CFSCNY Needs Assessment

OTSEGO COUNTY SUMMARY REPORT
MAY 15, 2024

PREPARED FOR: Community Foundation for South Central New York

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Introduction

In 2023, Horn Research was contracted to complete an updated needs assessment for CFSCNY exploring housing, poverty, mental health, nonprofit capacity, and equity. Each of these topic areas has been organized into discrete subject matter reports and county-specific reports.

This Otsego County report provides county-level data and overarching funding recommendation for each topic area. Additional regional information can be found in the topic area specific reports.

Section I: Equity

The Community Foundation for South Central New York (CFSCNY) expressed interest in understanding the ongoing challenges the region faces with equity. To understand whether and to what degree equity issues are prevalent, a review of the landscape in the CFSCNY region was conducted. The primary methods for the equity review included gathering and analyzing relevant secondary data to identify disparities, conducting a literature review of the impact of disparities on individuals and communities, and examining effective interventions.

Notes on Equity

In 2020, a "racial reckoning" launched nationwide diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives and programs[1]. Corporations, nonprofit organizations, and educational institutions conducted DEI assessments, hired DEI consultants and leaders, and developed DEI programs.

In 2023, there was a backlash against DEI initiatives, particularly in the corporate sector, but also now includes academia and other sectors and continues today. The backlash came to a head after the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that race-conscious college admission programs were unconstitutional[2].

Despite the recent boom and bust of organizational DEI initiatives, there continue to be opportunities to explore, understand, and address inequities in the CFSCNY region. Research has shown that inequities in areas such as health, education, employment, and housing dramatically negatively impact individuals, communities, and the economy as a whole. A study by the San Francisco Federal Reserve estimated that inequities in employment, education, educational utilization, and earnings in the years 1990-2019 reduced the national GDP by trillions of dollars[3]. Another study found that the economic burden of health inequities for racial and ethnic minorities in 2018 was $421-$451 billion, and the estimated economic burden of education-related health inequity was $940-$978 billion[4].

Viewing data and information through an equity lens can include analyses of various characteristics. These identity-based characteristics have historically resulted in inequitable treatment or outcomes for sub-populations. In the United States, equity analyses have typically included the original protected classes under employment law as well as other, more recent additions:

- Race
- Color
- Ethnicity
- Sex/Gender
- National origin
- Religion
- Age
- Disability
- Gender Identity/Expression
- Sexual Orientation
- HIV/AIDS status
- Military/Veteran status
- Pregnancy

Many of these characteristics are socially constructed, meaning there is no biological basis for the distinction between categories. The challenge is that we have behaved for centuries as though there was a biological basis for these differences, resulting in actual disparities in experiences and outcomes. For example, race has no objective reality but rather is what people think it is. This presents a challenge in analyzing and presenting data because doing so reinforces the concept that race can be defined explicitly and consistently. In reality, categorizing people into race and ethnicity is a fraught process. There is no way to empirically decide who falls into which category or which categories are essential to include, combine, or exclude.

However, there is ample evidence to show that our nation's social construct of race and ethnicity has led to real and persistent disparities between different social and cultural identities. Identifying those disparities within the CFSCNY region is a crucial goal of this assessment. Where possible, socially constructed identities such as race and ethnicity, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, veteran status, and national origin have been explored to understand where any disparities may exist within fundamental needs. In addition, the author assumes that the identity-level data provided by the secondary data sources was based on self-defined identity information. For example, race and ethnicity data from the Census is based on individuals' self-reported cultural identity. We assume this cultural identity information is valid and correct in the Census and the other data sources mined for this project.

Data is not always available for each of these social identities, and population sizes in some locations are too small to establish meaningful comparisons. On occasion, identities have been combined to provide some comparative value. For instance, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) has been used throughout this and companion reports to encompass people with identities that are not white and not Latino/Hispanic. This is an imperfect method of presenting data because individual cultural identities often have different histories, experiences, and disparities. More granular levels of cultural identity have been presented where possible. Data for some cultural identities, such as religion, are unavailable, and others, such as sexual orientation, are extremely limited. Gender identity categories rarely include offerings beyond male or female, and the presence of disability is generally a broad, undefined term.

The racial and ethnic composition of the regional population has changed significantly since the last CFSCNY needs assessment. In 2010, the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) population was 9.6% of the population. By 2020, that had increased more than six percentage points to 16%. The change is primarily driven by changes in the Broome County population, where the BIPOC share of the population increased from 13.7% in 2010 to 21.4% in 2020. Age groups in the region are not represented equally and are different based on race and ethnicity. The largest age group in the CFSCNY region is the 20-24 age range (8.5%). The BIPOC population in the CFSCNY region has a higher rate of younger people, and the white, non-Hispanic population has a higher rate of older people. A small proportion (5.1%) of the population in the CFSCNY region is foreign-born, about half of whom are naturalized citizens. Disability is prevalent in the region (16%), particularly among older adults (33%).

Demographics

Race and Ethnicity

The BIPOC population in Otsego County increased by nearly five percentage points from 7.3% of the population to 12.0% between 2010 and 2020.

Age

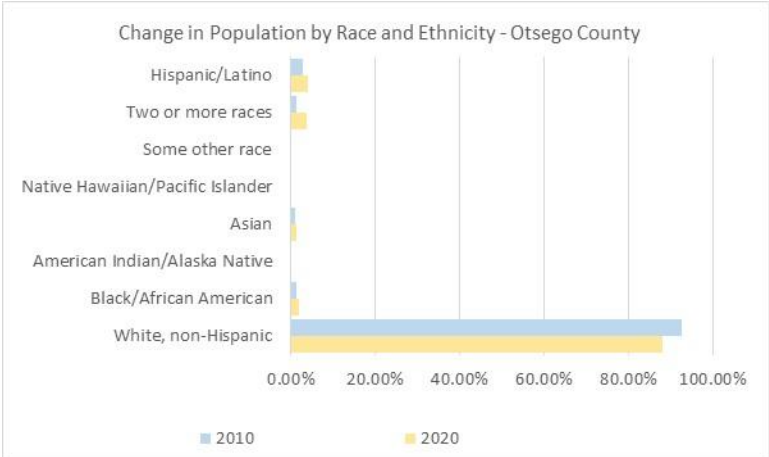
The BIPOC population is younger overall, and the largest BIPOC group is aged 15-19. This distribution is most likely driven by the university in Oneonta, where 37% of the student population is BIPOC. The white population is more heavily distributed in the older age ranges, with the largest population aged 55-64.

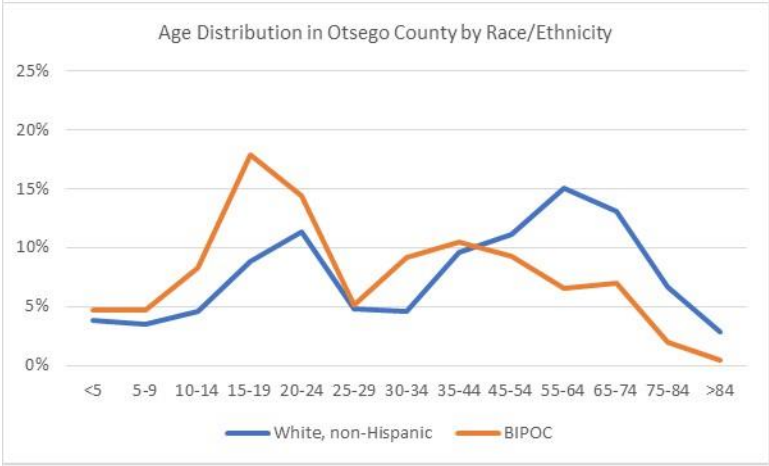
Nativity

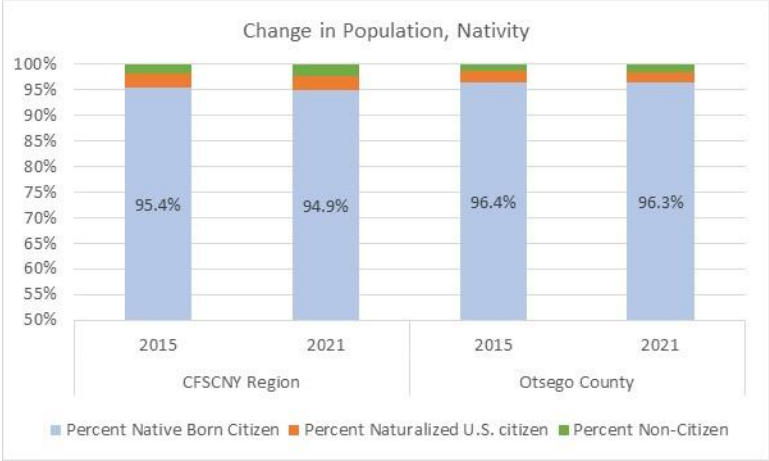
Otsego County's immigrant population has stayed flat since the last assessment and remains relatively low at 3.7%.

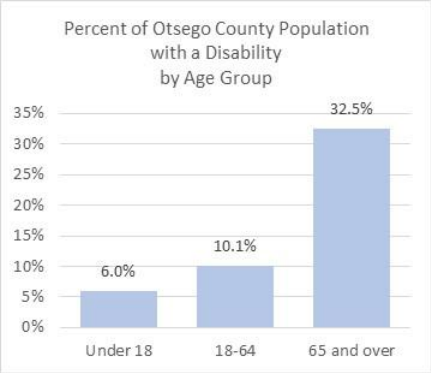
Disability

As with the rest of the region, disabilities are most common among older adults in the county, with a third of people aged 65 and over saying they have a disability.







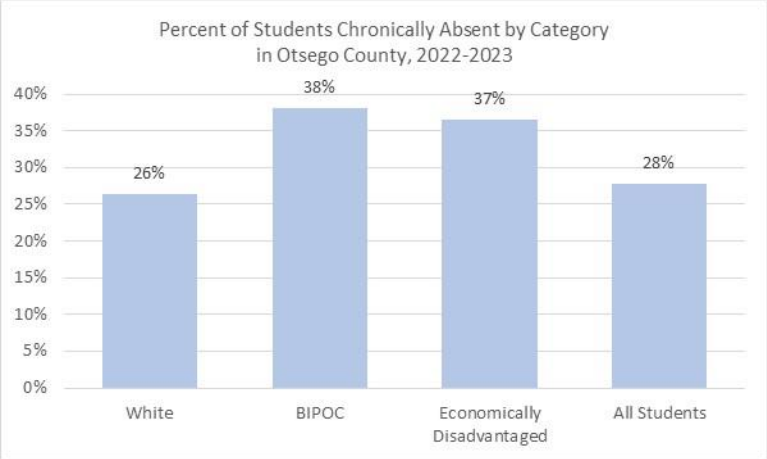


Education

Several indicators provide valuable insight into inequities in education. Inequities early in education also lead to further disparities later. For example, chronic absenteeism frequently leads to dropping out of high school and lower educational attainment as an adult.

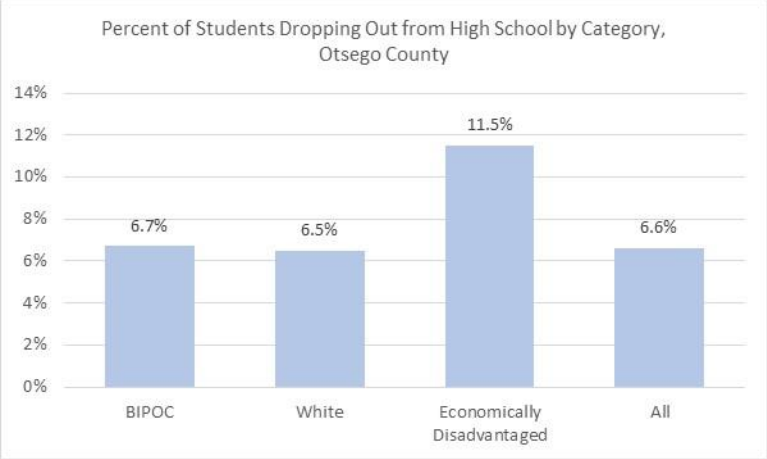
Chronic Absenteeism

In Otsego County, 38% of BIPOC students and 37% of economically disadvantaged students were chronically absent during the 2022-2023 school year. These rates are much higher than the rate of white students (26%).



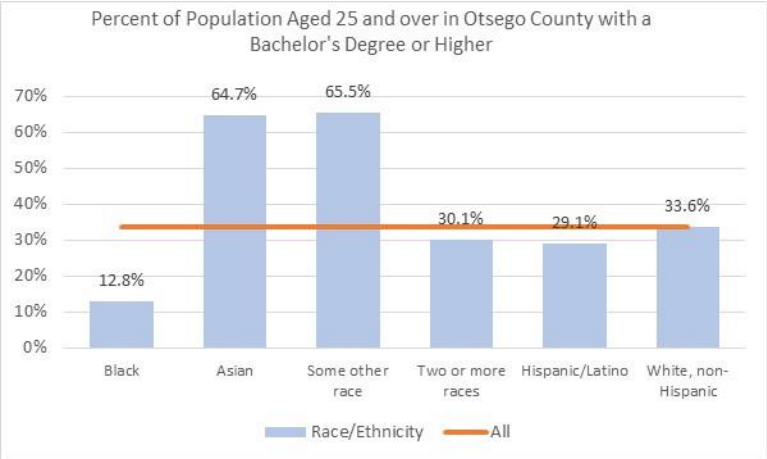
Dropout Rates

The percentage of economically disadvantaged students dropping out of high school is also about twice the rate of white students in the county. Of note, the rate of BIPOC students dropping out of high school in the county is nearly the same as white students.



Educational Attainment

A third of the population aged 25 and over in Otsego County has a bachelor's degree or higher. However, the county has significant differences in educational attainment by race and ethnicity. Only 13% of Black residents over age 25 have a bachelor's degree or higher, while two-thirds of Asian residents do.

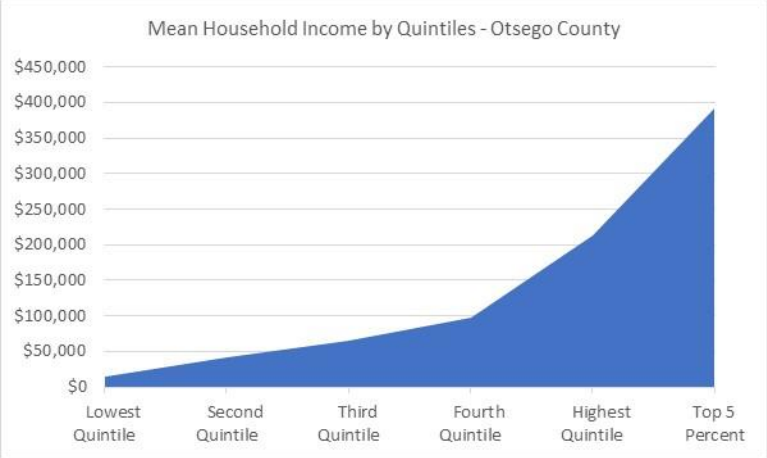


Income Inequality

Income inequality has become an increasing challenge in the United States. According to Inequality.org, the wealthiest 1% of US residents earn 104 times as much as the bottom 20% of earners[5]. A review of the consequences of income inequality found that it reduces growth, innovation, and investment and affects a host of health and social problems, including life expectancy, imprisonment, violent crime, drug abuse, mental health, child education, and teenage pregnancy[6].

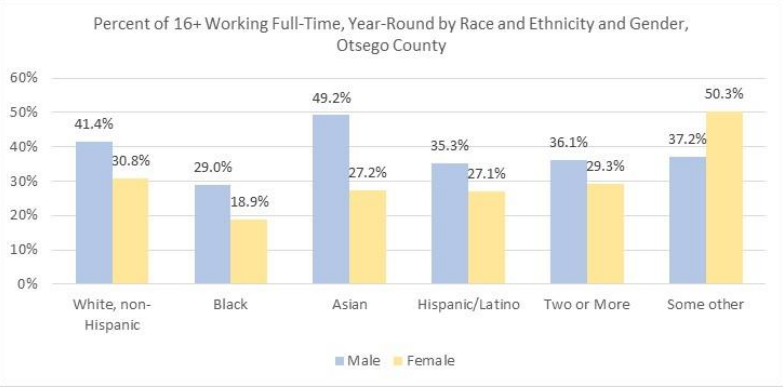
Income and Wealth

There is a significant difference between the incomes of the lowest and highest quintiles in Otsego County. Households in the lowest 20% of income levels have a mean income of $17,168, while households between 80% and 100% percentile have a mean income of $209,671. The highest-income households in Otsego County (top 5%) have 20 times greater income than the lowest-earning households.



Employment and earnings

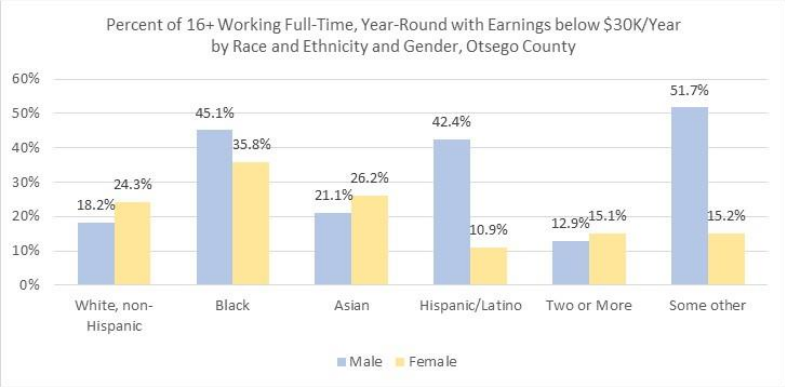
Full-time employment is often critical to being self-sufficient. In Otsego County, the demographic group most likely to be employed full-time, year-round, are Asian men (49.2%), women of some other race (50.3%), and white, non-Hispanic men (41.4%). In comparison, Black women (18.9%) have the lowest full-time, year-round employment. Generally, fewer women in the county have full-time, year-round jobs than men.



Wages

Otsego County has made more progress in the gender pay gap than other counties in the CFSCNY region. The County Health Rankings indicate that women in the county who work full-time, year-round, make 91 cents for every dollar a man working full-time, year-round, earns.

The small numbers of BIPOC residents and large margins of error make detailed analysis of employment by race and ethnicity with low wages more challenging. The chart presents the rates of full-time, year-round work with earnings below $30,000 per year by race/ethnicity and gender. However, drawing conclusions based on these data should be done cautiously, and large margins of error should be considered for small demographic populations.



Business ownership

Data describing business ownership by gender, race, and ethnicity is limited. One indicator, the number of certified MWBE businesses, offers some insight but is likely confounded by the arduous process of becoming certified. In Otsego County, 2.4% of all businesses are certified MWBE.

Community

Several indicators point to inequitable outcomes related to community well-being. Voting and participation in leadership roles indicate the level of a community's prosocial engagement. In addition, families' experiences with Child Protective Services, rates of disconnection in a community, and arrests and incarceration all affect community resilience.

Voting

Reviewing voting data by census tracts, Otsego County has statistically significant different rates of participation in voting between tracts with higher rates of BIPOC people in the population versus tracts with lower rates of BIPOC people. The most significant discrepancy was between eligible voters who were registered. Only 33% of people in high BIPOC tracts were registered to vote, while 81% of people in low BIPOC tracts were.

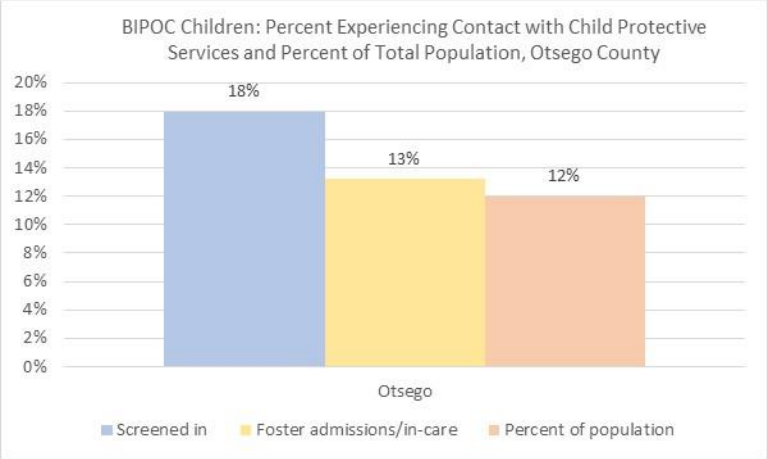
There were no statistically significant differences in participation rates between high-poverty and lower-poverty tracts.

Table 1. Percent of Voter Engagement by Type of Engagement and Census Tract Type, Otsego County

	Mean Percent		
	Eligible voters who are registered	Eligible voters who voted	Registered voters who voted
Higher rates of BIPOC residents *(In Census Tracts with more than 16% of Population Identifying as BIPOC)*	32.8%	16.6%	52.6%
Lower rates of BIPOC residents *(In Census tracts with less than 16% of the population identifying as BIPOC)*	80.8%	48.5%	59.7%

Child Protective Services

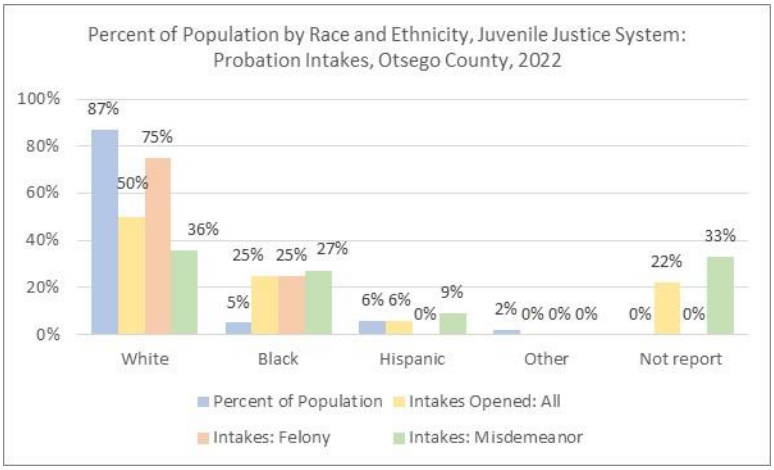
BIPOC children in Otsego County have contact with CPS disproportionately to the population. Nearly one in five children who were involved in CPS cases that were "screened in" or where there was reasonable cause to suspect maltreatment or safety concerns were BIPOC, but only 12% of the child population in the county is BIPOC.



Disconnected youth

Disconnected youth are more likely to be involved with the criminal justice system. The number of disconnected youth in Otsego County is unavailable, but in 2022, 15 juvenile arrests were made. This is down from 86 arrests in 2018. In 2018 and 2019, an NYS law was implemented to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 18 for young people who commit non-violent crimes. These offenders go to probation or family court and receive intervention and evidence-based treatment rather than detention. With the new law, a new category was developed, Adolescent Offender, for 16- and 17-year-olds who are arrested for felony-level crimes.

Juvenile arrest data by race and ethnicity is not available. However, the racial and ethnic breakdown of probation intakes in Otsego County shows that Black youth are disproportionately involved with the juvenile justice system. While Black youth make up only 5% of the Otsego County population, 25% of youth entering the probation system were Black. Only one child from Otsego County was admitted into detention in 2022.



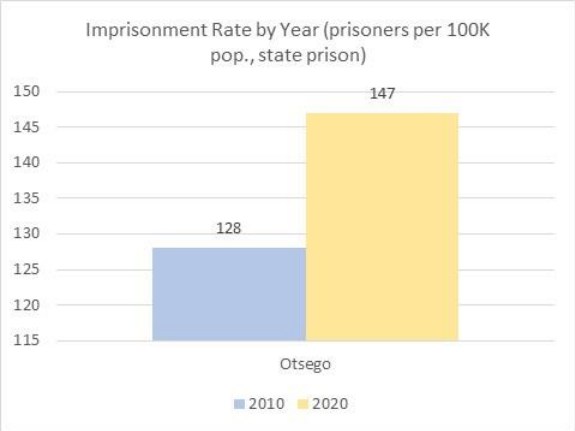
Disconnected youth are also much more likely to become pregnant. In Otsego County, teen pregnancy rates were very low.

Table 2. Teen Pregnancies per 1,000 Females under Age 18 by Race and Ethnicity, Otsego County

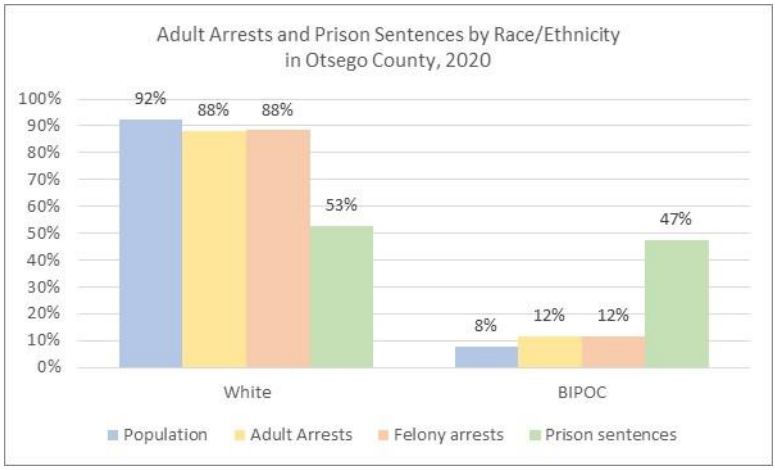
	Teen Pregnancy Rates
White	2.9
Black	*
Asian	*
Hispanic	2.4*
Total	3.1

Incarceration

Otsego County incarceration rates have had the smallest increase in the CFSCNY region. The county rates have only increased by 15% since 2010, rising to 147 prisoners per 100,000 population.



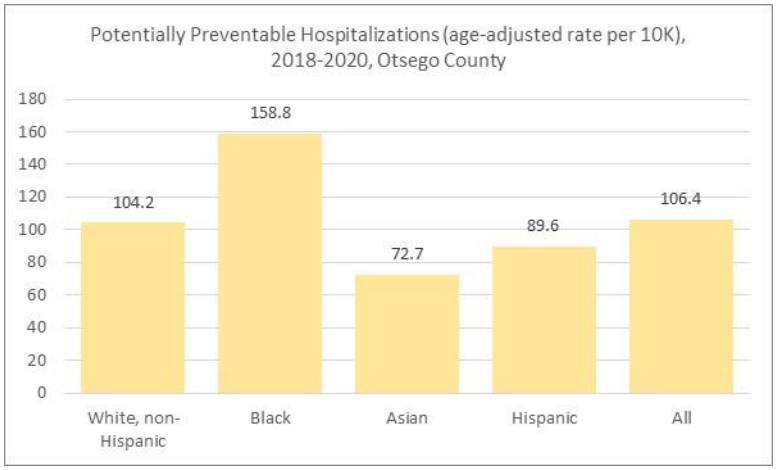
Arrest rates and prison sentences are significantly different between white and BIPOC residents in Otsego County. While BIPOC adults represent only 8% of the population, 47% of prison sentences were given to BIPOC adults. White people accounted for 88% of all felony arrests but only 53% of prison sentences.



Health and Life Expectancy

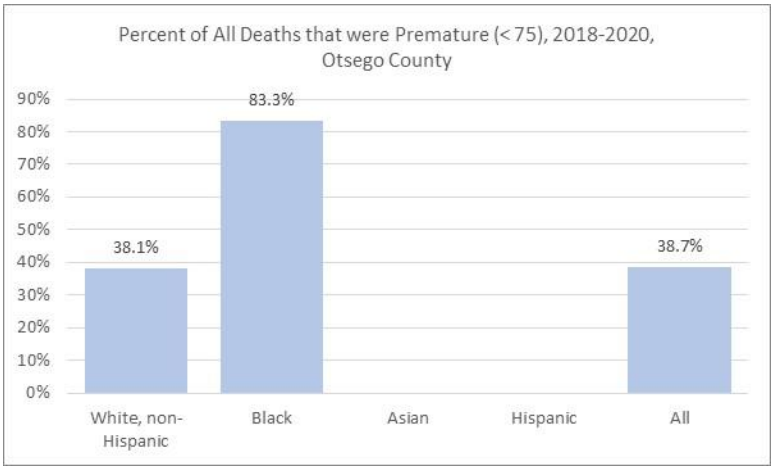
There are differences in the health and life expectancy of Otsego County residents based on race and ethnicity.

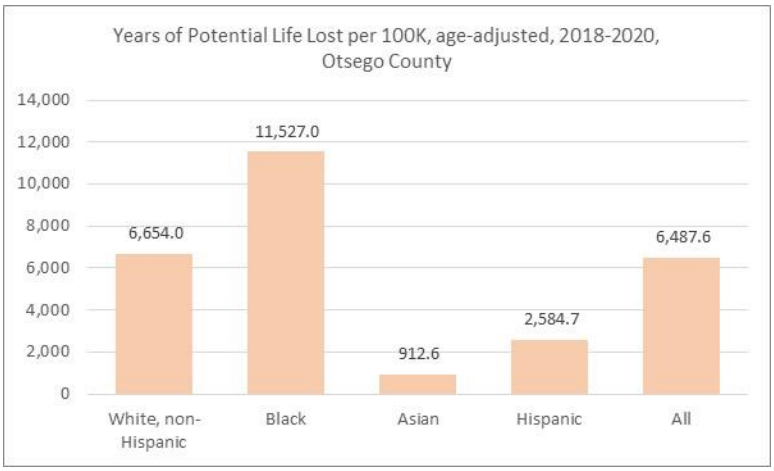
The rate of potentially preventable hospitalizations of Black residents was much higher than the rates of residents of all other races and ethnicities.



For the period between 2018-2020, 83% of deaths of Black residents were premature (before age 75). In comparison, only 38% of the deaths of white adults were premature.

The years of potential life lost per 100,000 population is much higher for Black residents in Otsego County than for all other races and ethnicities.





Section II: Poverty

CFSCNY expressed interest in understanding the current state of poverty in the region as compared to the assessment conducted in 2015. The poverty rates identified in the 2015 assessment surprised some readers, and CFSCNY expressed interest in knowing how these rates may have changed, especially related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

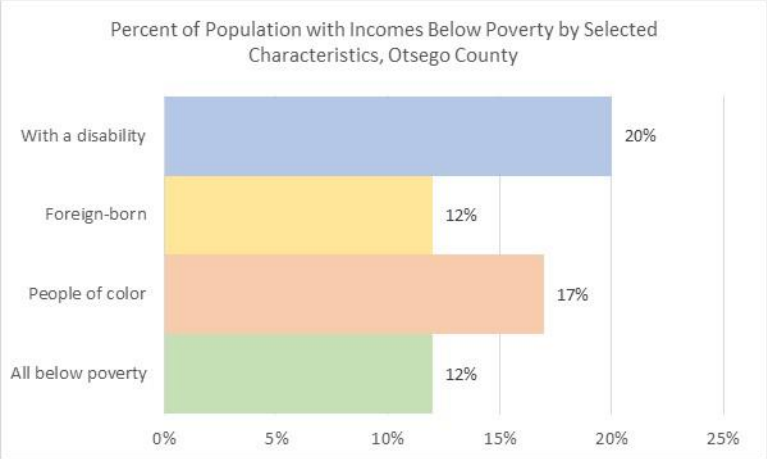
According to the most recent Census data, the poverty rate in Otsego County stands at 12.4%. This is a decrease from the last assessment (15.5%). The rate of child poverty has also declined slightly from 18% to 17%. Based on Census estimates, over 1,500 children in Otsego County live in households with incomes below the poverty rate, down from 1,983 in 2013.

The poverty rate for people aged 65 and older has stayed steady, with the most recent data of 7.5%, but in 2013, the total number of older adults in poverty was 768 and increased to 912 in 2021.

Equity Spotlight

An analysis of poverty rates by demographic groups shows a significant disparity in poverty rates between people of color and the county as a whole.

Otsego County is predominantly comprised of white, non-Hispanic residents (88%). Comparing the rates of poverty by various demographic characteristics finds that people of color have higher rates of poverty in the county as a whole[7]. In addition, people with a disability are almost twice as likely to have incomes below poverty than the population.

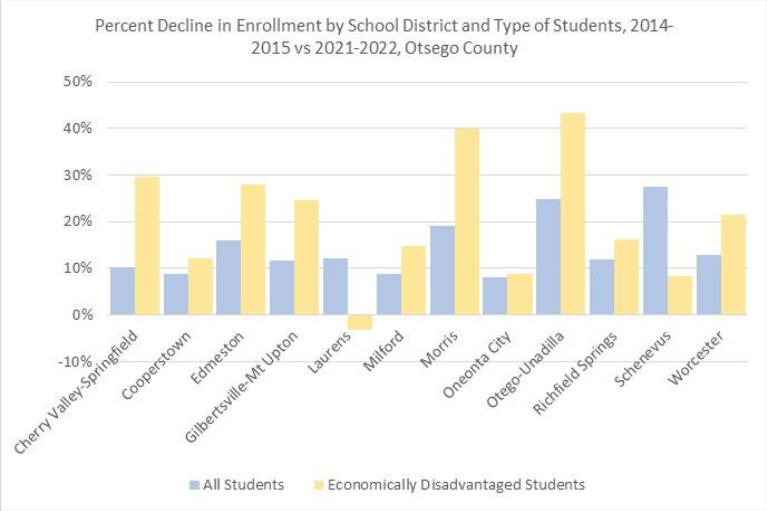


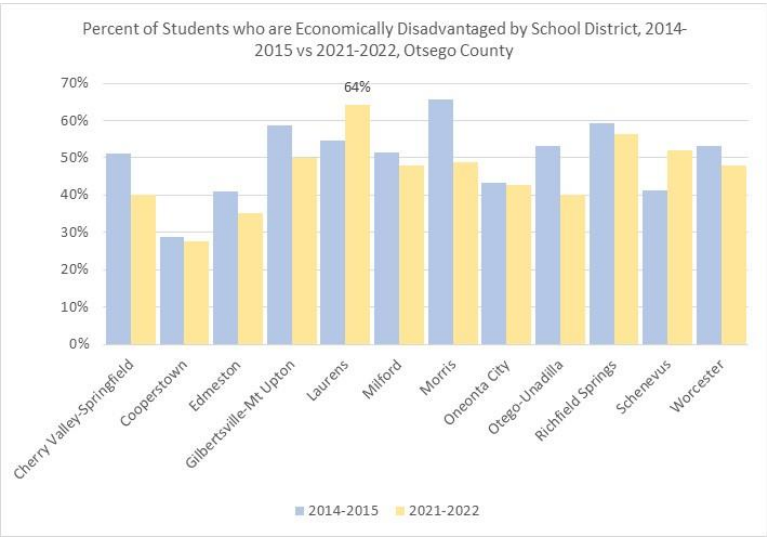
Digging Deeper: Child Poverty

Census data indicated that the incidence of child poverty has changed in several townships in Otsego County. For example, in Exeter, the child poverty rate in 2013 was estimated to be 30%, but the 2021 data says the rate is 0%. In Pittsfield, the 2013 rate was 18.4%, and the 2021 rate was 46.2%. What accounts for these dramatic differences? Margins of error could be the primary culprit. The Census data is based on sampled populations, and rural counties are more susceptible to these errors.

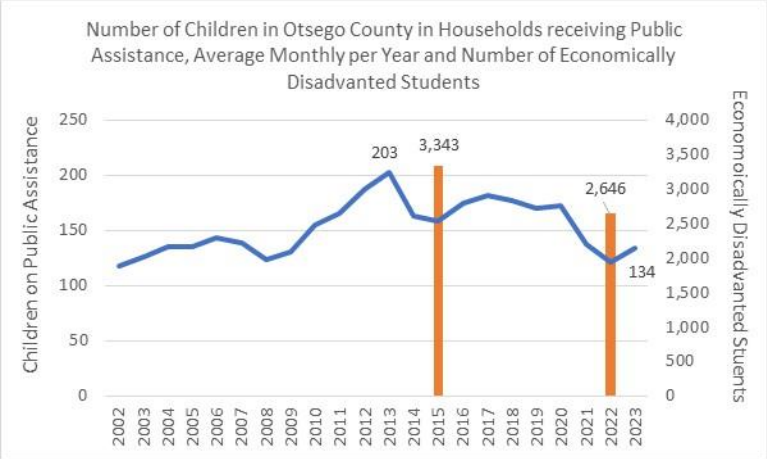
Other Child Poverty Data Sources

Data from NYSED show that the number of students enrolled in school in Otsego County has decreased by 13% since the last assessment, and the number of children flagged as economically disadvantaged has declined by 21%, suggesting that the Census data is a less than ideal source of information for these rural areas. The bulk of districts in Otsego County have seen more significant decreases in enrollment for economically disadvantaged students, except Laurens school district, which had a 12% decrease in total enrollment and a 3% increase in economically disadvantaged students. Laurens School District has the highest ratio of economically disadvantaged students to total enrollment at 64%.





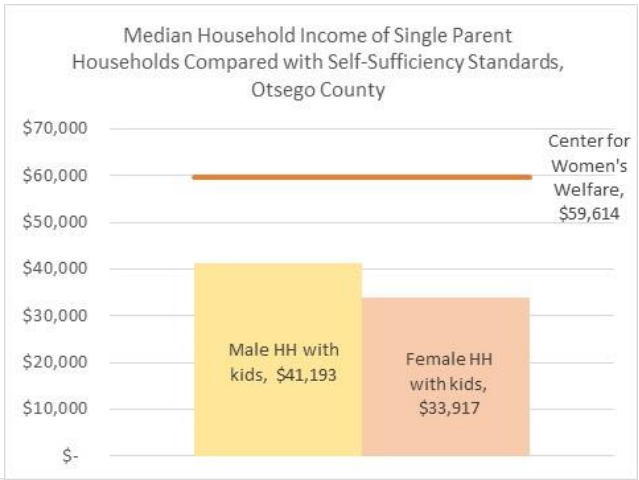
Reviewing public assistance data from the Office of Disability and Temporary Assistance shows that the number of children in households receiving public assistance has declined substantially since the last assessment. In 2013, Otsego County had a high point of 203 children receiving public assistance (average monthly participation). In 2023, the average monthly participation had declined to 134 children. Public assistance is not a precise proxy for poverty. Many people with incomes below poverty choose not to receive public assistance or are prevented from doing so due to sanctions or other restrictions on eligibility. The number of economically disadvantaged students in Otsego County schools has also declined, but not at the same rate.

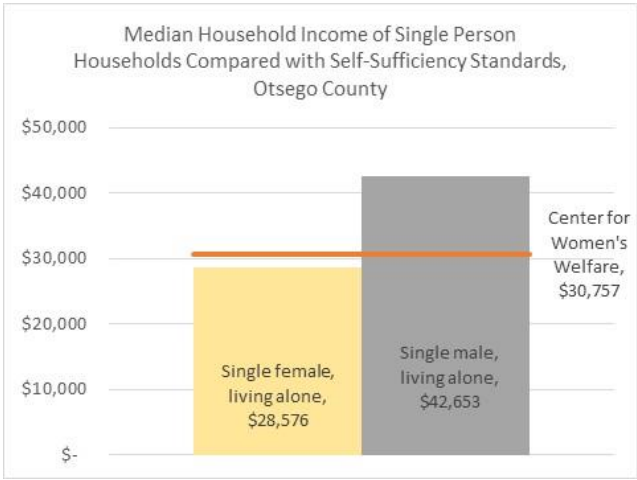


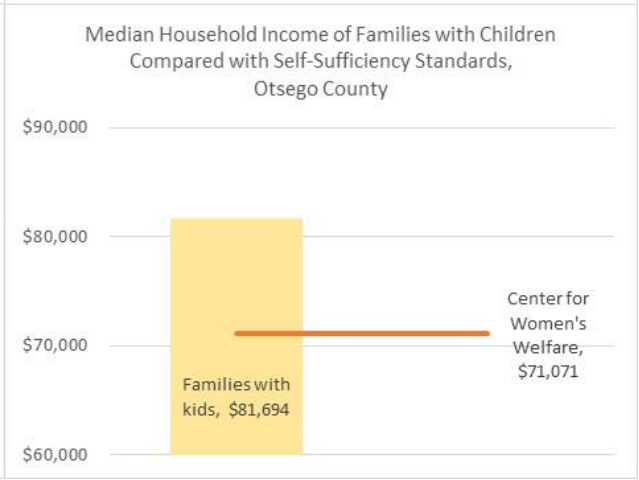
Other Measures of Economic Distress

The federal poverty line is not the only, nor the best, way to understand the extent of income insufficiency. Several other living wage, or self-sufficiency scales, have been created to understand better the income required to meet households' needs.

The most recent calculation from the Self-Sufficiency Standard from the Center for Women's Welfare at the University of Washington finds that the necessary annual income for a single parent with a preschooler in Otsego County is $59,614. The median incomes[8] for single fathers and single mothers are well below that income level, suggesting that most single-parent households live below self-sufficiency.







In contrast, two-parent households in Otsego County have a median income surpassing the self-sufficiency standard by over $10,000.

Single-person households show significant variation between males and females. Single males in Otsego County have a median income of $12,000 over the self-sufficiency standard, while single females' median income is $2,000 below the standard.

Debt

An important issue related to poverty is the amount of debt a household holds. According to the Urban Institute[9], 19% of Otsego County residents have debt in collections, with a median debt of $1,667. The NYS rate of debt in collections is 20%. Eight percent of Otsego residents have student loans that are in default.

Access to Public Benefits and Tax Credits

Government programs are a critical resource for low-income individuals and families. Research has found that:

- safety net programs can move people out of poverty but not to self-sufficiency;
- non-worker, non-elderly, non-disabled people are the most underserved by government programs, often due to eligibility restrictions; and
- co-enrollment in government programs enhances housing stability and food security.

In addition, one of the most effective interventions to supporting an individual's or family's ability to accumulate assets and reduce debt is connecting families to tax credits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credits (CTC).

Participation in SNAP

According to OTDA, in July 2023, 3,504 households and 6,122 people received SNAP benefits in Otsego County[10]. The most recent data from the Census indicate that 9,041 individuals live in households with incomes less than 125% of poverty. This data suggests that the county has approximately a 68% participation rate in SNAP.

Earned Income Tax Credit

Take-up rates for EITC and CTC are challenging to determine with available data. However, the state estimate of 81% and our regional estimate of 76% would suggest that approximately 850 low-income households[11] in the county are eligible for but are not receiving EITC. With an average of $2,500 in refundable EITC credit, this is a substantial benefit that is not being accessed.

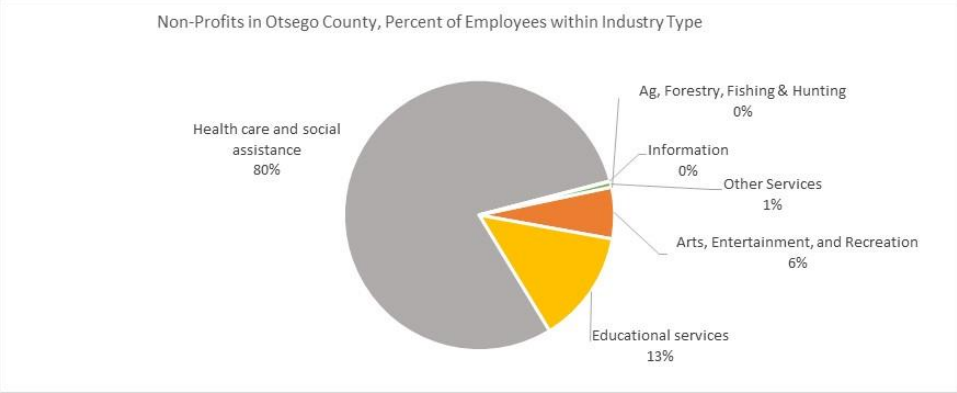
Volunteer Tax Preparation Services

The most recent data from the IRS show that in Otsego County, only 2% of tax returns with an adjusted gross income less than $25,000 used free tax assistance, and 47% used a paid preparer. This is a significant cost for these low-income households.

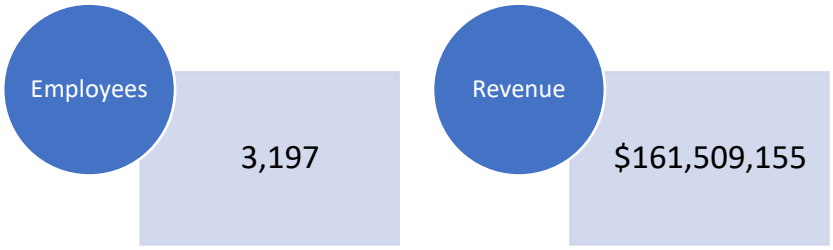
Section III: Non-Profit Capacity

CFSCNY expressed interest in understanding the current state of nonprofits in the region. Anecdotal information indicated that many nonprofits were operating on slight margins, had difficulty hiring staff, and were experiencing a leadership gap. To understand whether and to what degree these issues are prevalent, a review of the nonprofit landscape in the CFSCNY region was conducted, including a survey of non-profit leaders in the area. The results of the analysis are primarily for the entire region, except where specifically noted to be county-based.

An analysis of 2019 IRS data found that 46 nonprofits[a] do business in Otsego County. These nonprofits employ nearly 11,000 people, the vast majority (80%) in the health care and social assistance industry.



A financial analysis and the qualitative survey included twenty-eight nonprofit organizations in Otsego County. Information from IRS 990 found nearly 3,200 people are employed in these organizations, and $161 million flows through the county due to their operation.



The largest organizations in the county are those providing nursing care and assisted living care, which employs 1,727 people in total. They are followed by services for older people and persons with disabilities (N=724). Organizations providing individual, family, and child social assistance and those providing services for older people and persons with disabilities are most prevalent in the county.

Table 3. Organizational Indicators by Type of Service Provided, Otsego County

	Number of Organizations	Total Number of Employees	Average Size	Total Revenue
Agriculture/Environment	3	31	10	$1,754,861
Arts Councils	1	5	5	$199,909

[a] Includes non-profits with at least two employees.

Child Care/Early Education	1	39	39	$1,393,758
Grantmaking	1	20	20	$484,266
Humane Society/Wildlife	2	34	17	$2,778,011
Individual, Family, and Child Social Assistance	4	311	78	$12,624,859
Libraries/Media	2	5	3	$304,738
Mental Health/Substance Abuse	1	30	30	$1,193,219
Museums/Historical Sites/Zoos/Parks	1	5	5	$108,437
Nursing Care/Assisted Living	3	1727	576	$90,842,252
Performing Arts/Musical Groups	3	211	70	$9,582,210
Services for the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities	4	724	181	$34,697,661
Shelter/Housing Services	1	4	4	$1,110,217
Supportive Services Health	1	51	51	$4,434,757
Total	28	3,197	114	$161,509,155.00

Leadership Gap

Data from the nonprofit survey found a looming leadership gap and limited internal efforts to create a pipeline for future leaders. The challenges of attracting qualified leaders to open positions include insufficient funds to provide attractive pay and a tight labor market.

Data from Otsego County agencies show an average salary of $95,018. This average is likely inflated because it excludes three agencies without salary data. Salaries ranged from a minimum of $13,992 to a maximum of $387,116. Most CEO salaries (29%) fell in the $50,000-$75,000 range.

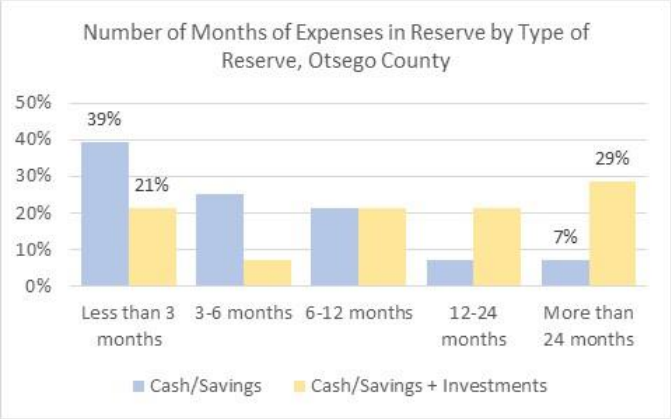
Fifty-three percent of survey respondents said their CEO would likely retire in the next 3-5 years.

A regional analysis of the survey sample by gender shows women are still a disproportionate share of leaders in the nonprofit sector. Still, a 24% wage gap exists between male and female CEOs. This means that for every $1 a man in the survey sample earns, a woman nonprofit CEO in the region only earns .76 cents. Men in the region are more likely to lead larger nonprofit organizations in terms of total operating budget and number of employees. The pay gap is most pronounced in organizations with operating budgets between $500,000 and $1 million, where women earn $0.68 for every dollar a man earns.

Financial Uncertainties

Several challenges exist for nonprofits with their finances, including not having sufficient funding to meet operational expenses, managing funders' reporting requirements, and the timeline and amount of reimbursements

In Otsego County, 21% of nonprofits have less than three months of reserve in cash, savings, and investments. Nearly 40% have less than three months of reserve in cash and savings. There does not appear to be a relationship between revenue, number of employees, or industry and the likelihood of having insufficient reserves.



Employment Challenges

Surveyed CEOs reported they often shoulder human resources responsibilities. Organizations expressed confidence that they could hire employees quickly if offered sufficient funds to expand their programs. This confidence is belied by the challenges with current hiring expressed by survey respondents. Respondents said that pay rate and finding qualified candidates were limiting factors in hiring. The overall labor market in the region has changed significantly with the loss of nearly 15,000 workers. Retaining employees is often constrained by the organization's inability to pay competitive wages. The lack of benefits, limited opportunities for advancement, and workload were also noted as challenges in employee retention.

Oversight and Equity

The primary challenges noted by regional respondents about their boards of directors were the difficulty in recruiting a diverse board and ensuring board members understood their roles. Nearly a third of surveyed organizations had not engaged in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) activities. DEI efforts by the other organizations ranged widely. Survey respondents indicated their primary challenge with DEI was a lack of diversity within their geographic region.

Technology Limitations

Technology challenges were rampant in the surveyed organizations. Primary challenges included the cost of keeping up with technology changes and improvements and accessing tech support. Respondents frequently requested funding and support to establish shared services between organizations.

Service Gaps

Transportation and housing were the most commonly noted gaps in service in their communities. For the most part, organizations said nonprofits collaborate well with each other, government agencies, and for-profit businesses.

Successes, Stressors, and Needed Resources

Organizations offered many success stories, from client success to improved and increased services. The most significant current and future stressor was having adequate funding. Beyond needing increased and consistent funding, respondents said they could use support with board training, professional

development for staff, advocacy training and support, grant writing, and assistance establishing shared services and networking opportunities.

Section IV: Mental Health

CFSCNY expressed interest in understanding the region's current state of mental health care. To understand whether and to what degree mental health disorders are prevalent and whether there are gaps in mental health care, a review of the resources available and the potential level of need in the CFSCNY region was conducted.

Incidence of Mental Health Disorders

Two sources of information on the incidence of mental health disorders are the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS), which is conducted bi-yearly by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and screening data from Mental Health America. The BRFSS has two questions exploring mental health: a self-report of poor mental health and a self-report of ever being diagnosed with a depressive disorder. Mental Health America provides free, anonymous, clinically validated mental health screenings on its website. The organization has taken the data from these screenings to offer state and county-level insight into the rate of people who score at risk for various types of mental health issues[12]. The data are from screens taken between 2020 and 2023.

According to the BRFSS, the rate of adults reporting poor mental health in Otsego County has remained relatively flat. In 2013-2014, 10.2% of adults said they experienced poor mental health. In 2021, the rate decreased slightly to 9.9%. The number of adults in Otsego County saying they have been diagnosed with a depressive disorder, on the other hand, increased substantially. In 2013-2014, 15.9% of respondents replied affirmatively. In 2021, the rate increased to 21.9%. Converting the percentages to rates per 10,000 population finds that in Otsego County, for every 10,000 people, 900 experience poor mental health, and 2,190 have been diagnosed with a depressive disorder.

Table 4. Rates of Mental Health Issues per 10,000 Population

	Otsego	Region
Poor Mental Health	900	1,421
Depressive Disorders	2,190	2,305

Data from Mental Health America's mental health screenings indicate that Otsego County residents screen positive for mental health disorders at about the same frequency as the rest of the region.

Table 5. Rates of Positive Screenings by Type per 10,000 Population

	Otsego	Region	NYS
Depression	12.1	13.6	13.5
Suicidal Ideation	11.5	13.5	14.9
PTSD	7.1	7.3	5.2
Trauma	30.6	30.2	22.1
Psychosis	8.7	8.7	6.9

Gaps in Care

Several other organizations in the county report on mental health care and potential gaps in care.

The Otsego County 2022-2024 Community Health Assessment[13] process also engaged a community survey. Nearly two-thirds (61%) of respondents said mental health issues were one of the top five health problems in the county. A similar rate of respondents (62%) said access to mental health providers was one of the biggest problems facing the county. Stakeholders interviewed for the assessment agreed, with 62% saying mental health was the top health concern for the county. Otsego County stakeholders agreed that individuals living with mental health issues were most at risk for poor health outcomes.

Otsego County's Mental Health Department[14] reported goals on expanding mental health services for children, particularly in schools, enhancing the workforce, integrating substance use and mental health clinics, and increasing suicide prevention activities.

The population-to-mental health provider ratio in the counties in Otsego County is high compared to the NYS rate. The county has been designated a Health Professional Shortage Area for mental health for Medicaid enrollees.

Table 6. Population to Mental Health Providers

	Otsego	NYS
Mental Health Providers	460:1	300:1

Availability of Care

An analysis[b] from KFF, a non-profit focused on health policy research,[15] found that in New York State, 5.6% of adults reported an unmet need for mental health treatment. The data is not provided more granularly, but other county-level indicators suggest a significant shortage of providers in the CFSCNY region.

Individual Providers

An analysis of individual providers in the region shows that in 2021, very few mental health providers were accepting new Medicaid patients. The Individual Provider Network data source indicates that 34 adult psychiatrists work in Otsego County, 26 of whom accept Medicaid. Fifteen were accepting new Medicaid patients. The data show one child psychiatrist in Otsego County does not accept Medicaid. No geriatric psychiatrists were practicing in Otsego County.

Fourteen other mental health professionals, such as social workers, counselors, and therapists, also practice in the county. Eleven of these providers accept Medicaid, and five are accepting new patients.

Outpatient Clinic Care

The latest data from the NYS Office of Mental Health (NYS OMH) on inpatient and outpatient mental health usage is from 2020. Updated information was not available at the time of this report.

[b] Analysis of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)'s restricted online data analysis system (RDAS), National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), 2018 and 2019, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Data Archive

In 2020, clinic treatment was provided to 2,681 adults and 773 children at Otsego County, state, and nonprofit mental health organizations. This was much lower than the number of adults and children served in 2015.

Table 7. Rate of Outpatient Clinic Care per 10,000 Population

	Adult		Child	
	Otsego	Region	Otsego	Region
2015	685	335	900	493
2020	535	321	814	463

Emergency Department Care

Emergency department care for mental health by county for all individuals was unavailable for this assessment. Data on Medicaid beneficiaries shows that emergency department care is utilized much more frequently than inpatient care[16]. For every inpatient admission for mental health, more than two go to the emergency room for care, and an equal number receive emergency care from Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Program (CPEP) care. The rate of emergency care to inpatient care is highest for children. More than three times the number of children who are admitted for inpatient psychiatric care receive emergency department care. These data suggest that the volume of need for crisis mental health care far exceeds the rate of inpatient care.

Crisis Care

Several mental health crisis care options are available throughout the CFSCNY region. These programs are designed to help de-escalate crises and prevent emergency department visits and intervention by law enforcement. Otsego County has contracted with the Neighborhood Center to provide a Mobile Crisis Assessment Team (MCAT). The MCAT offers 24-hour, seven days per week intervention and crisis de-escalation services. The team also provides follow-up services and referrals. Despite the increase in crisis care services, the number of people receiving the care lags far behind the number receiving mental health care in emergency departments.

Inpatient Care

Mary Imogene Bassett Hospital has 20 beds in their Inpatient Psychiatric Unit. In addition, RSS, Inc. has one respite bed for adolescents in the county.

In 2022, the hospital had 384 admissions for mental health issues. This is a 34% decrease from 2020, when the hospital had 581 people admitted for mental health issues. In comparison, the hospital had a decline in admissions of only 6% for all health issues.

The rate of Otsego County residents in inpatient care for mental health treatment per 10,000 population in 2022 was lower than the state rate for adults but slightly higher for children.

Table 8. Rates of Inpatient Care per 10,000 Population

Average Daily Census	Otsego	Statewide
Adult: All Inpatient	1.8	3.8
General Hospital	1.3	2.1
Private Hospital	0.3	0.2
State Psych Center	0.2	1.4
Child: All Inpatient	2.9	2.6
General Hospital	0.1	0.6
Private Hospital	1.7	0.6
State Psych Center	0.6	0.5
Residential Treatment Facility	0.6	0.8

Specialty Outpatient Care

Specialty outpatient treatment for people with serious mental illness is unavailable in Otsego County.

School-Based Care

School-based care has been implemented in all districts in Otsego County by the Bassett Healthcare Network.

Quality of Care

Emergency Department Care

Data from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services found that the wait times in the emergency department for psychiatric/mental health patients in Otsego County were extremely long, varying between three and seven and a half hours.

Table 9. Time Spent Waiting in the Emergency Department for Mental Health

Hospital	Average number of minutes patients spend in ED before leaving – Psychiatric/Mental Health Patients	Sample Size
AURELIA OSBORN FOX MEMORIAL HOSPITAL	178	11
BASSETT HEALTHCARE	448	16

Timely follow-up outpatient care is an important protective factor against self-harm and suicide, rehospitalization, and reduces overall cost. The National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) recommends a follow-up period of 7 days for patients discharged from the hospital with psychiatric illness. Otsego County has a very low 7-day follow-up rate of 46%.

Outcomes

Adverse outcomes can result from untreated mental health disorders, including relationship problems, difficulty maintaining employment or school enrollment, financial difficulties, homelessness, poor physical health, incarceration, self-harm, and suicide.

Suicide and Self-Harm

Data show that Otsego County has much higher rates of suicide than NYS (excluding NYC).

Table 10. Rates of Suicide and Self-Harm Hospitalizations

Age-Adjusted	Otsego	NYS (excluding NYC)
Suicide *Per 100,000 Pop.*	15.5	9.8
Self-Harm Hospitalizations *Per 10,000 Pop.*	5.6	5.9

There has been an increase in suicide mortality rates in Otsego County, up from 12.8 in 2009-2011 to 15.5 per 100,000 population in 2018-2020. Men are vastly more likely to commit suicide in Otsego County, with 96% of all suicides in 2017-2019 being by men.

Deaths of Despair

The deaths of despair rate in Otsego County (132.0 per 100,000 population), defined as mortalities attributable to drug overdoses, alcoholic liver disease, and suicides, exceeds NYS rates (104.1). Social determinants of health such as low socioeconomic position, low education levels, working in jobs with high insecurity, unemployment, and living in rural areas are most predictive of deaths of despair.

Section V: Housing

CFSCNY expressed interest in understanding whether there were changes in the housing market in the region since the last needs assessment. The 2015 needs assessment identified several gaps and needs related to housing in Otsego County, including:

- Need for more supportive housing options for people with mental health disabilities and developmental disabilities.
- Need for support for seniors to repair and modify their homes
- Need for resources for low-income families to make needed repairs on their homes
- Support to prevent homelessness and provide moving assistance

Housing has continued to be a challenge in Otsego County, particularly regarding the availability and affordability of quality housing. Several needs assessments have found that the county lacks affordable housing.

Data from Other Assessments

Opportunities for Otsego conducted a Community Needs Assessment in 2021[17] and 2023[18] and, as part of that process, conducted an online survey of community members. Nearly all participants (90%) said housing was a problem in the area. The most frequently noted issues included the limited inventory of year-round housing and the cost of monthly rent/housing payments.

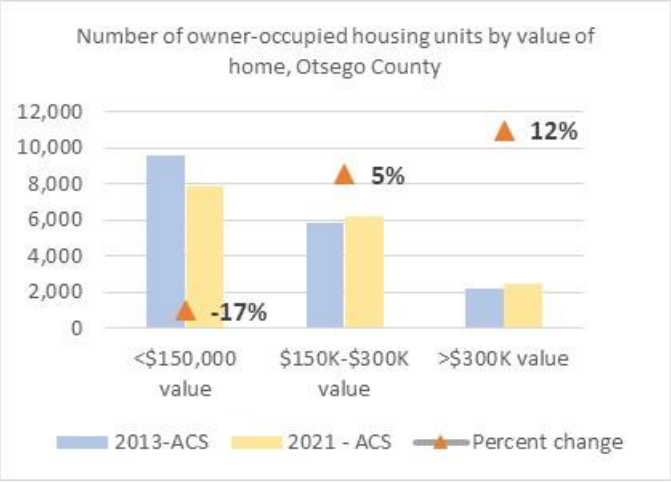
The 2022-2024 Otsego County Community Health Assessment[19] included a stakeholder survey. Just over a third (38.1%) of stakeholders identified inadequate/unaffordable housing options, and 19% said homelessness contributed to health concerns in the county. The assessment's Social Determinant of Health Summary found that cost-burdened and substandard housing were critical issues in Otsego County.

The 2020 Otsego County Mental Health Services Department Local Service Plan[20] found that safe, affordable housing was a challenge in the county and essential to wellness and recovery. The plan also noted that the need for sober/recovery housing had been identified as a significant need for 14 years and that the county had made progress toward meeting the needs through the efforts of Rehabilitation Support Services, Inc., which was awarded ESSHI funding in 2018. The award of 14 housing slots revealed significant opposition to housing development. RSS also proposed to develop 64 affordable apartments in the City of Oneonta. It also found that the lack of professional workforce housing presented a challenge for recruiting professionals serving people with developmental disabilities. The report also noted an increased need for affordable housing for the OPWDD population aging out of youth services.

Affordability and Availability of Housing

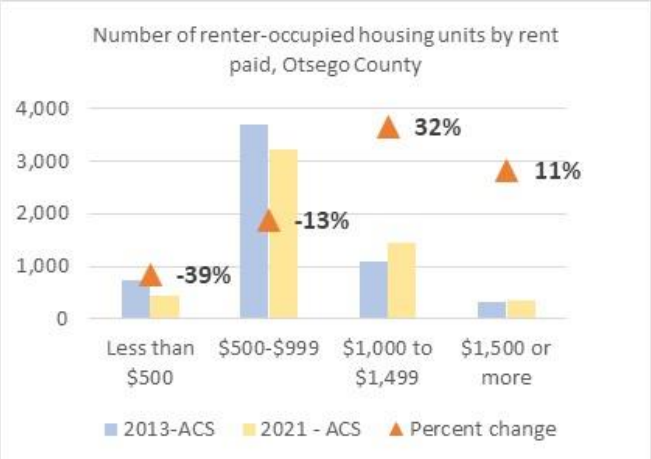
In the 2015 needs assessment, data showed that housing costs were generally moderate for both owners and renters. Since the assessment, housing in the county has become much more expensive. The median value of owner-occupied housing has increased by 12%, but the median sale price of new homes has increased dramatically. Between 2014 and 2022, the median price of home sales in the county increased by 63% from $119,500 in 2014 to $195,000 in the first quarter of 2022.

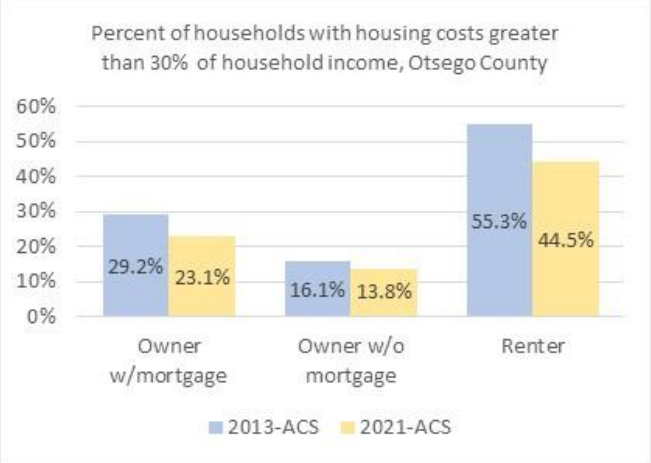
In contrast, the availability of affordable housing has declined in Otsego County. Census data show that the number of owner-occupied homes valued at less than $150,000 has decreased by 17%.



A similar shift has occurred in renter-occupied housing. Census data show a 17% decline in rentals, with rents below the Fair Market Rent of $916 for a two-bedroom apartment. These declines show that Otsego County has not increased the number of low-income housing options to address inflationary pressures.

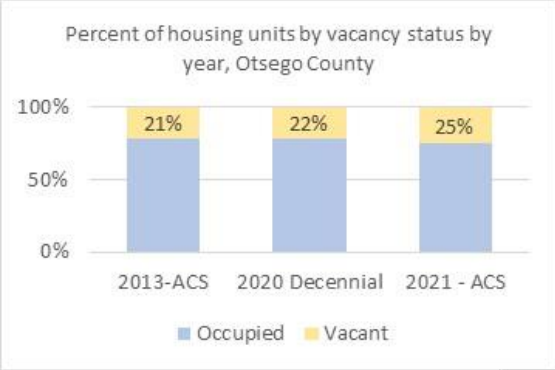
There has been a reduction in the number of households with a high housing cost burden as a proportion of their income among all types of households. However, the rate of renters with unaffordable housing costs remains exceptionally high at 45%.



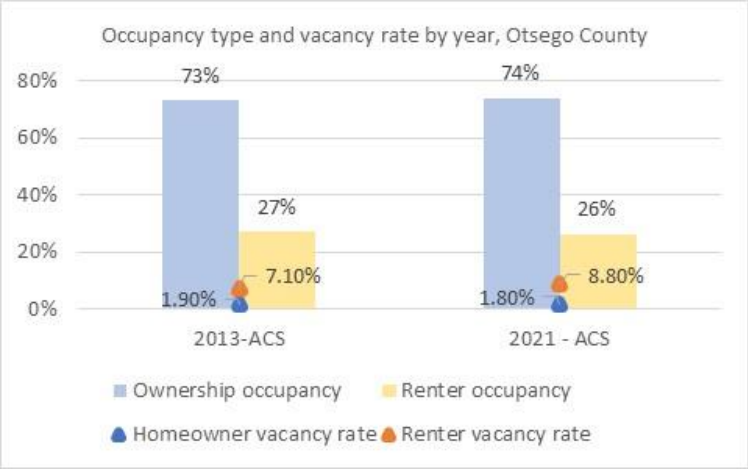


Vacancy Rates

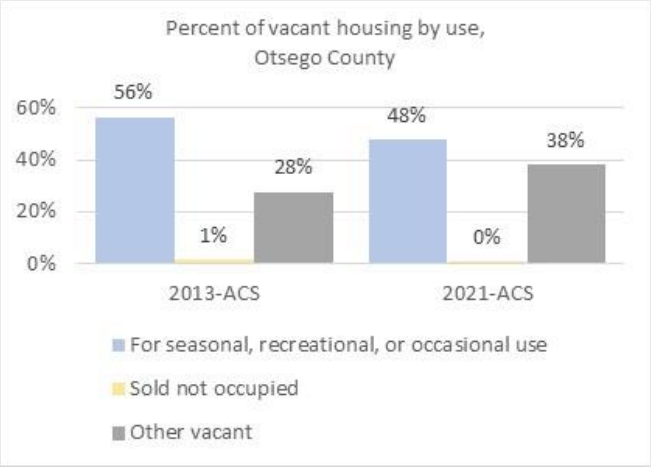
Occupancy statistics have remained essentially the same since the 2015 needs assessment. Data from 2021 show a slight increase in the number of vacant housing units in the county. Owner occupancy has remained flat.



Homeowner vacancy rates remain very low, but renter vacancy rates have increased to nearly 9%. Data suggest that seasonal and recreational housing continue to make the availability of housing for local renters and owners a challenge, with 48% of vacant housing being for this use.



There has been an uptick in the percentage of houses that are categorized as “other vacant,” a term that encompasses houses that are in foreclosure, in legal proceedings, needing repair, being prepared to rent/sell, being renovated, abandoned/condemned properties, specific use housing, and those being held vacant for “personal reasons” or with extended absences by the owner.

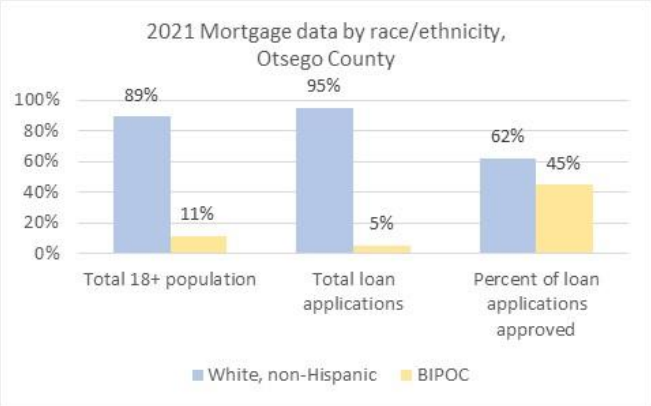


Equity Spotlight

Access to mortgages in Otsego County differs between populations by race and ethnicity[21]. Disproportionately more white, non-Hispanic adults apply for loans and are more likely to have their loans approved.

Otsego County has a relatively small BIPOC population. Eighty-nine percent of the county's adult population identifies as white, non-Hispanic. However, 95% of all mortgage applications in 2021 were made by white, non-Hispanic buyers.

In addition, white, non-Hispanic applicants were more likely to have their mortgage loans approved. Nearly two-thirds of white, non-Hispanic applicants were approved, while only 45% of BIPOC applicants were.

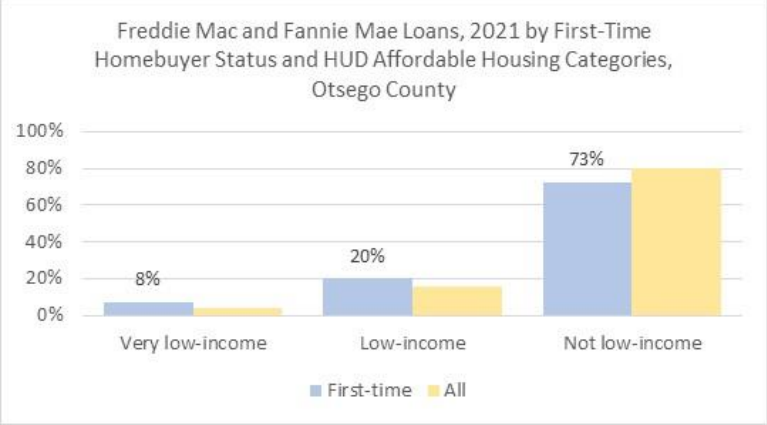


First-time and Low-Income Homebuying Support

Recent research and analysis have shown that homeownership during stable housing prices can build significant wealth for households, suggesting that supporting homeownership can create long-term financial security among low-income families. Various federal and state programs support first-time homeownership. However, limited data is available to understand who receives this support and who does not.

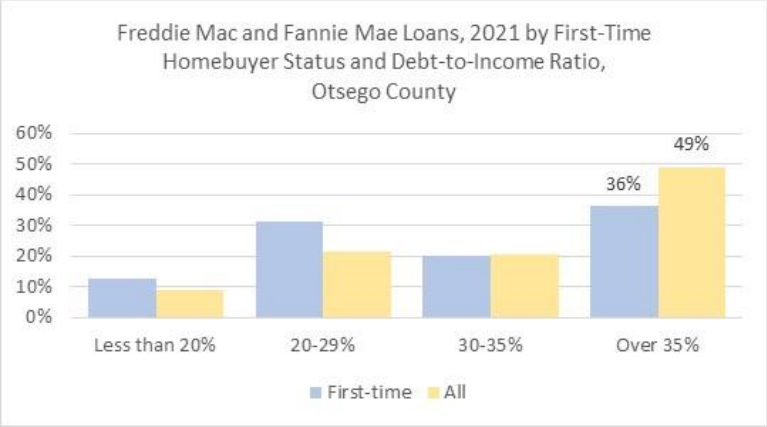
During 2021, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac acquired 519 mortgage loans for homes purchased in Otsego County. Of these, only 15% were first-time homebuyers. Most loans (96%) were made to white, non-Hispanic borrowers.

Based on the Fannie Mae/Freddie Mac mortgage acquisition data, 28% of first-time homebuyers receiving conventional loans in Otsego County in 2021 had incomes that met HUD's very low-income or low-income goals[c].



Over a third of first-time homebuyers and nearly half of all homebuyers had debt-to-income ratios above 35%. These rates are comparable to NYS's, where 51.8% of homebuyers had debt-to-income ratios above 35%.

In 2022, 11 USDA Guaranteed Loans offering 100% financing to homebuyers were made in Otsego County for $1.5 million. In addition, six Repair Grants and seven USDA repair Loans were made to eligible households. Out of 58 NYS counties with eligible geographies, Otsego County ranks 37 in the total investment from USDA loan programs. Research shows the program is vastly underused due to challenging eligibility requirements and outdated systems.



[c] Very low-income borrowers have incomes no greater than 50% of the area median income. Low-income borrowers have incomes no greater than 80% of the area median income.

Subsidized Housing

Data from HUD[22] show that in 2022, Housing Choice Vouchers in Otsego County were only filled at 83%, while public housing was occupied at 96%.

Table 11. Number of Units and Occupancy Rates for Subsidized Housing in Otsego County

	Number of Units	Percent Occupancy
Public housing	112	96%
Housing choice vouchers	241	83%
Project-based Section 8	82	88%

The time households spend on the voucher waitlist is nearly three years and 17 months for public housing. Tenure tends to be extended in all types of subsidized housing, with users staying, on average, more than seven years in the programs.

The demographics of residents within subsidized housing programs vary considerably. Public housing is most likely to include people with disabilities under the age of 61 who do not have wages as their primary source of income. Participants in the regular voucher program are more likely to include people with extremely low incomes and seniors. Project-based Section 8 participants are the most likely to be BIPOC and to include female heads of households, and least likely to have a disability in the household.

Table 12. Subsidized Housing Demographics, Otsego County

	Public Housing	HCV	Project-Based Sec. 8
Race/Ethnicity			
BIPOC	6%	17%	21%
With a Disability			
Any in household	63%	42%	27%
Head of household/Co-Head age 61 or less	100%	60%	53%
Head of household/Co-head age 62 and over	40%	72%	32%
Family structure			
Two adults with children	0%	7%	5%
Female head of household	60%	69%	79%
Female head of household with children	0%	22%	21%
Income level			
Extremely low	59%	75%	63%
Very low	89%	97%	97%
Wages major source of income	4%	19%	15%

Housing Stability

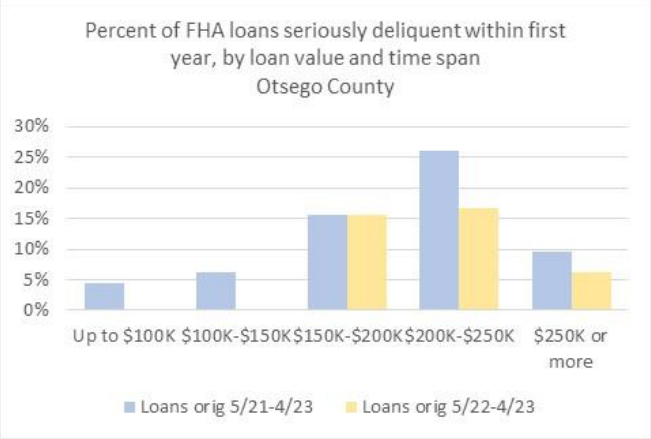
Moving repeatedly during childhood has been shown to have several detrimental effects on well-being in adulthood. Children are more likely to have academic and social-emotional challenges after repeated moves[23]. Adult outcomes include lower life satisfaction, poorer reports of psychological well-being, and fewer social relationships[24].

Delinquencies and Foreclosures

While typically buying a house helps to build wealth and assets, renters who became homeowners during the period preceding the Great Recession found little to no growth in wealth by 2013, partly due

to the housing downturn and high foreclosure rates[25]. This suggests that beyond supporting first-time homebuyers in purchasing their homes, support for low-income homeowners to stay in their homes would be necessary, especially during an economic recession.

According to HUD data, during the two years of May 2021-April 2023, 190 FHA loans originated in Otsego County. Of these, 22 (12%) were 90 days delinquent within the first year[26]. The rate of first-year delinquencies appears to be declining somewhat. For loans originated between May 2022 and April 2023, only 8.7% were seriously delinquent within the first year. Mortgages under $150,000-$200,000 were most frequently delinquent overall (N=9 delinquent), but homes valued at $200,000-$250,000 were more likely to be delinquent (6 delinquent out of 23 loans).



HUD data also shows that delinquencies are being addressed mainly through HUD's incentive claims options for loan servicers, which pay part of the delinquent funds back to those servicers to keep homeowners from being foreclosed on. Between June 1, 2022, and May 31, 2023, 21 partial claims were paid by HUD to lenders in the Oneonta MSA. However, as of May 31, 2023, HUD data show that of 108 delinquent loans in the MSA, 13 were in foreclosure.

A review of Zillow found that nine properties in Otsego County were foreclosed by the lender during the past year.

Evictions

Eviction filings as a proportion of renter households in Otsego County surpassed pre-pandemic levels (1.9% in 2019) by 2022 (2.7%)[27] but are still much lower than most other counties in the state. A total of 157 eviction claims were made in the county in 2022. As of June 26, 2023, Otsego County had 66 evictions filed, similar to the rate during the same period in 2022 (N=70).[28]

Most eviction filings in Otsego County through city and district courts were due to non-payment. A small portion of the population is evicted for other reasons, such as lease violations or expiration.

Table 13. Eviction Filings Data, Otsego County

	Percent due to non-payment percent	Non-payment number	Total eviction filings City and District Court Only	Total eviction filings, including Town and County
2019	91%	48	53	112
2020	100%	13	13	31
2021	77%	20	26	45
2022	89%	50	56	156
2023 (to date)	57%	13	23	66

Actual warrants for eviction continued to be issued during the pandemic despite the eviction moratorium but at much lower rates than pre-pandemic.

Table 14. Warrants for Eviction Data, Otsego County

	Number of warrants	Total eviction filings City and District Court Only	Percent of eviction filings resulting in warrants for eviction
2019	40	53	76%
2020	3	13	23%
2021	15	26	58%
2022 (as of March, 2022)	11	28	39%

In Otsego County, 726 applications for rental arrears and temporary rental assistance were made to ERAP. A total of 467 payments were made to 286 applications, resulting in just over $2 million in rental assistance for the county through ERAP.

Table 15. ERAP Data, Otsego County

	Rental arrears	Temporary rental assistance
Applicants		
Total Payments	273	194
Average amount	$5,667	$2,656
Total amount	$1,546,957	$515,181

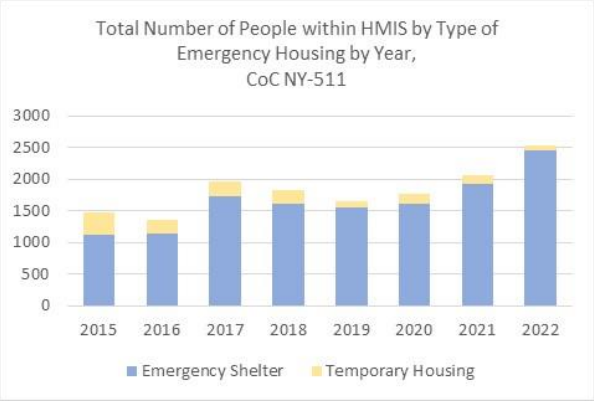
In addition to ERAP, funds were made available through the Landlord Rental Assistance Program (LRAP), for which landlords applied when their tenants left the property or were unwilling to apply for ERAP. The LRAP program stipulated that the landlord could not increase the rent or evict the tenant for one year after receipt of the funds.
In Otsego County, 23 of 42 landlord applications were paid for $117,586.

Opportunities for Otsego is the primary non-profit organization supporting households facing eviction or needing housing support. The organization has recently received funding from HUD to provide rapid rehousing services after losing funding from OTDA four years ago. The organization has identified a significant lack of affordable housing units as a critical barrier to utilizing the rapid rehousing funds[29].

Opportunities for Otsego provides the only 24/7 staffed emergency shelter in the area, a congregate-style shelter for 18 people. The organization's information indicates that shelter stays had extended to an average of six months. Opportunities for Otsego also reported[30] serving 79 homeless families with emergency housing between Oct. 1, 2020, and Sept. 30, 2021. In addition, 23 homeless people attained permanent housing during that period. Otsego County's Department of Social Services reported that in 2021, they received 247 referrals for housing assistance and paid out $2,156 in cash security deposits from public assistance funds for four households.

Homelessness

The Continuum of Care (NY-511) serving the CFSCNY region includes Broome, Otsego, Chenango, Delaware, Tioga, and Cortland Counties. All homelessness data is reflective of all counties combined. All homelessness indicators have increased dramatically since the last assessment.



Data on homelessness comes from three primary data sources: the Point-in-Time (PIT) count, the Housing Inventory Count (HIC), and the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

PIT Count

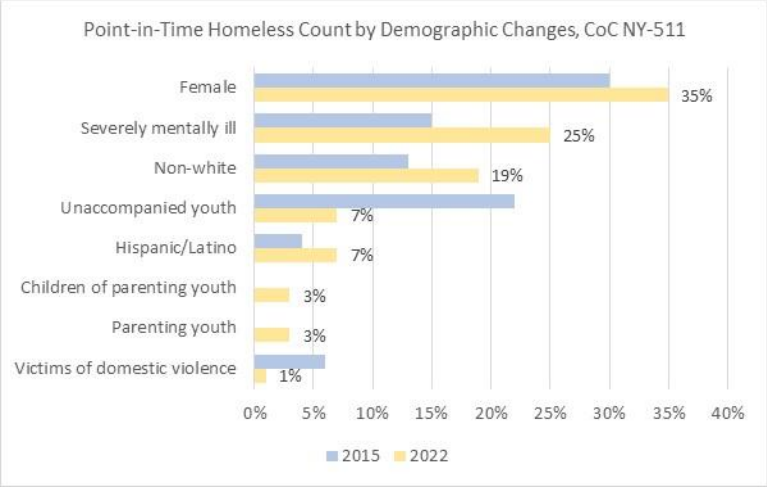
The PIT count is a yearly count of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness on a single night in January.

PIT data show a general increase in the number of unhoused people in the region. In 2015, the PIT found 282 homeless households (302 people). In 2022, the number of homeless households increased by 40% to 394 (483 people).

The 2022 PIT count found that emergency shelter and transitional beds were filled at a 76.7% usage range for that night. In addition, 67 individuals were unsheltered.

PIT Population Dynamics

There have been some shifts in the demographics of people found to be homeless in the PIT count. In 2015, 4% of the homeless households identified in the PIT were households with children. In 2022, that rate more than tripled to 12%. More homeless people were women in 2022 than in 2015, and there were higher rates of parenting youth and children of parenting youth. The rate of homeless individuals in the region disaggregated by race and ethnicity changed as well, with higher rates of homeless people identifying as Hispanic/Latino and races other than white. Of particular note, the rate of homeless people identified as being severely mentally ill increased from 15% to 25%.



The rate of people counted as chronically homeless in the PIT has stayed relatively flat and is very low (3%).

HIC

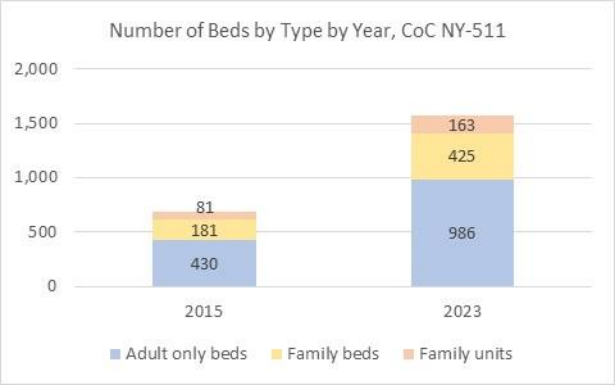
The most recent HIC shows that the region has created nearly all types of beds. In 2015, NY-511 had 128 emergency shelter beds and 164 transitional housing beds available to unhoused individuals. In 2022,

emergency shelter beds increased more than threefold to 558 beds, but transitional housing beds decreased by 63%. Permanent supportive housing also ballooned by 141% from 209 to 503, and 250 beds of rapid rehousing were added.

Table 16. Number of Beds by Type of Shelter by Year

Beds	2015	2023	Number change	Percent change
Emergency shelter	128	558	+430	+336%
Transitional housing	164	61	-103	-63%
Permanent supportive housing	209	503	+294	+141%
Rapid rehousing	0	250	+250	
Other permanent housing	12	39	27	+225%
Total	430	1,411	+981	+228%

Emergency housing has increased proportionately between adult-only and family-bed and unit housing.

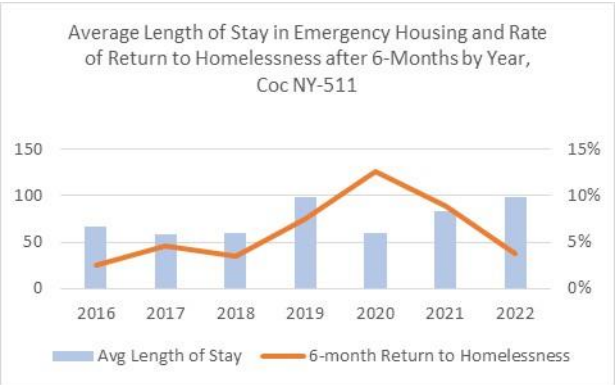


The number of beds for chronically homeless individuals increased from 13 to 96 between 2015 and 2023. All of these beds were in permanent supportive housing.

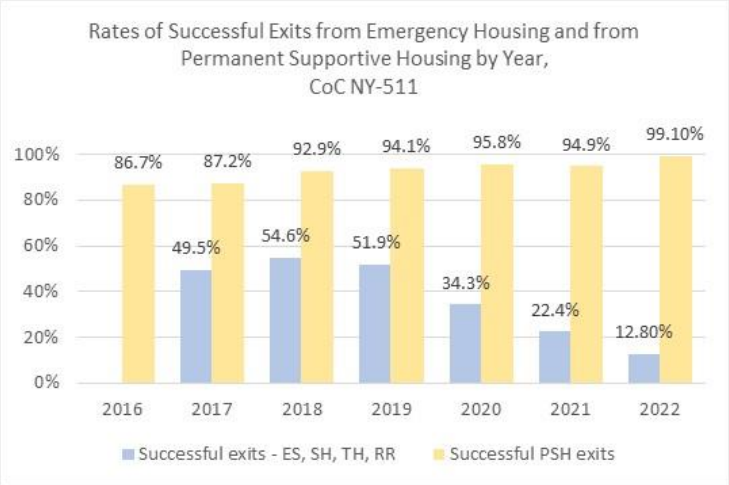
HMIS

In 2022, 2,527 individuals were tracked in the HMIS as receiving emergency or transitional housing assistance. This represents a 71% increase over the number of individuals in the system in 2015 (N=1,477).

HMIS data suggest that people are staying homeless for more extended periods. The average stay in emergency housing increased from 67 days in 2016 to 99 days in 2022. Rates of returns to homelessness within six months have varied over the years, but recent data suggest the rates of return to homelessness are low at 3.8%.



The type of housing provided significantly impacts whether a homeless person or family successfully moves to permanent housing. In 2022, only 12.8% of exits from emergency shelters, safe havens, temporary housing, and rapid rehousing successfully exited to permanent housing. In contrast, 99% of exits from permanent supportive housing were successful, including those who stayed in permanent supportive housing. Of note, 78% of those leaving emergency shelters had "unknown destination" recorded in the HMIS. This lack of data should be considered when reviewing exit and return to homelessness rates.



Housing for Special Populations

Senior Housing

There is no comprehensive accounting of the number of senior housing units in Otsego County, but the County Office for the Aging provides a list of housing options for seniors where the number of subsidized units is estimated below.

Table 17. Senior Housing by Type, Otsego County

	2015 Assessment		2023 Assessment	
	Buildings	*Units*	*Buildings*	*Units*
Subsidized/Low-Income		233	7	246
Adult homes/assisted living	5	196	5	277

Otsego County is home to three nursing homes. The 2015 assessment noted that the NYS Department of Health had projected an unmet need of 123 beds in Otsego for 2016. The number of free beds has also increased somewhat since the COVID-19 pandemic.[31] During and after the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of residents living in nursing facilities decreased nationally by 13% between July 2019 and July 2022[32]. Otsego County has seen a similar decline (13.5%) in nursing home residents since July 2019.

Table 18. Nursing Home Beds, Otsego County

	July, 2015	July, 2019	April, 2023
Number of beds	384	384	387
Available beds	19	7	61
Residents	365	377	326

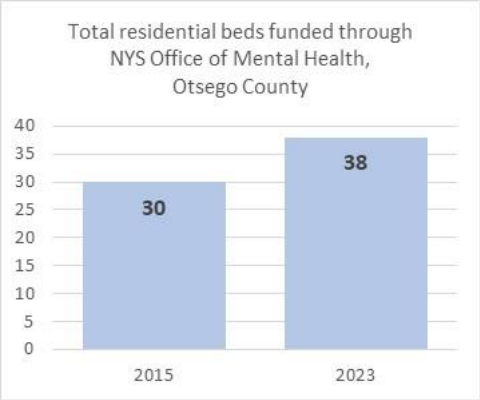
Aging in Place

The 2015 assessment found that seniors in Otsego County were inclined to age in place. This trend has remained steady in recent years, with the most current data from the Census showing that 84.9% of householders aged 65 and older live in owner-occupied housing (83.3% in 2013).[33]

An update to the Otsego Housing Study in 2009 reported qualitative information from the Otsego Office for the Aging that there was a need for more senior community housing, especially housing affordable for middle-income seniors.

Supportive Housing for Mental Health Disabilities

Investing in permanent supportive housing for people with mental health disabilities has been shown to reduce inpatient bed days and emergency room visits and reduce incarceration[34].



The number of residential housing beds available to people with mental health disabilities has increased by 27% (N=8) since the last assessment.

The increases were in supported housing community services, which assist individuals in locating and securing housing of their choice and accessing the supports necessary to live successfully in the community, as opposed to congregate treatment, apartment treatment, and supportive housing, which provides housing directly to individuals.

Table 19 Occupancy Rate of Mental Health Residential Programs, Otsego County[35]

	2015 Assessment			2023 Assessment		
	Congregate Treatment	*Apartment Treatment*	*Supported Housing*	*Congregate Treatment*	*Apartment Treatment*	*Supported Housing/ Community Services*
Number of beds	8	8	30	8	8	38
Percent occupancy rate	92.8%	93.5%	53.9%	82.7%	89.3%	*
Median Length of Stay (LOS) (days)	1,002	333	364	313	712	*
Percent LOS greater than two years	71.4%	14.3%	31.6%	25.0%	42.9%	*

Supportive Housing for People with Developmental Disabilities

No data source is available detailing the availability of supportive housing for people with developmental disabilities.

Supportive Housing for People with Substance Use Disorders

Otsego County's LSP does not have a goal for improving housing for the population but noted that housing is a particular challenge in the county for all categories.

Funding Recommendations

Equity

Addressing Chronic Absenteeism

Funders and leaders should explore and support evidence-based interventions to reduce chronic absenteeism. These efforts could significantly long-term impact economically disadvantaged and BIPOC students.

Advocate for and Provide Support to Low-Income College Students

Higher education remains the most consistent and robust route to long-term self-sufficiency, but college is financially out of reach for many low-income students. Funders and leaders should consider advocating for changes to the Excelsior Scholarship program, such as reducing the credit requirements and on-time graduation, supporting summer enrollment, and allocating funding for non-tuition financial needs. Funders and organizations should also consider providing support to current Excelsior students. Supporting programs offering financial support for non-tuition needs, providing mentorship and guidance to maintain compliance with scholarship rules, and giving advice and support in gaining employment in the region after graduation to ensure residency requirements could ensure these students take the best advantage of the program.

Target Support, Funding, and Opportunities to Historically Excluded Communities

Leaders and funders can prioritize historically excluded populations to address long-standing structural inequities when offering new leadership programs, opportunities, and funding. Though these practices alone may not eliminate structural barriers, they can ensure that efforts do not exacerbate existing inequities. Examples of efforts may include targeting financing and other support to organizations serving specific geographic communities disproportionately suffering from inequitable outcomes.

Provide Leadership Development Opportunities to Leaders of Color

More and more leaders of color are spearheading work in their communities. Investment in these leaders should include more than just capital. Providing mentorship, professional development, and ongoing support will better position people of color and the organizations they lead for success.

Support Voting among BIPOC Populations

Despite efforts to expand access to voting in New York State, data suggest that BIPOC populations in the county vote at lower rates than non-BIPOC populations. Funders should consider supporting targeted civic education to low-turnout populations to provide information on registering and voting.

Provide Funding and Support to Families Impacted by Incarceration and Children involved with Child Protective Services.

Funders and leaders can support the development of clear, understandable information about the CPS process for children to ensure their ability to participate and be protected. In addition, funding programs that support these children's sense of belonging and self-actualization may improve short- and long-term outcomes.

Similarly, funders should consider supporting programs that provide evidence-based interventions that facilitate child-parent bonds, increase parental skills, and foster other social supports both during incarceration and post-release.

Provide Funding to Programs Supporting Disconnected Youth

Intervening with disconnected youth can significantly impact individuals and the next generation of children. Comprehensive programs that support developing "*civic engagement, healthy family and social relationships, or improved physical, mental, and emotional well-being"* are successful. In addition, investments in programs that divert at-risk youth from the judicial system, support incarcerated youth both during and after incarceration, and provide childcare support for young adults are critical interventions that can promote equity over the lifespan, particularly for Black and Latino/Hispanic young adults in the region.

Commit to Measuring Equity within Localities

Recent backlash to DEI efforts poses a significant risk to communities wishing to address inequities. Funders and leaders should resist efforts to roll back the focus on equity and recall that while "a rising tide lifts all boats," it drowns those without one. Funders should commit to measuring equity in relevant indicators and communicating that information regularly to the community.

Poverty

Helping households and individuals leave poverty and attain self-sufficiency requires that they obtain stability in several interrelated areas of life, including:

- **Autonomy and self-determination:** an individual's or family's sense of confidence and motivation in conjunction with their employment skills and readiness.
- **Financial security and responsibility:** an individual's or family's ability to accumulate assets and reduce debt.
- **The well-being of family and self:** having satisfactory physical and mental health, having access to safe and affordable dependent care, and having a social network and community support to rely on.
- **Basic assets for living:** having safe, affordable housing and safe, affordable transportation.

Several anti-poverty strategies that address these domains were identified as effective and reflected in the funding recommendations below.

Advocating for Federal and State Tax Credits

The success of the federal government's expansion of Child Tax Credit and Earned Income Tax Credit during the COVID-19 pandemic shows that government policies can effectively reduce childhood poverty. Some community foundations have advocated for continuing these tax credits.[36] Several bills have been introduced in New York state to increase and redefine the Empire State Child Credit. Continued advocacy and focus on these issues could enormously impact poverty rates, low-income families, and the local economy.

Support Programs Assisting with Access to Tax Credits

Ensuring eligible households access tax credits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit and the federal and state Child Tax Credits, including potential new and revised credits, could be an important anti-poverty activity to be funded. Because most rural counties focus their tax assistance on older adults, supporting programs to draw more low-income workers into the program may be helpful.

Academic, Personal, and Financial Support to BIPOC Student

Funding for programs helping Black and Hispanic/Latino students attend two- or four-year college programs may help eliminate some disparity in educational attainment and financial self-sufficiency. Financial incentives such as tuition and fee gap scholarships for students who have a gap between their financial aid award and tuition, assistance to reduce (or eliminate) the cost of textbooks, and one-on-one academic and career advisement have been found to increase college graduation rates among these populations.

Programs Supporting Child Care

The CFSCNY region, much like the rest of the state and nation, continues to have insufficient childcare providers to meet the needs. Funding programs that incentivize and support new providers to meet regulatory requirements may help expand the pool of providers. Connecting families to childcare subsidies may help some families reduce their cost burden. However, substantial childcare funding and policy changes will be required for meaningful improvement. Advocacy and support are needed for more robust responses to the childcare crisis.

Programs Supporting Elder Care

As with child care, elder care is expensive and difficult to find. With a rapidly aging population, high costs of care, and a lack of funding, many more families are likely to face serious economic challenges. The lack of a coherent system for long-term care requires most families to run out of money before they receive long-term care support from the government. Funding programs that help families plan for future long-term care needs in the region may be helpful, as would investing in local community-based aging programs. The economic challenges with long-term care will be difficult to solve locally. More significant policy and funding changes will be more impactful, such as tax credits and paid leave for family caregivers, investments in the direct-care workforce, and subsidies for low- and moderate-income older adults.

Programs Promoting Access to Public Benefits

The value of public benefits, such as SNAP, to low-income families, is substantial, but many eligible families continue not to participate. Supporting programs that assist in applying and recertifying for SNAP and conducting outreach to underserved populations may increase participation and reduce unnecessary challenges in accessing food. Ensuring food-insecure college students can stay in school can have a strong additive effect on their long-term financial future.

Cash Transfers

Results from cash transfer programs have been promising in helping at-risk populations, including reducing homelessness, improving health outcomes, and reductions in mortality. While a national cash transfer program is unlikely to happen soon, efforts targeted to local at-risk populations may be cost-effective by reducing high-cost downstream care for homelessness, chronic disease, and child welfare and offer an opportunity to address issues with equity.

Financial Coaching

Confidence in financial matters is a critical prerequisite to decreasing debt and increasing wealth. Supporting financial education and coaching programs that provide knowledge and confidence to young adults and low-income families can result in individual and community economic success. These programs can also bring unbanked and underbanked households into affordable financial services and

support reducing and eliminating debt. Providing financial education opportunities to high school students can effectively safeguard against poverty in adulthood. Low-income residents and young people in all counties of the CFSCNY region should have access to financial education and coaching. Creating an ethos of financial literacy in the region will require organizations to understand, solicit, and embrace the values and beliefs of people from all cultural backgrounds.

Two-Generation Approaches

Facilitating and supporting organizations to integrate disconnected resources can positively impact families. Programs that provide services to children could be connected with other needed services and resources for parents. For example, financial coaching or SNAP application assistance could be supplied in combination with child care. Funding opportunities explicitly targeted to these collaborations or connections could spark creative solutions.

Non-Profit Capacity

General Operating and Multi-Year Funding

There is a clear need for additional funding for the range of nonprofits in the CFSCNY region. General operating funds and multi-year funding, in particular, are needed. Funders and leaders should prioritize providing this funding for nonprofits and advocating for increased overhead funding from state and federal sources.

Support for Establishing Shared Services

Funders and leaders should consider supporting nonprofits in establishing shared services agreements for financial management, human resources, IT support, equipment, and workspace operations. Smaller agencies can also be helped by proactively developing a plan and agreement and soliciting participation from small or diverse organizations.

Capacity-Building Funds

Funders and leaders should consider creating a funding pool that is continuously available for capacity-building efforts, such as training for supervisors, board training, donor cultivation, grant writing, and advocacy. Proactively offering grants and coordinating training for these needs may reach underserved and diverse organizations more effectively.

Support for Organizational Mergers

Funders should consider proactively identifying small or financially struggling nonprofits suitable for partnership or merger. In addition, funders could offer technical and financial support to manage such a merger.

Pay Transparency

Educating funders, organizations, board members, and communities about the region's pay and racial pay gap may prompt intentional efforts to address the inequity. In addition, supporting and requiring pay transparency may help reduce funding disparities and address the wage gaps between gender, race, and ethnicity. Some opportunities to support pay transparency include:

- Modeling pay transparency practices within the philanthropic organization and encouraging the adoption of *internal* pay transparency among all organizations that receive funding.
- Encouraging the adoption of *public* pay compensation disclosure among grantees and vendors by making pay transparency practices an explicit element of the grantmaking process. Consider giving more weight to organizations with pay transparency practices in review processes.

- Requiring grantees and vendors to disclose the compensation of all project staff and contractors in grant applications. The funder could then host a database of the anonymized compensation levels available to prospective grantees.
- Committing to funding initiatives that amplify strategies to close funding disparities and invest in nonprofit leaders of color.
- Requiring grantees to have all contractors and staff paid at least a living wage.

Mental Health

Expand the Workforce

Hospitals and behavioral health providers, in collaboration with counties, funders, and educational institutions, should consider creating programs to expand the behavioral health workforce. Some options include apprenticeships, earn-as-you-learn programs, supporting agencies and individuals to access loan repayment funding for behavioral health degrees, and optimizing recruiting efforts by creating a coalition of employers hiring behavioral health professionals.

Fund Interventions Targeted to High-Risk Groups

Research has shown that younger people, women with depressive disorders, and men with substance use disorders should be specifically targeted for intervention, as well as people who have comorbid diagnoses such as substance abuse or other psychiatric disorders. In addition, a history of childhood maltreatment was consistently associated with poor outcomes for anxiety, depression, and substance use disorders, indicating a pressing need for providing support and treatment for children, teens, and adults who experienced abuse in childhood. Funding school-based care and programs that address social determinants of health areas, such as education, employment, and poverty, can have a protective effect on the long-term mental health of community members.

Advocate for and Fund Robust Post-Discharge Case Management

Maintaining and building on treatment successes from inpatient and residential treatment requires timely access to outpatient care. Very often, adults and children discharged from inpatient treatment are sent to home and self-care. Proactive and comprehensive follow-up and case management to ensure these individuals can access ongoing outpatient care can reduce the incidence of self-harm and rehospitalization. The robust results and desire for Assertive Community Treatment show the value of providing intensive case management support for individuals with serious mental illness.

Advocate for Higher Reimbursement Rates and Greater Transparency/Accountability

A key challenge in increasing the number of providers is the low reimbursement rates for all types of insurance plans, but most especially for Medicaid and Medicare. Advocating for greater transparency in rate setting and increasing reimbursement rates, especially for Medicaid, can address inequities in mental health care and improve access to care. In addition, advocating for policies that hold insurance companies accountable for providing accurate information on their in-network providers can help communities better understand the gaps in care and pressure insurance companies to expand provider networks to ensure sufficient care for beneficiaries.

Continue and Expand School-Based Mental Health Care

Research has clearly shown that school-based health and mental health care positively impact several outcomes for students, including reduced absenteeism, increased screenings for depression, and reduced likelihood of seeking emergency care. Research has also shown that school-based care can be beneficial in alleviating service gaps in rural areas. Continuing and expanding school-based mental

health care throughout the CFSCNY region could provide families with better service and increase the likelihood of early intervention for mental health issues. Additionally, supporting data collection on school-based care can help policymakers and service providers plan more effectively.

Plan for Addressing Social Isolation with Growing Cohort of Older Adults

The risk for mental health challenges in socially isolated older adults can be bidirectional, meaning those with depressive or anxiety disorders may withdraw. In turn, social isolation can cause depression and anxiety. In the CFSCNY region, the number of older adults living alone has increased by nearly 20%, from 9,947 people to 11,873. More in-home social visiting options may help to alleviate some of the mental health challenges experienced by older adults, particularly those in rural areas.

Housing

Housing Czar/Specialist

There have been several studies of housing in the CFSCNY region. These studies and other community assessments provide abundant housing data and recommendations for addressing the housing challenges faced throughout the region. Significant attempts have been made to address housing issues in recent years. Government agencies and non-profit organizations have put forth many efforts to build, rehabilitate, and support housing in the region. Unfortunately, housing issues have continued to exacerbate over recent years. There may be an opportunity to better coordinate housing efforts by funding one or two staff positions within CFSCNY or some other coordinating agency to drive housing policies, programs, and partnerships. The staff positions could take a macro-level approach to operationalize, track, and report on housing strategies and reduce siloed efforts by providing opportunities for housing stakeholders to collaborate. The staff could also be responsible for community awareness and engagement.

Prioritize Affordable Housing Development

Continued advocacy and support for passing local and state legislation prioritizing affordable housing and supporting efforts to access state and federal funding could improve housing availability in the region, reduce waitlists for families eligible for subsidized housing, and improve equity.

Expand Emergency Rental Assistance Programs/Mortgage Assistance Programs

Ensuring that sufficient emergency rental assistance funds are available to families in crisis is critical to circumvent housing instability. Focusing these funds on underserved communities can address long-standing housing inequities. In addition, providing displacement assistance, including funding and navigation support, for evicted families is essential. Supporting first-time homebuyers in avoiding foreclosure is vital to helping families improve their financial future. Offering a resource that provides counseling and immediate financial assistance can ensure these households avoid displacement and economic loss.

Support the Development of Housing for Special Populations

Shortages of permanent supportive housing for people with mental health disabilities, developmental disabilities, and substance use disorders continue to plague the region. Continued and expanded efforts to develop permanent supportive housing and the necessary workforce are essential to ensure these populations have the opportunity to live full and productive lives.

Support Code Enforcement and Levy Fines

Housing quality continues to be a concern in the communities in the CFSCNY region. Old housing stock has not been updated and continues to deteriorate. Implementing a system where code enforcement has sufficient authority and staff capacity to levy fines could incentivize landlords to improve their rental housing. In addition, requiring a pre-rental inspection process could provide the framework for identifying necessary repairs and improvements and preventing dangerous and low-quality rental housing.

Provide No-Interest Home Improvement Loans or Grants to Low-Income Homeowners

Facilitating low-income homeowners' access to financial assistance for housing repair could also improve the housing stock in the CFSCNY region. Some state and federal dollars, such as the USDA Section 504 Home Repair Program, are available for home repair and improvement.[37] In addition to helping homeowners know about and access these funds, there is an additional opportunity to provide local loans and grants to homeowners.

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