-health factors that include conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age. These factors are economic stability, education access and quality, health care access and quality, housing, social networks, exercise opportunities, and diet. It is difficult to consider prevention activities when there is no access to a primary care provider in Tompkins County.

The rate of smoking reported by adults in Tompkins County is 13% which is just under New York State’s rate of 14%. Smoking rates among adults with mental illness, those with low income or education level, or those with a disability is higher than their counter parts in Tompkins County (*TC Whole Health Community Health Assessment 2022-2024*). Like other areas around the country, vaping use among young people is high.

The opioid crisis is present in Tompkins County. Over the past year, the Alcohol and Drug Council of Tompkins County closed without notice leaving a gap in services available for recovery support. This also closed the detox center that had partially opened. Cayuga Addiction Recovery Services offers various recovery services that includes Outpatient Treatment, Opioid Treatment Program, and a Men’s Residential Treatment Program. REACH Medical provides services including Medication Assisted Therapy (MAT), Primary Care and Behavioral Health Services using a harm reduction model. Southern Tier Aids Program (STAP) operates a Syringe Exchange Program and risk reduction services for intravenous drug users and offers testing for HIV and Sexually Transmitted Infections. STAP also offers Health Homes Care Management to serve a variety of chronic conditions with comprehensive care management and care coordination services. These community resources provide training on how to administer Narcan. Narcan is readily available in the community at no cost.

The chart below (<https://tompkinscountyny.gov/health/opioids#nysdashboard>) outlines drug related deaths from 2019- 2023 in Tompkins County. The availability of Narcan and the number of community partners trained could be influencing the plateau of deaths between 2022 -2023 rather than the steady increases that occurred between 2019-2021.



Social Determinants of Health are the conditions in which we live, work, and play. They include community, government, and culture, and the institutions, systems, norms, and behaviors that shape our environment. Social determinants explain in part why some people are healthier than others, and many are not as healthy as they could be.

Health equity occurs when every person has fair and just opportunities for optimal health and well-being. While Tompkins County is recognized as one of the healthiest counties in New York State per County Health Rankings, local and state-level data sources show significant disparities, or differences across different populations in health indicators, health outcomes, and healthcare access. Health and healthcare disparities are strongly related to the social determinants of health, stemming from socioeconomic inequities and systemic barriers that disproportionately impact people by race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability status, geographic location, and more. (*Tompkins County Community Health Improvement Plan, 2022-2024*)

Survey results from the *Stakeholder Survey* indicate that Mental Health Services are a high priority concern facing low-income families and households in Tompkins County as well as an area of need within the next three years as well.

Survey results from the *Community Partner Survey* indicate that Mental Health Services and Substance Dependency Assistance are two pressing needs for individuals and families with low incomes in Tompkins County. In the next three years, results from this survey indicate the needs will shift to Healthcare and Mental Health Services.

Responses from the *Community Member Survey* indicate that Dental Care (45.21%) and Mental Health Services (28.77%) fall under the top needs experienced in the household within the last twelve months. These two areas were also listed as needed services that were not received within the last 12 months.

In the *Executive Summary of the Tompkins County Community Health Assessment and Improvement Plan*, the focus of promoting health equity is woven into the integration of mental, physical, and environmental health.

Overall, access to Health Services remains a constant issue across the continuum of physical health, mental health, dental health, and substance use treatment. Access to health insurance is not a barrier, it is access to providers across the continuum of services that needs improvement.

## **Employment**

By 2022, employment levels in Tompkins County had almost returned to pre-pandemic levels. The local Unemployment Rate is 2.9% as of April 2024. The chart below shows the five-year trend in Tompkins County as it compares to New York State and the Nation.

## Five Year Unemployment Rate Snapshot:

Report Area	April 2020	April 2021	April 2022	April 2023	April 2024
Tompkins County, NY	11.3%	3.8%	2.4%	2.2%	2.9%
New York	15.2%	7.8%	4.2%	3.6%	3.9%
United States	14.0%	5.8%	3.4%	3.1%	3.5%

Data Source: US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2024 - April.

Tompkins County has a unique economy in Upstate New York. Nearly 45% of jobs are concentrated in the education service sector, as compared to about 12% in the surrounding region. While conventional and advanced manufacturing play an important role in Tompkins County, in the surrounding region the manufacturing sector remains the strongest sector, generating about 17% of jobs. Tompkins County has a growing high-tech sector, with strengths in research and development and systems design, producing about 8% of permanent jobs. Due to the predominance of the education and technology-related sectors Tompkins County employers generally require higher levels of education and skills than the surrounding counties, whose private sector economies are dependent on more traditional basic-skilled and medium skilled industries. (*Tompkins County Workforce Strategy*)

Private sector jobs in the Southern Tier rose by 2,600 or 1.2 percent, to 214,600 over the year in March 2023. Job growth was centered in leisure and hospitality (+2,000), natural resources, mining, and construction (+600), manufacturing (+300), other services (+200) and professional and business services (+200). Losses were found in private education and health services (-600). Government jobs decreased by (-300) over the year (*NYS DOL Southern Tier Labor Statistics, March 2023*). In some service industries, the hourly wages offered are high, but the employment packages do not offer full time hours or benefits to the employee. Some higher paying jobs are seasonal in nature, including some construction, paving, landscaping, and cannot offer year-round employment.

The *Alternatives Federal Credit Union 2023 Living Wage Study Report* estimates that 38% of hourly workers earn wages below \$18.45. Included in the chart below is data compiled demonstrating disparities in earning a living wage between people of color and disparities by gender.

Racial-Ethnic Group	% of Wage Earners in Group That Earn Less Than \$18.45 per Hour
Black or African American Alone	58.8%
All Other Race-Ethnicities, Combined*	54.6%
Hispanic or Latinx	49.5%
Asian or Pacific Islander Alone	41.6%
White Alone	35.0%
<b>Gender</b>	
Female	41.4%
Male	33.6%
<b>Countywide Average for All Wage Earners</b>	<b>37.5%</b>
<small>Note: Persons who identify as either (1) Some Other Race Alone (Not Hispanic or Latinx) or (2) Indigenous Alone (Not Hispanic or Latinx), or (3) Two or More Races are, collectively, 3.45% of all wage earners. Because of the small observed frequency of workers from these groups, the groups are combined in this table. With the exception of the group labeled "Hispanic or Latinx", all racial groups describe persons who identify as Not Hispanic or Latinx.</small>	
<small>Source: American Community Survey, five-year estimates (2017-21), Public Use Microdata Sample</small>	

To help support workforce development the Direct to Work (DTW) is a full-time (Monday through Friday 9:30 am – 3:30 pm), four-week career readiness manufacturing program. The training includes learning technical skills through an online site called ToolingU-SME and applying those skills using both physical tools and virtual reality technology called Transfr VR. Participants in the program gain industry exposure by taking trips to local manufacturers, team building skills, and direct job placement.

At the Hospitality Employment Training Program (H.E.T.P.), participants are trained to be work ready in the hospitality industry and office administrative work. They receive over 60 hours of instruction in skills and certifications in the hospitality industry and office administrative work. Participants get up to 120 hours of on-the-job training and coaching. Participants learn and receive training and certifications in various areas like Resume Workshops, Mock Interview Coaching, Food/Beverage Certification (case by case), Customer Service Training, Computer Proficiency Classes, Business Tours, Etiquette Courses, Conflict Management, Empathy/Emotional Intelligence, Transferable Skills to Other Careers. The typical barriers to employment are addressed including transportation assistance with bus passes, childcare resources and work attire resources.

Survey results indicate from all three online surveys that employment is not a high priority concern facing low-income families and households in Tompkins County at the time of the survey. It can be noted that the wages from employment do not meet the cost of living in Tompkins County as described earlier in this report.

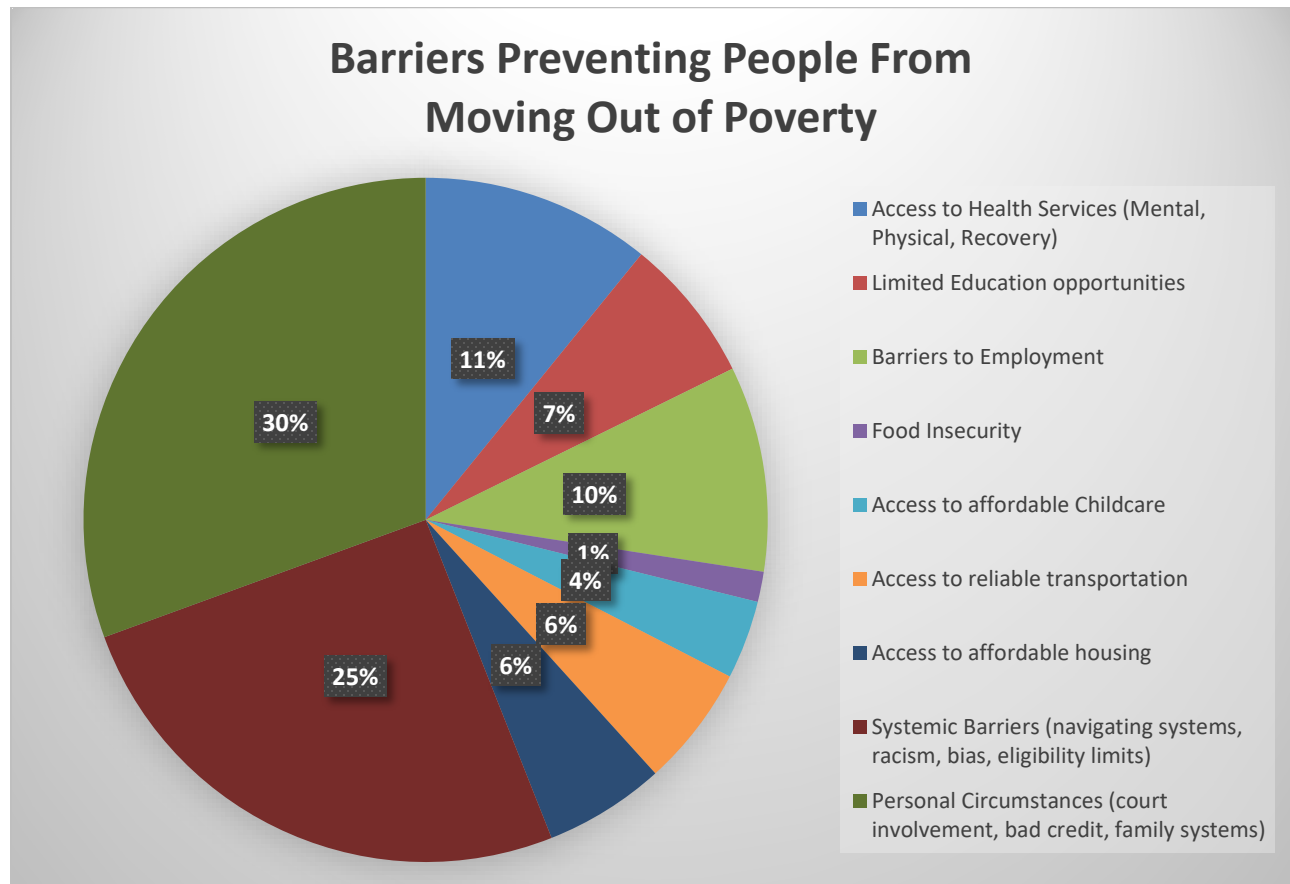


## Qualitative Data:

### Stakeholder Brainstorm Groups:

In December 2023, the TCAction staff engaged in a brainstorming activity to identify the causes of poverty in our community and identify how TCAction programs can respond to help people move out of poverty. This activity involved over ninety staff. The responses were compiled and shared with the group via email after the event.

The first question asked was “What are the barriers in our community that prevent people from moving out of poverty?” Staff generated hundreds of responses identifying factors such as personal circumstances and systemic barriers. Personal circumstances included things such as household size and composition, court involvement and health conditions while systemic barriers included things like bias and structural racism, program restrictions related to eligibility that exclude, and barriers to navigating systems. Also identified are factors including access issues for health services including physical health, mental health and dental health, safe and affordable housing options, affordable education options, healthy food options, accessible reliable transportation, and childcare. Staff also noted a barrier in our community to obtaining and maintaining full-time employment with living wage pay and benefits is closely linked to transportation and childcare barriers.



During the same Brainstorm Group session, a second question “What are ways TCAction can respond to community needs in ways that we are not already?” The responses collected were reviewed and assigned to the following categories:

- Increase Community Collaborations (host community partners at sites)
- Increase Existing Program Services (add transportation services, increase # of classrooms, offer other financial assistance, increase program hours)
- Add new programs (fee for service childcare, utility assistance, home repair, clothing closet, family education series)
- Increase Agency Capacity (continuous staff training, fundraising, increase community outreach, additional volunteers and internship opportunities)
- More advocacy for systems change (local, state and federal level)

The information gathered from this stakeholder group emphasizes the needs identified throughout this document and helps inform us of some of the recommendations provided at the end of this report.

#### Community Surveys 2024

In the Spring of 2024, we launched three online surveys to collect feedback. The survey questions are attached to this report in the appendix. The surveys were launched on May 15, 2024, and closed on June 14, 2024, using Zoho survey tool. Information collected in these surveys was analyzed by TCAction leadership.

The *Community Partner Survey* was sent to contacts at 88 of our existing community partners to collect information on local conditions, economic opportunities and barriers for all residents who are at risk of remaining or becoming economically insecure via email. There were 20 responses collected. This is a 23% response rate.

The *Stakeholder Survey* was sent to TCAction Board of Directors, TCAction Head Start Policy Council, and TCAction Staff and Volunteers totaling 121 individuals. This survey tool was like the Community Partner Survey with additional questions added about the organization. There were 48 responses collected. This is a 40% response rate.

The *Community Members Survey* was promoted on the Human Services Coalition email Listserv and on social media platforms offering QR Code access. There were 73 responses collected. Qualitative data gathered from these surveys can be found in the domain section of this assessment report.

## **Summary of Assessment Findings**

The domains outlined in this assessment intersect and interact with each other creating layers of complexity. TCAction leadership has identified the following recommendations for the top needs of each domain. Some of the recommendations include programmatic actions and some include advocacy actions. This information will inform the Strategic Planning Process as well as other program goal plans within the organization.

<b>Domain</b>	<b>Need Identified</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
Childcare	Affordable childcare slots available for children 0- 3 years old	Increase the number of Early Head Start classrooms
Education	Improve school readiness	Increase enrollment in EHS/HS
Food & Nutrition	Reduce food deserts	Increase TCAction Pantry capacity to include more deliveries and increase fresh food options
	Increase SNAP enrollments	Facilitate applications for SNAP
Housing	Increase permanent housing for unhoused community members	Identify additional Supportive Housing Program opportunities
	Additional units of affordable housing	Increase housing subsidy voucher allocation
Transportation	A transportation plan that supports the entire County	Participate in community meetings as a voice of those living in poverty
Health Services	Increase access to Health Services for low-income households including Physical, Mental and Dental	Identify ways to incorporate health services at all TCAction programs sites
		Participate in community meetings as a voice of those living in poverty
Employment	Increase opportunities with living wage employers	Continue practice of hiring people with lived experience  Continue COLA increases that meet Tompkins County Living Wage rates

## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Appendixes (reference list by domain)**

### **General information/demographic**

National Community Action Partnership, Community Needs Assessment Tool– “The Hub”

New York State Community Action Association – Tompkins County Poverty Report 2023

US Census and American Community Survey 2018-22 Five Year Estimates

Tompkins County Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA), NY:

<https://datausa.io/profile/geo/tompkins-county-puma-ny/>

### **Childcare**

NYS Office of Children and Family Services, Child Care Assistance Program Market Rates 2022 (22-OCFS-LCM-14)

The Women’s Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor Fact Sheet, January 2023, Childcare Prices in Local Areas, Initial Findings from the National Database of Childcare Prices

Raising New York From Barriers to Opportunity [https://raisingnewyork.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/09/RNY\\_BenefitBarriers\\_Web.pdf](https://raisingnewyork.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/09/RNY_BenefitBarriers_Web.pdf)

### **Education**

New York State Department of Education:

<https://data.nysed.gov/pathways.php?year=2023&county=61>

Tompkins County Profile, Prepared by Tompkins County Youth Services Department 2021-

<https://tompkinscountyny.gov/files2/youth/TownProfiles/2021/2021%20Tompkins%20County.pdf>

Council on Children & Families- Kids’ Well Being Indicators Clearinghouse (KWIC)

### **Food and Nutrition**

Tompkins County Community Food System Plan: Food System Baseline Assessment (September 21, 2021)

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) | OTDA <https://otda.ny.gov/programs/snap/>

USDA Food Access Research Atlas

KWIC County Report [https://www.nyskwic.org/get\\_data/county\\_report.cfm](https://www.nyskwic.org/get_data/county_report.cfm)

Tompkins County Emergency Food Pantries and Meal Sites - Food Bank of the Southern Tier

### **Housing**

Tompkins County 2022 Housing Snapshot

National Low Income Housing Coalition’s Out of Reach 2022 Report

Homeless and Housing Needs Assessment for Tompkins County (2022 Horn Research)

2022 Point in Time Count Data Report <https://hsctc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/2022-PITC.pdf>

### **Transportation**

Tompkins County Transportation Equity Coalition- Transportation Equity Needs Assessment 2022-2023

## **Health Services**

Tompkins County Whole Health- Community Health Assessment 2022-2024,  
Tompkins County Whole Health- Community Health Improvement Plan 2022-2024  
Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

<https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/>

NYS Opioid Data Dashboard: <https://tompkinscountyny.gov/health/opioids#nysdashboard>

## **Employment**

Alternatives Federal Credit Union 2023 Living Wage Study Report

New York State Department of Labor- Southern Tier Labor Statistics March 2023

Tompkins Workforce Strategy

## **Tompkins Community Action 2024 Survey Questions**

*Community Partner Survey*

*Stakeholder Survey*

*Community Member Survey*