

2021 SHERIDAN COUNTY CSBG COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT



Prepared by:

Community Builders, Inc. 
Community and Economic Development Consulting
"Building Communities - One Relationship at a Time" **CBI**

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Summary

The Sheridan County Community Service Block Grant Board of Directors contracted with Community Builders, Inc. (CBI) to prepare a Community Service Block Grant Needs Assessment to study the needs of people who are living in poverty in Sheridan County, Wyoming. This Community Needs Assessment (CNA) examines the extent of poverty in Sheridan County, factors that support the creation of poverty, factors that worsen the impact of poverty, services and resources currently available to offset the creation or impact of poverty, priorities for meeting needs, and barriers to services.

This study began with a discussion and review of Sheridan County's previous CNA's (2012, 2015, and 2018). Additionally, CBI collected new information about the community, and conducted surveys of the community (Community Survey). CBI also communicated with stakeholders and agencies that provide services to low-income persons (Stakeholder/Provider Survey). Survey collection was conducted through SurveyMonkey, and the effort focused on agencies and organizations that provide services in Sheridan County. These agencies and organizations were in turn asked to obtain Community Surveys from the individuals they serve.

Sheridan County CSBG Board members were asked to provide feedback on the surveys. Survey responses were compared with objective data to see how the surveys compared with known demographics for the area. This needs assessment looked at many different issues, concerns, and trends among those who are living in poverty in Sheridan County. Several categories of information were gathered, including:

- Employment
- Education
- Housing
- Nutrition
- Asset Development
- Health Services
- Transportation

The consistency of results from the two surveys and the objective data analysis is remarkable. **There is clear consensus on the top three areas to fight poverty in Sheridan County:**

- 1. Mental health services**
- 2. Affordable housing**
- 3. Substance abuse treatment and prevention**

In addition to these core services, there seems to be a general lack of awareness of the many services that are available in Sheridan County. Lack of awareness becomes an obstacle to receiving services. To address it, the CSBG Board might consider developing a broad-based program for education and outreach, since so many community members appear to be unaware of available services and their eligibility for them.

Adoption

The Sheridan County CSBG Tripartite Board reviewed, revised, and adopted this 2021 Sheridan County CSBG Community Needs Assessment as of _____.

Sheridan County CSBG Board Secretary

Vision and Planning Approach

Overall Vision for Project

The Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) program requires that a comprehensive community needs assessment be conducted every three years. This needs assessment becomes the basis for considering whether current programs are effectively achieving their strategic goals. Accordingly, this assessment seeks to empower local community leaders to understand emerging and ongoing needs of economically insecure residents in the community.

The Sheridan County Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) Board contracted with Community Builders, Inc. (CBI), to conduct this needs assessment. These assessments are conducted every three years. The CSBG Board is responsible for distributing Wyoming Community Services Block Grant funds. The primary objectives are to assist low-income families to become more self-sufficient, more employable and better able to stay employed.

The CSBG Board will use this assessment to make future decisions about funding priorities, based on the services and resources available and the identified needs of the low income, disabled and elderly residents of Sheridan County.

Methodology and Data Sources

To complete this assessment, CBI engaged community leaders to identify economic resources, social resources, and partnership opportunities in the community. This report can now be used to help guide local discussions about public policy issues, and it can educate community residents and leaders about the local needs. CBI prepared this Needs Assessment for delivery to and acceptance by the Sheridan County CSBG Board.

CBI worked with the CSBG Board to develop a contact list for every known health and human service provider in Sheridan County. Approximately 100 agencies and organizations were identified during the previous survey. Targeted stakeholders included government agencies, schools, nonprofit/community service agencies, health agencies, housing/senior housing facilities, churches and others.

According to Wyoming 2-1-1, there were 472 Resources available to Sheridan County callers as of November 2021. A Resource can be a unique agency, service, or site. About 60 of these resources have a Sheridan address, but many are actually statewide (or national) programs that are headquartered elsewhere. Some agencies provide multiple services. After analyzing Wyoming 2-1-1's database, CBI identified 227 unique email addresses to receive a stakeholder survey (via Survey Monkey Email Invitation Collector). CBI also used a Web Collector for stakeholder surveys and received a total of 32 responses.

When stakeholders were contacted via email, they were asked to complete a survey and to provide their clients with either electronic or paper copies of the community survey. After the initial contact, reminders were sent automatically to recipients who had not yet responded.

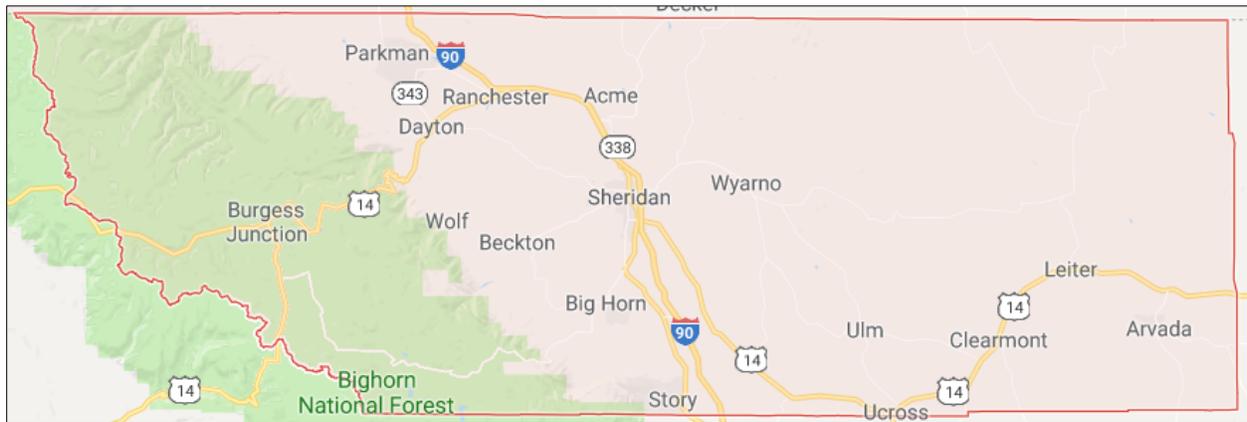
Additionally, CBI created news releases that received local radio time and local newspaper coverage. However, only 17 community members responded to the survey.

CBI conducted an objective analysis into the Sheridan County local economy and its residents, including demographics, economics, housing, employment, and poverty. The U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS) data is the primary data source used throughout this report, unless otherwise noted. In addition to the ACS data, this CNA provides analysis based on data from the State of Wyoming and Wyoming Community Development Authority (WCDA).

Defining the Community

The primary service area for information collection is the entire county. All of Sheridan County is served by most social service agencies, and overlapping jurisdictions are not a significant factor in most social service areas. There are four incorporated municipalities in Sheridan County: Clearmont, Dayton, Ranchester, and Sheridan. In addition, there are several unincorporated communities, including Arvada, Banner, Big Horn, Leiter, Parkman, Story, Ucross, Ulm, Wolf, and Wyarno. This CNA analyzes the entirety of Sheridan County.

The “community of place” is defined by these distinct geographic boundaries. The “community of interest” is defined by shared common interests, goals, or knowledge. These communities, rural by nature, tend to share common interests and live and work in the county.



Sheridan County, Wyoming. Source: Google maps

Issues for Analysis

This needs assessment is organized to align with CSBG Information System Survey, which includes several different Service Categories including:

- Employment
- Education
- Housing
- Nutrition
- Asset Development
- Health Services
- Transportation

Data has been collected to better understand how each of these categories may impact poverty in Sheridan County. The questions on the community and stakeholder surveys similarly focus on these topical areas. Each category is discussed in the sections that follow.

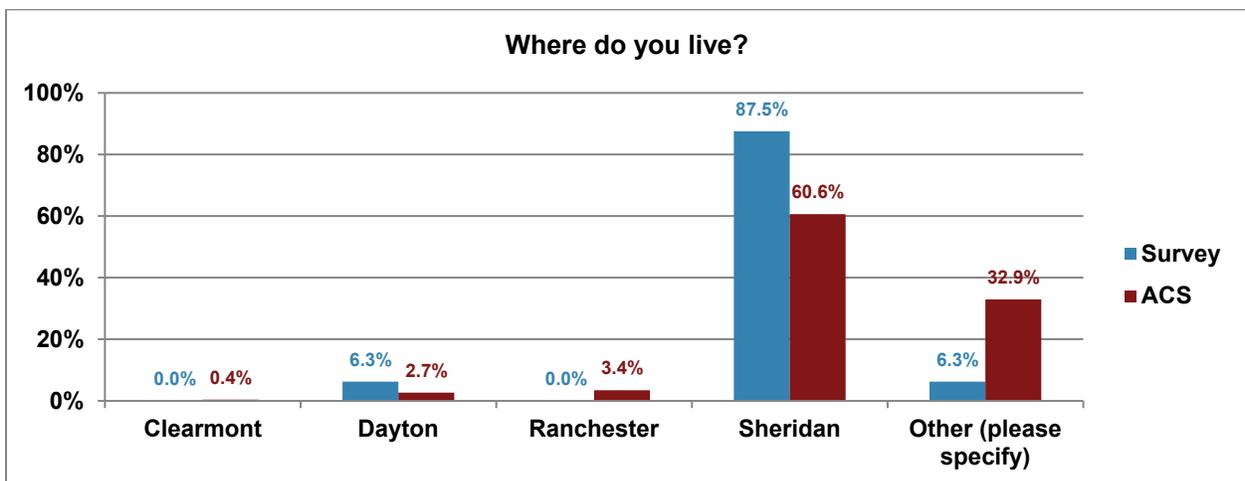
Information Gathering – Community Profile

Sheridan County is in north-central Wyoming. The local economy depends heavily on agriculture, tourism, and natural resource extraction. Oil and gas production represents a large part of its local tax base, and so the local economy reflects the traditional “boom/bust” cycles that occur throughout Wyoming. The primary jobs provided by these industries represent the core value of the local economy.

Population

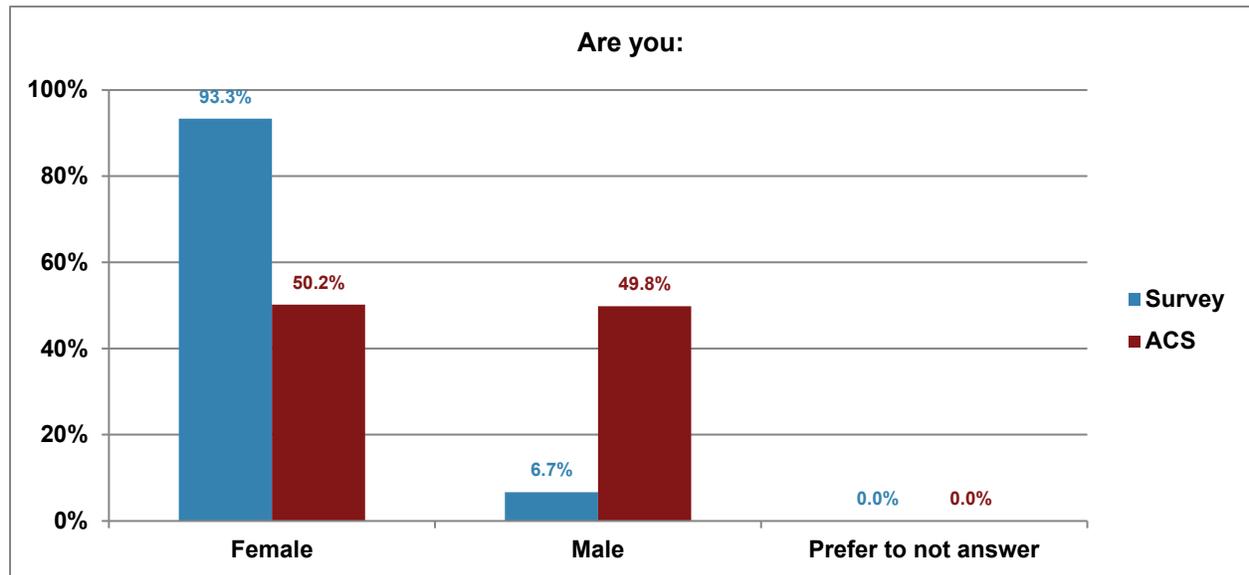
Sheridan County is a large rural area (2,524 square miles) in north-central Wyoming. It includes mountains and high plains. The county has a current population of 30,921 residents (2020 Census). About two-thirds of those residents (20,739 or 67.1%) live in a municipality. According to the 2020 Census, Clearmont has lost population (down to 116) since 2010, while the other municipalities have grown. Dayton (822), Rancheater (1,064), and Sheridan (18,737) have each grown since 2010.

Most (86.7%) of the community surveys were returned by Sheridan residents, even though city residents there comprise only 60.6% of the total County population. Thus, Sheridan residents are overrepresented, and residents in unincorporated areas of Sheridan County are underrepresented, with the survey data.

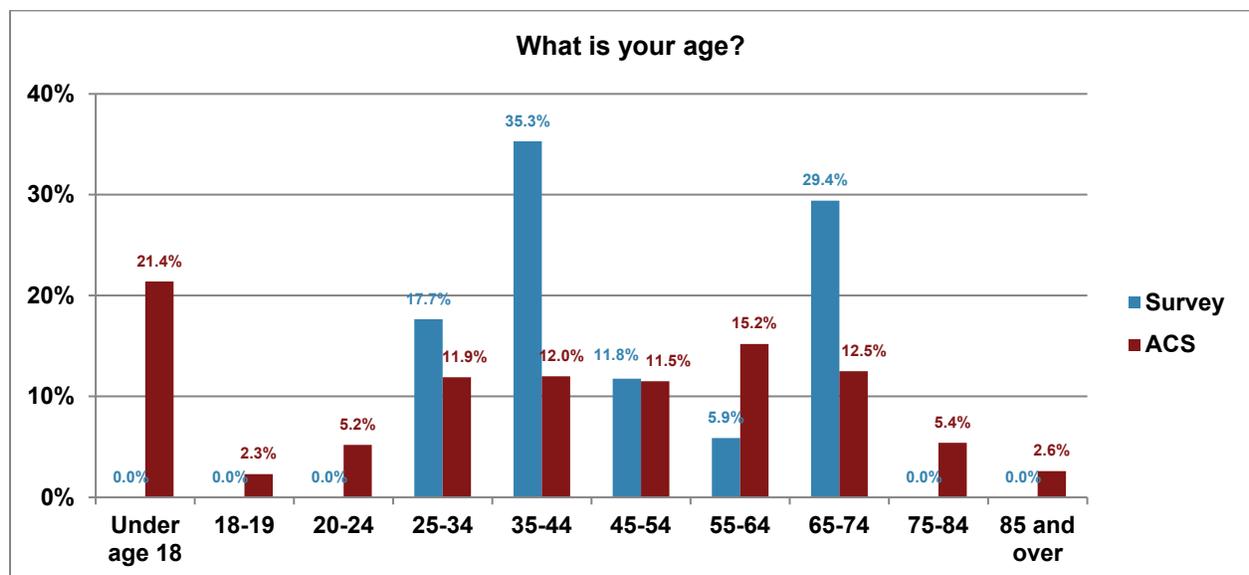


Demographics

Sheridan County is an exception to the rule in Wyoming that there are more men than women. There are slightly more women living in the county (50.2%) than men (49.8%). However, far more surveys were completed by women than men, as shown below. This is a typical finding found in nearly every CSBG community survey.



Often, public surveys are completed by adults who tend to be older. That was not the case with the 2021 Sheridan community survey. While the survey sample is very small (17), this year's survey attracted several younger adults, which resulted in a broader distribution of respondents, as shown below.

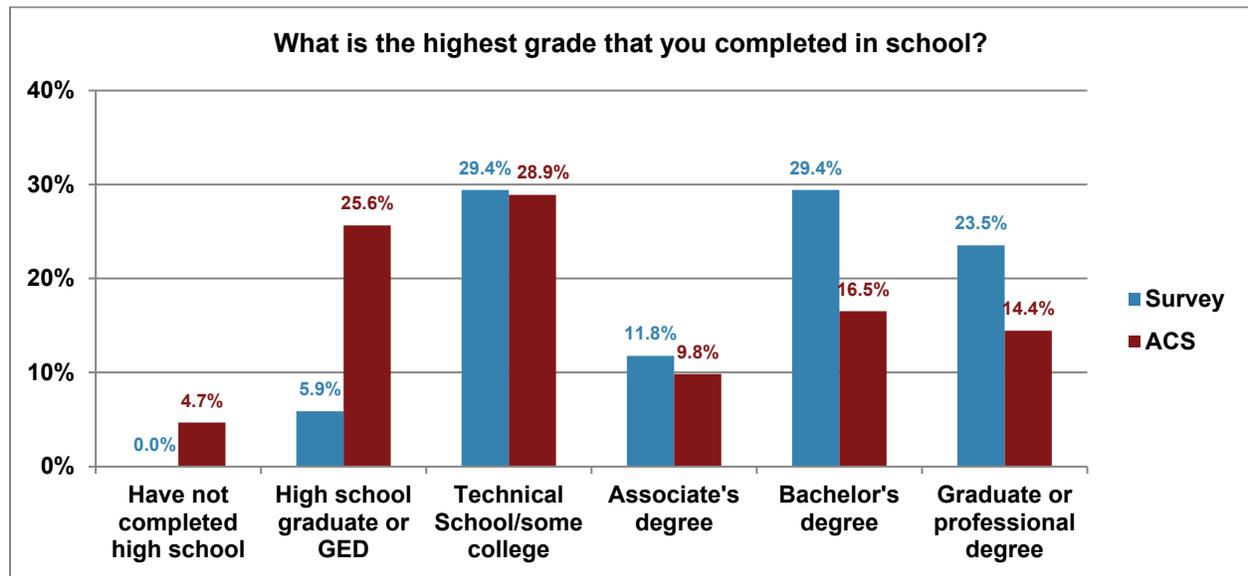


Sheridan County residents are mostly (95.1%) white, with very few minority races. The survey respondents, likewise, were mostly white (88.2%). According to the Census Bureau, Hispanics

comprise 4.2% of the local population, but no survey respondents identified themselves as Hispanic. Similarly, not one survey respondent indicated that they speak a language other than English as their primary language. This survey bias will remain unless the survey instrument is translated to other languages and specific efforts are made to include those who do not speak English.

Educational Attainment

Sheridan County boasts a high percentage of high school graduates and residents who have an Associate degree. The community survey tended to be completed by residents who have educational degrees, as shown below.



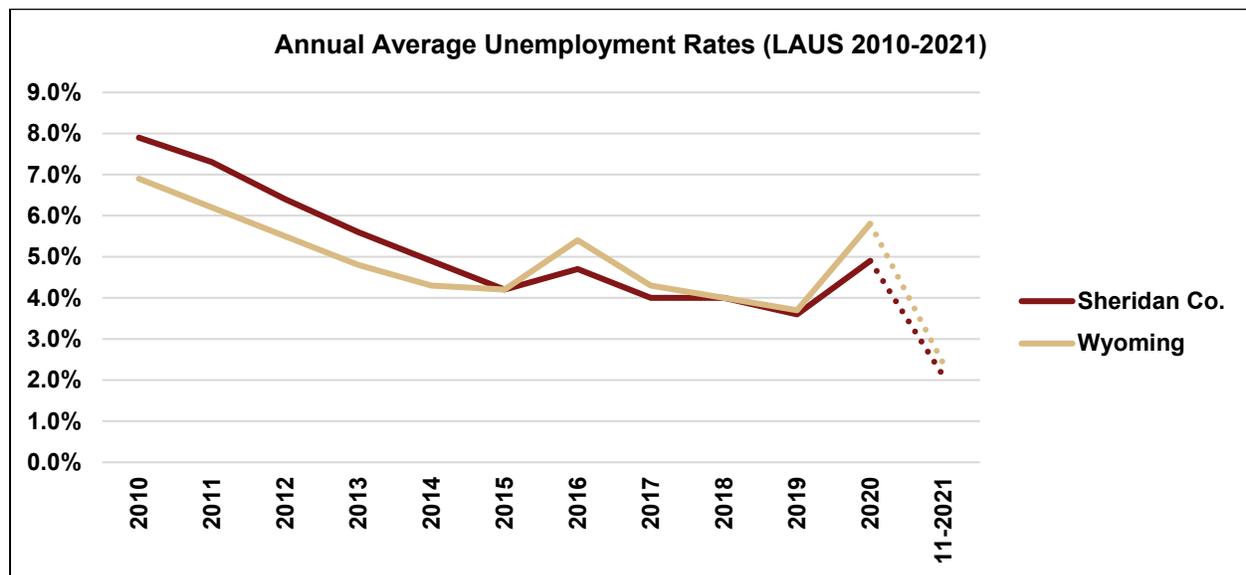
Household Size

Survey respondents were asked to identify the number of people living in their homes. For community survey respondents, their household size tended to be bigger than usual (averaging 2.53 persons per household), but the Census/ACS data tells us that the actual average number of persons is lower in Sheridan County (2.2). Further study may be warranted to understand the factors affecting household size for those living in poverty. For example, the survey data suggests that homelessness is being masked as multiple adults are living together (often without children present, if we can trust the small sample size crosstab data analysis). Are homeless adults moving in with friends, and would they make a different choice if there were a homeless shelter available? One cannot answer that question with the information we have at this time.

The community survey captured input from families that have someone who is 65 years or older living in their household. According to Census/ACS data, 33% of households in Sheridan County have at least one person who is 65 years or older. Slightly more households (41.2%) responding to the survey have at least one person 65 or older in their household.

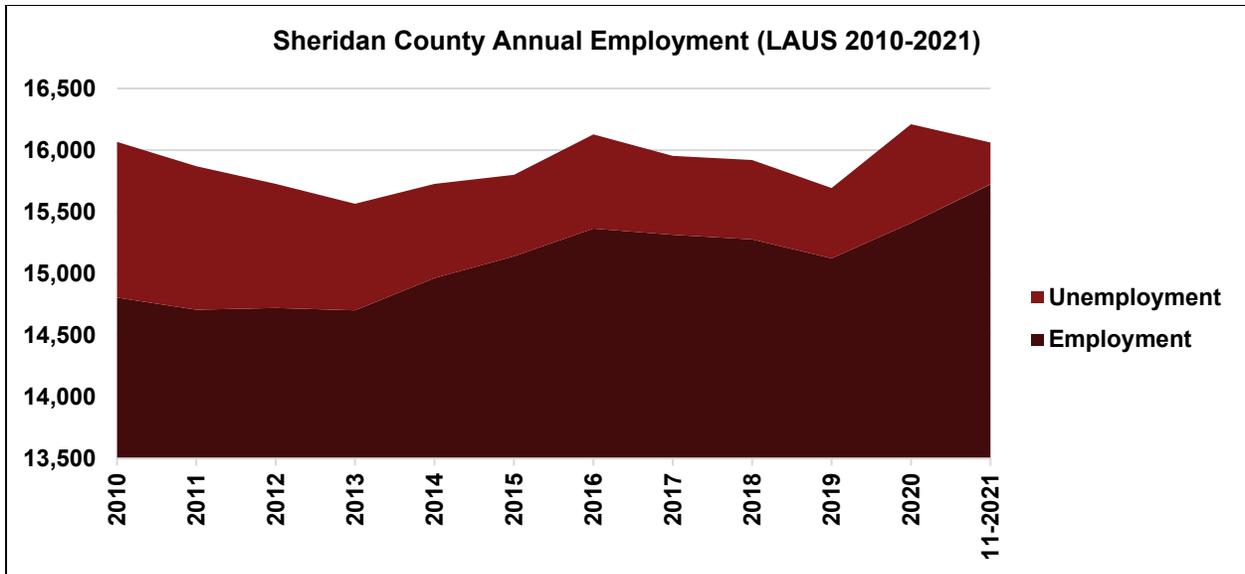
Unemployment

Unemployment is generally low and getting lower in Sheridan County. The local unemployment rate often reflects the broader measure for the entire State of Wyoming. This long-term trend is illustrated in the following chart, which provides the annual average unemployment rates from 2010 to 2020. These rates are calculated by the Wyoming Department of Workforce Services according to the national Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) program. The most recent LAUS monthly releases suggests that Sheridan County has returned to its long-term downward trend, following the COVID-shocked economy. Sheridan County's unemployment rate is currently estimated at 2.1% (preliminary estimates for November 2021), as shown below.

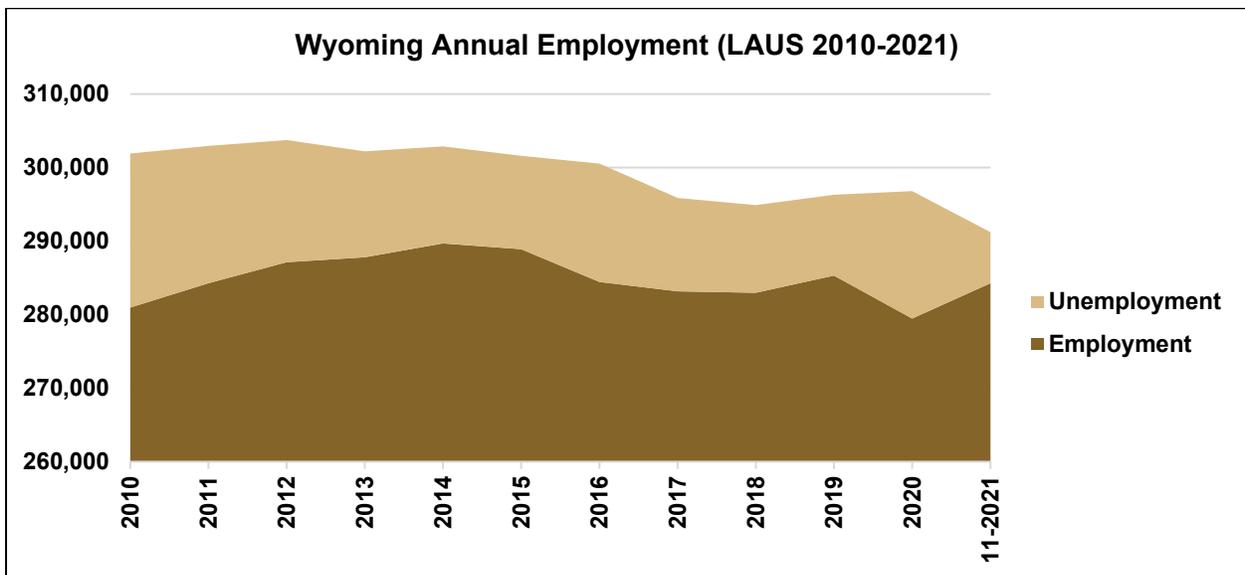


A high unemployment rate is often associated with high impacts of poverty. However, a low unemployment rate does not necessarily mean that there are minimal problems with poverty. Sheridan County's relatively low unemployment rates cannot be fully appreciated without considering some of the underlying trends in the economy.

During the last ten years, the unemployment rate has continued to drop for two key reasons: new jobs AND workers leaving the workforce. According to the Wyoming Department of Workforce Services, a big reason for the region's low unemployment rate is that workers are leaving the area to find work elsewhere. As a result, the size of Sheridan County's total labor force has remained stagnant, with about 16,000 workers, for the last ten years. Meanwhile, actual jobs have increased at an average rate of 0.6%. Consequently, the actual number of unemployed workers in Sheridan County has dropped from more than 1,000 to just a few hundred looking for work, as shown below.

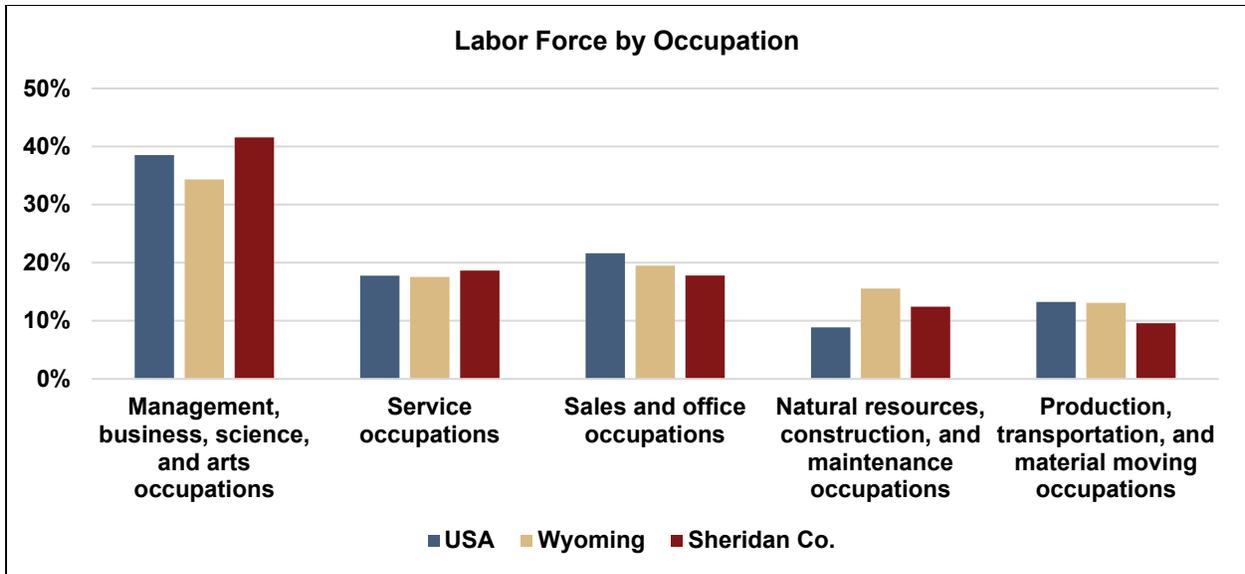


This shrinkage of the labor force is a statewide phenomenon. The following chart illustrates this employment trend for the entire state.

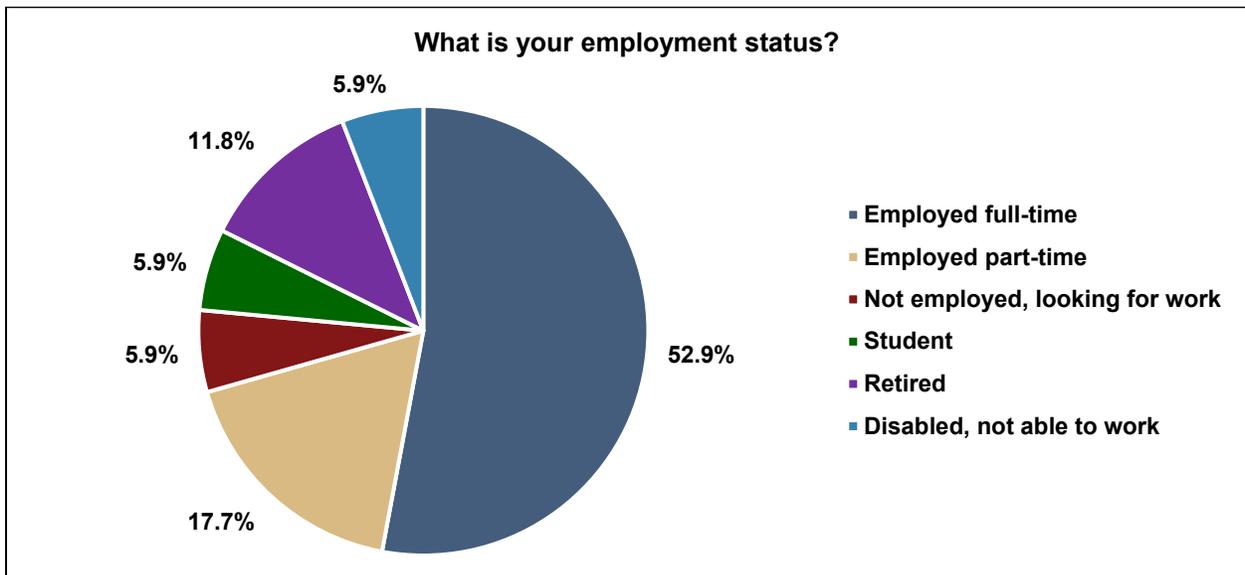


Labor Force

As of November 2021, Sheridan County has a civilian workforce of 16,062 workers. These workers live near their workplace, with short commutes (averaging 15 minutes, compared to 27 minutes nationwide). The mix of occupations in Sheridan County reflects the influence of local assets: agriculture and natural resources. The following chart compares the types of occupations found in Sheridan County, compared with Wyoming and the United States.

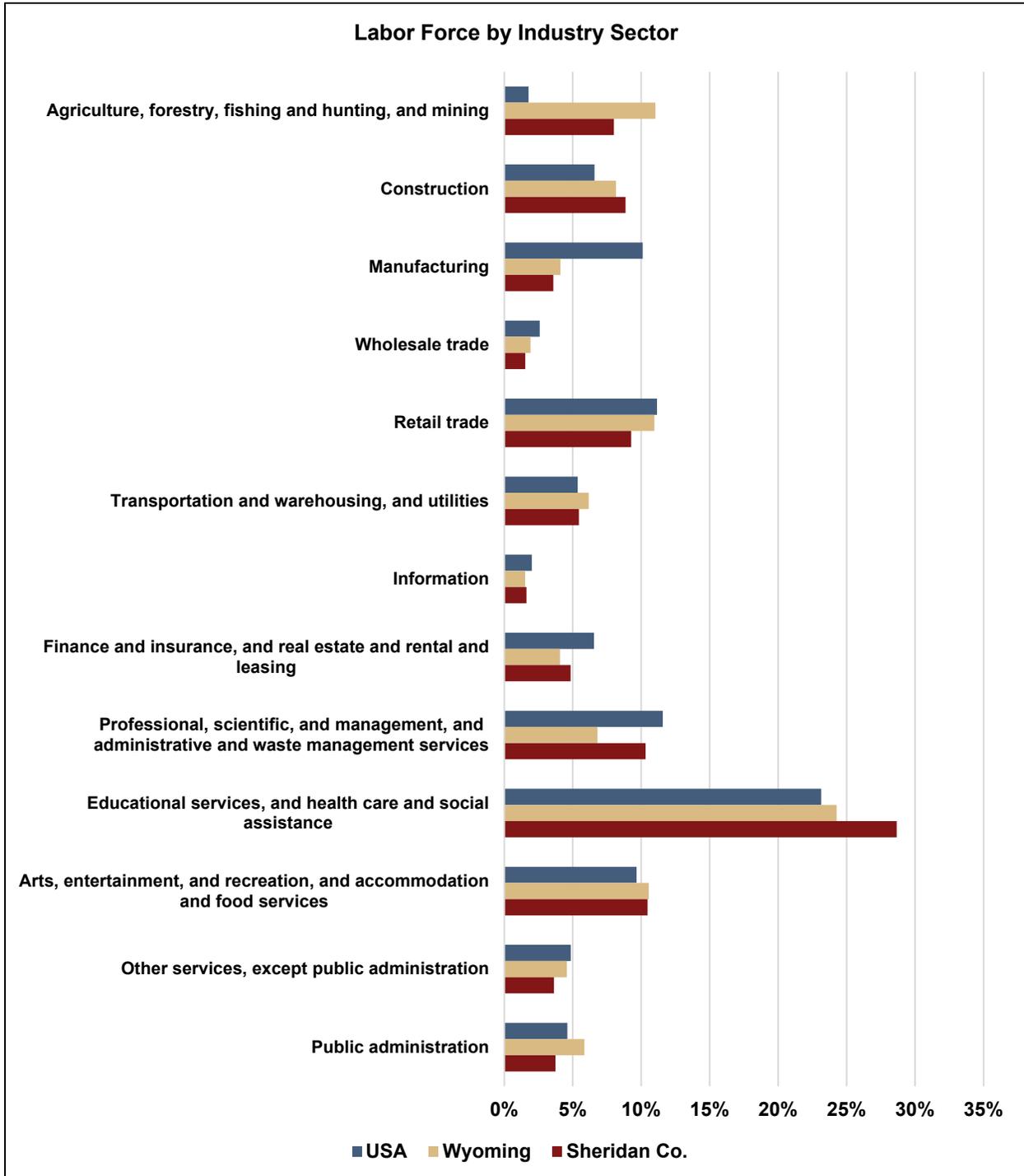


Most survey respondents are employed (more than 70% are working at least part-time). Others were students, retirees, or disabled residents, as shown below.



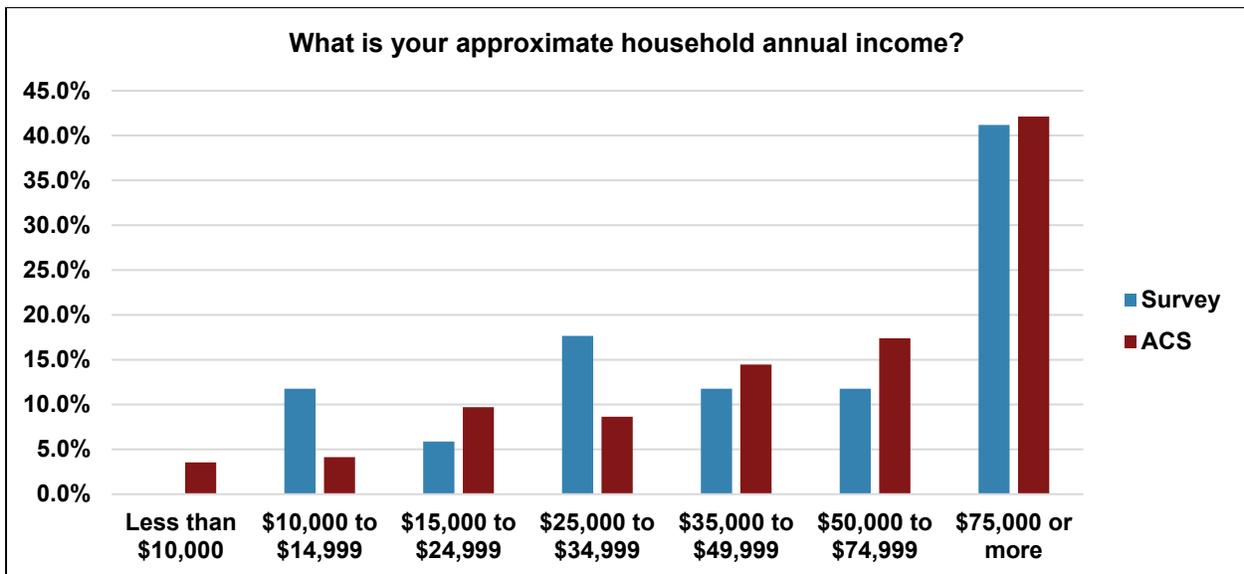
Industries

The largest industry sectors in Sheridan County are associated with agricultural production, natural resource extraction, and tourism/travel. The following table compares the mix of industries providing jobs in Sheridan County, compared to Wyoming and the United States.



Income

Surprisingly, the survey results reflected the actual distribution of incomes in Sheridan County, as shown in the graph below. Most survey respondents earn far less than most Sheridan County residents. This needs assessment was open to the entire community. Of course, stakeholders were encouraged to ask their clients to complete surveys, so the survey results are purposely targeted to reach the lower-income residents who struggle with poverty. The survey results show a smattering of input from citizens across a broad spectrum of income.



Sheridan County’s median household income is \$60,807, which is lower than the rest of Wyoming and the nation. Median family income and per capita income are higher in Sheridan County, in part because households have a higher occupancy than Wyoming or the nation. The following table provides comparisons for various measures of income.

| Income Measure | USA | Wyoming | Sheridan County |
|-------------------------|----------|----------|-----------------|
| Median household income | \$62,843 | \$64,049 | \$60,807 |
| Median family income | \$77,263 | \$79,782 | \$81,833 |
| Per capita income | \$34,103 | \$33,366 | \$35,254 |

Any “median” measure is determined by dividing the entire population into two equal parts: one-half of the cases above the median and one-half below the median (which includes those with no income). Each of these income measures is calculated a bit differently by the Census Bureau ACS program, as follows:

- Household Income** – This includes the income of the householder and all other individuals 15 years old and over in the household, whether they are related to the householder or not. Because many households have just one occupant, average household income is usually less than average family income.

- **Family Income** – In compiling statistics on family income, the incomes of all members 15 years old and over related to the householder are summed and treated as a single amount.
- **Per Capita Income** – Per capita income is the mean income computed for every man, woman, and child in a particular group including those living in group quarters. It is derived by dividing the aggregate income of a particular group by the total population in that group.

Crime

Wyoming has a low crime rate (20.5 violent crimes and 149.2 property crimes per 10,000 inhabitants), according to the Wyoming Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) 2020 annual report. Crime rates in Sheridan County are slightly higher than the state average (21.3 crimes per 10,000 inhabitants).

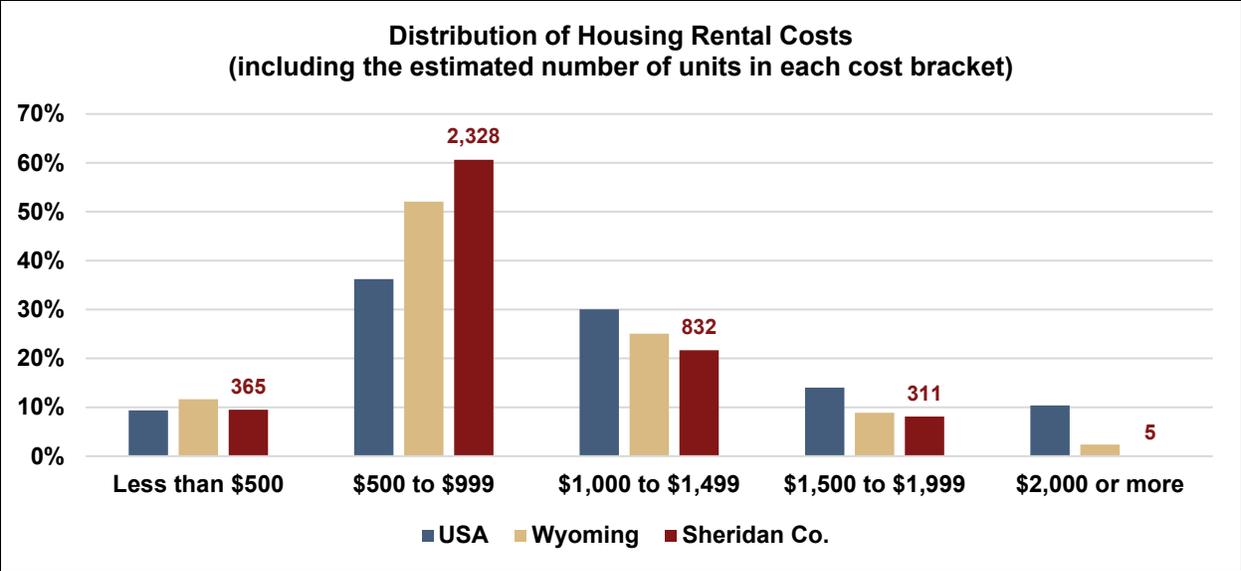
Housing

According to Census/ACS data, 11.2% of all housing units in Sheridan County are vacant, which is lower than the nation (12.1%) and the state (16.9%). Most housing units in Sheridan County are single family homes (11,027, or 73.9%), followed by multi-family units (2,623 or 17.6%). The next most common type of housing is mobile homes (1,247 or 8.4%). In contrast, other communities in Wyoming and the rest of the nation have significantly more multi-family housing units in their mix of housing options (20.5% for Wyoming and 32.1% for USA).

Home values in Sheridan County are higher than the rest of Wyoming and the nation. The median home value in Sheridan County is \$272,400, which is 25.2% higher the national median (\$217,500), and 23.5% higher than the Wyoming statewide median (\$220,500). High values make it more difficult to purchase a home.

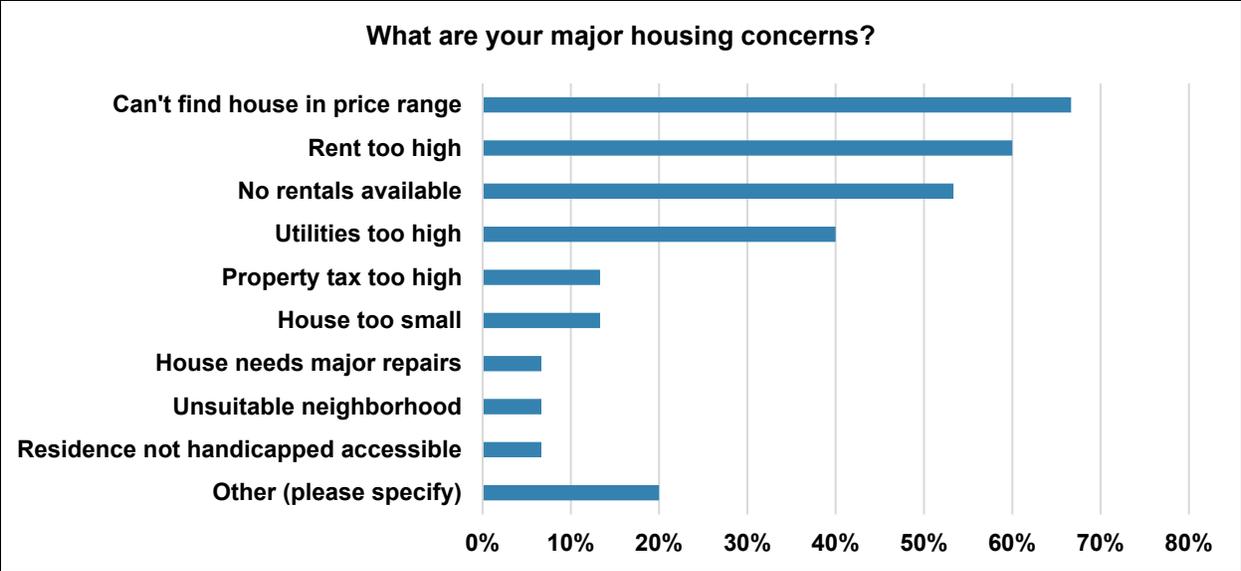
Unlike home values, the median gross rent paid for living units is *lower* in Sheridan County and Wyoming than elsewhere. According to the Census/ACS data, the gross rent paid in Sheridan County for a monthly residential rental property is \$836. Nationwide, gross rent averages \$1,062; in Wyoming the average gross rent is \$855 per month. Low rents keep the cost of living lower for Sheridan County residents and help to ease the impact of poverty.

Sheridan County's rental housing is focused on workforce housing, but there are housing options at many price points. Most of the local demand for rental housing falls below \$1,000 per month. However, with high home values pressuring the market to raise rates, it is unclear how much longer rental costs will remain low. A comparison of housing rental costs is provided below, showing how Sheridan County compares to Wyoming and the nation.



There are as many as 21 low-income housing apartment complexes in Sheridan County, which contain at least 620 affordable apartments for rent in Sheridan, Wyoming. Many of these apartments are income-eligible housing with subsidized housing. In addition, there are approximately 690 other apartments that do not have rental assistance but are still considered to be affordable housing for many families. It should be noted that the HUD-funded Public Housing Agency that serves Sheridan is the Housing Authority of the City of Cheyenne.

Many community survey respondents (58.8%) own their own homes, while many others (35.3%) rent their residence. The greatest concern is that respondents cannot find a house (or a place to rent) in their price range. The concern about prices is further underscored by comments made by survey respondents in the “Other” category: There are too few available housing options at any price point, and no available housing for seniors and others wanting to rent. All survey respondents are concerned, also, about utility costs. These concerns highlight the vulnerability of local residents struggling with rent. In contrast, the factors that many people consider when buying a home (i.e., neighborhood and quality of construction) are at the bottom of the list.



The difficulty that survey respondents have with finding an appropriately priced home is supported by stakeholders. Objectively, housing data (e.g., high home values and limited vacancies) also points to housing as a major problem for local residents.

Information Gathering - Public Engagement

To complete this assessment, CBI engaged community leaders and the public to identify economic resources, social resources, and partnership opportunities in the community. CBI sought input from Sheridan County residents through surveys and interviews with stakeholders and residents/clients.

These interviews and surveys were conducted to identify key needs, assets and services to help address local poverty. This public input helped target limited resources so that they can be used most effectively.

A general media release was prepared and distributed within the community at the beginning of the public engagement process and a community forum was held near the end of the project, to get reactions and to solicit additional input on key findings.

Community Survey

The community survey was available online or as a paper copy at several locations. Agencies were asked to distribute surveys to their low-income customers/clientele. Agencies used their own Facebook and web pages to help boost survey responsiveness. A total of 17 surveys were analyzed, and the profile of the community (see section above) reflects those community survey responses. However, the small sample size limits the usefulness of specific results and so, when possible, survey results are provided along with objective data from the US Census Bureau/American Community Survey (ACS).

Stakeholder Survey

CBI worked with the CSBG Board to develop a contact list for every known health and human service provider in Sheridan County. More than 200 agencies who are potentially providing services in Sheridan County were identified for survey, with 32 surveys being returned. Target stakeholders included the CSBG Board, government agencies, schools, nonprofit/community service agencies, health agencies, housing/senior housing facilities, churches and others.

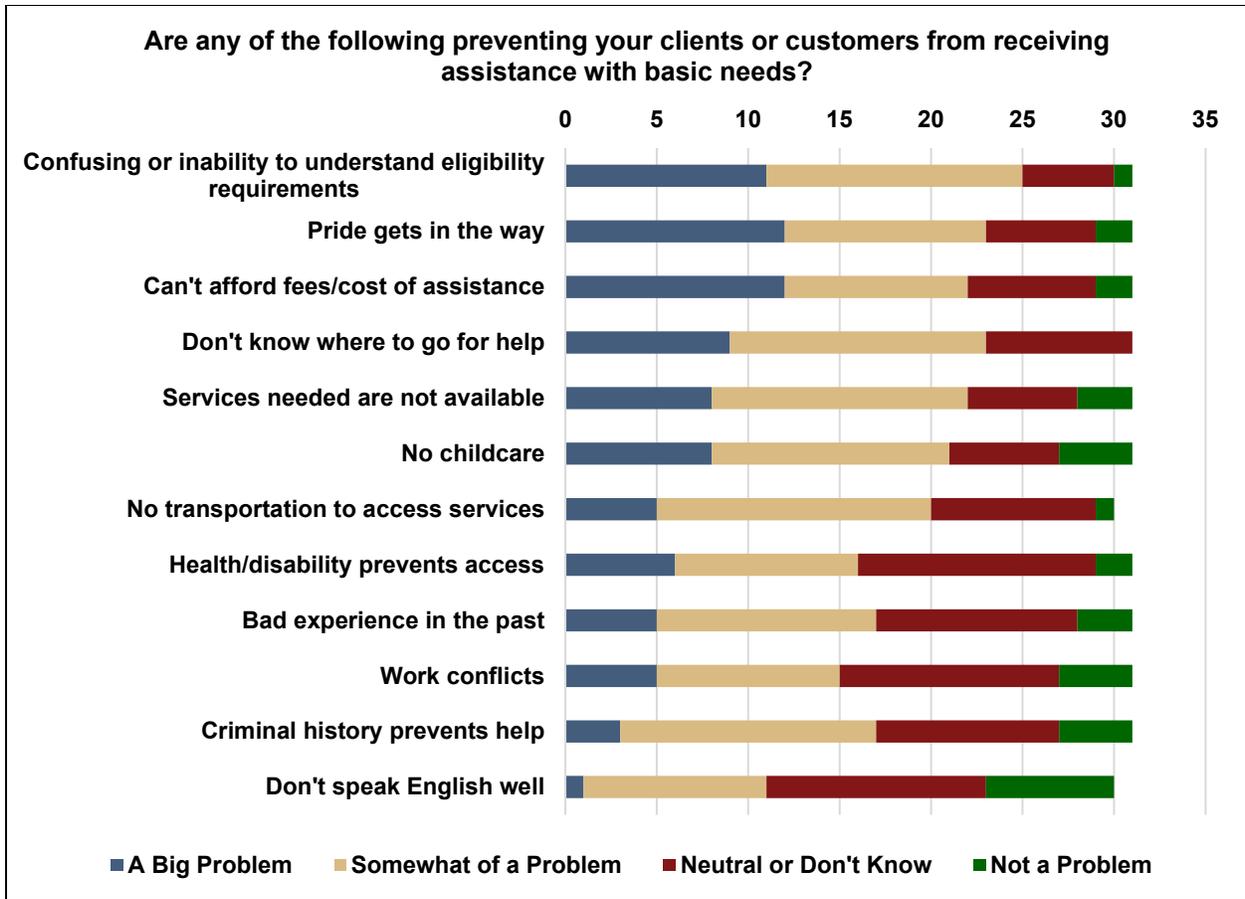
All providers and stakeholders were initially contacted via email. They were asked to complete and to provide their clients with either electronic or paper copies of the community survey. Providers/stakeholders who responded to the survey included:

- CSBG Board
- AARP Foundation
- Absaroka, Inc. Head Start
- Community Cupboard
- Compass Center for Families
- Dog and Cat Shelter
- Educational Opportunity Center

- First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
- Goose Creek Transit
- Habitat for Humanity of the Eastern Bighorns
- Job Corps
- Maternal Child Health, Sheridan Co Public Health
- Public health
- Salvation Army
- Senior Citizens Council
- Sharon's Home Health - Eclipse
- Sheridan County Public Library System
- University of Wyoming - Cent\$ible Nutrition Program
- Uprising
- Wyoming 2-1-1, Inc.
- Wyoming Guardianship Corporation
- Wyoming Public Defenders, Sheridan and Johnson County
- Youth Development Services

Most stakeholders are unaware of duplication of efforts in Sheridan County. A few stakeholders identified potential areas where duplication of services might exist (e.g., meals are provided at multiple locations). However, each example provided in the survey responses seems to indicate that multiple agencies are simply doing similar work, and not duplicating (or wasting) such efforts. For example, there may be several agencies that are working to decrease healthcare costs, or to perhaps provide services to people with disabilities (of many different types). These are not as duplicative as they are different sites or services designed to reach many different types of individuals.

Stakeholders identified several obstacles and barriers that their clients must overcome to receive services. Confusion about eligibility requirements is the top barrier. Many of these “barriers” can be overcome with outreach and education, particularly by working on a marketing campaign with Wyoming 2-1-1 (who can help get information directly to residents who need it). All identified barriers are shown below.



Several open-ended questions were asked of Stakeholders. The outline list below identifies consensus comments and otherwise noteworthy input.

Employment Services Needed but Not Available:

- Job training for new industries/businesses
- Stakeholders generally recognize the Sheridan College and DWS are assets
- Seems to be a need for case management (resume building, career coaching, etc.)

Education Services Needed but Not Available:

- Childcare/preschool
- 4-year degrees

Housing Services Needed but Not Available:

- *More than any other area, this topic was a concern for nearly every respondent*
- Affordable housing for low-income workers
- A homeless shelter

Income and Asset Building Services Needed but Not Available:

- Affordable housing programs

- Financial literacy training
- Credit counseling
- Budget planning for families

Nutrition, Food and Commodities Needed but Not Available:

- Good quality, nutritious food is already available
- Some think eligibility should be relaxed

Health Services Needed but Not Available:

- Mental health is THE top concern
- Affordability and access to care remain problems

Transportation Services Needed but Not Available:

- Have reliable public transportation in place – want to expand it
- After hours/weekend transportation

Community, Cultural, Social and Economic Assets Needed but Not Available:

- Many concerns about lack of diversity
- Recognition that COVID has impacted every service and asset
- Call for more LGBTQ support

If you could do one thing to improve family and individual economic security in Sheridan County, what would it be?

- Provide affordable housing
- Provide mental health services
- Improve access to health insurance

If you could do one thing to improve the well-being of families and children in Sheridan County, what would it be?

- Improved and affordable housing
- Mental health counseling
- Economic diversification
- Access to affordable healthcare

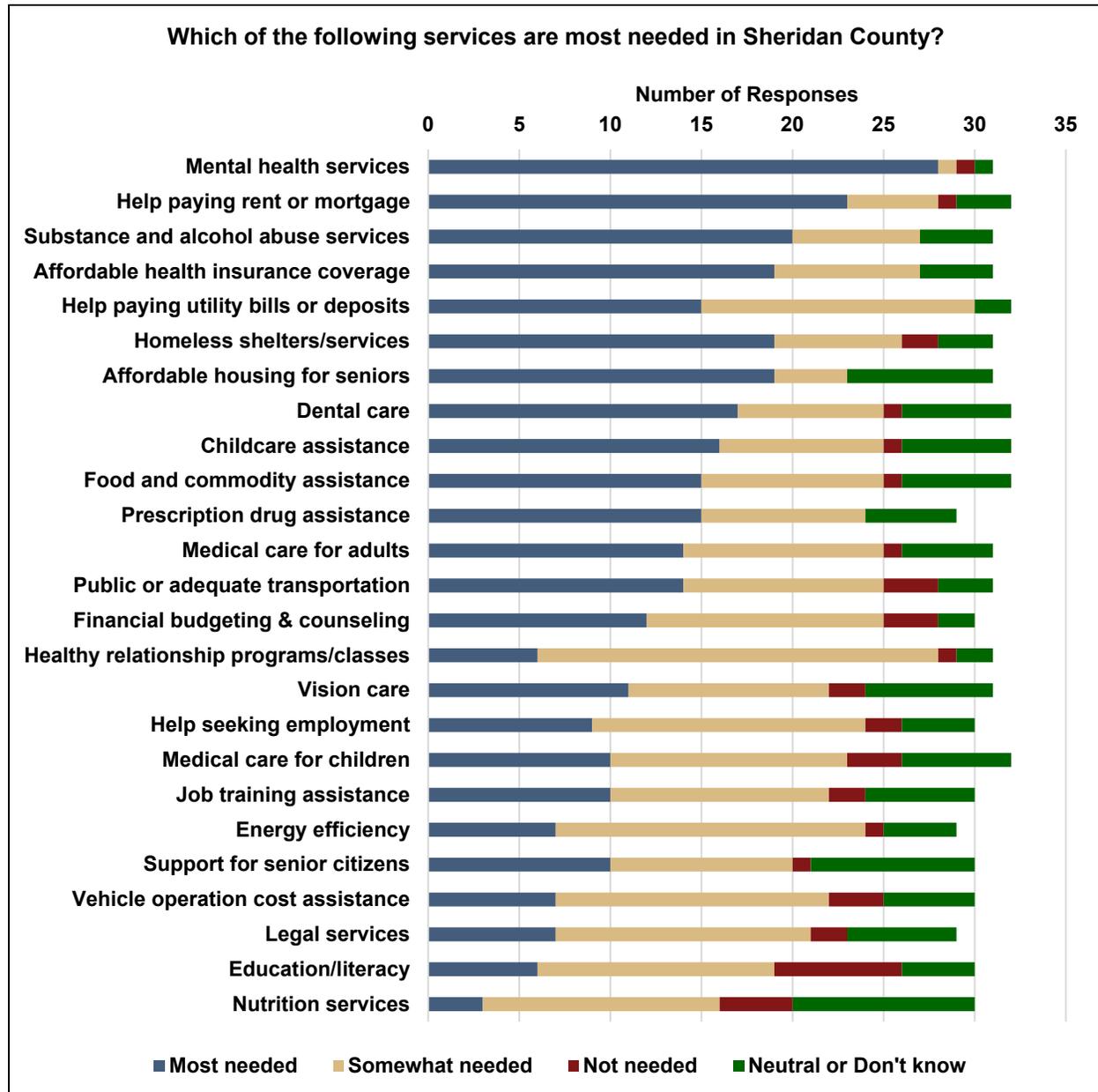
If you could do one thing to increase community economic vitality and opportunities in Sheridan County, what would it be?

- Raise wages
- Support diversity of people and economy

Finally, there were several survey questions that were asked of both stakeholders and clients. These responses have been combined for comparative purposes here.

Most Needed Services

Stakeholders were asked what services were most needed in Sheridan County. A broad look at all services is provided in the following chart, which illustrates the extent to which each service is needed in Sheridan County (according to stakeholders and service providers).



Mental health has become THE issue to be addressed in Sheridan County, followed closely by affordable housing. Several of the other top concerns are directly related to these two services, which emphasizes just how important mental health and housing have become.

There is remarkable consistency between the stakeholder and community surveys on their perceptions of Sheridan County's greatest needs. In fact, the 2022 Sheridan County surveys are

the first time (for CBI) that the top three needs identified in the community survey (and their priority) are identical to the stakeholder/service provider survey. Those top concerns are:

1. Mental health services
2. Affordable housing
3. Substance or alcohol abuse services

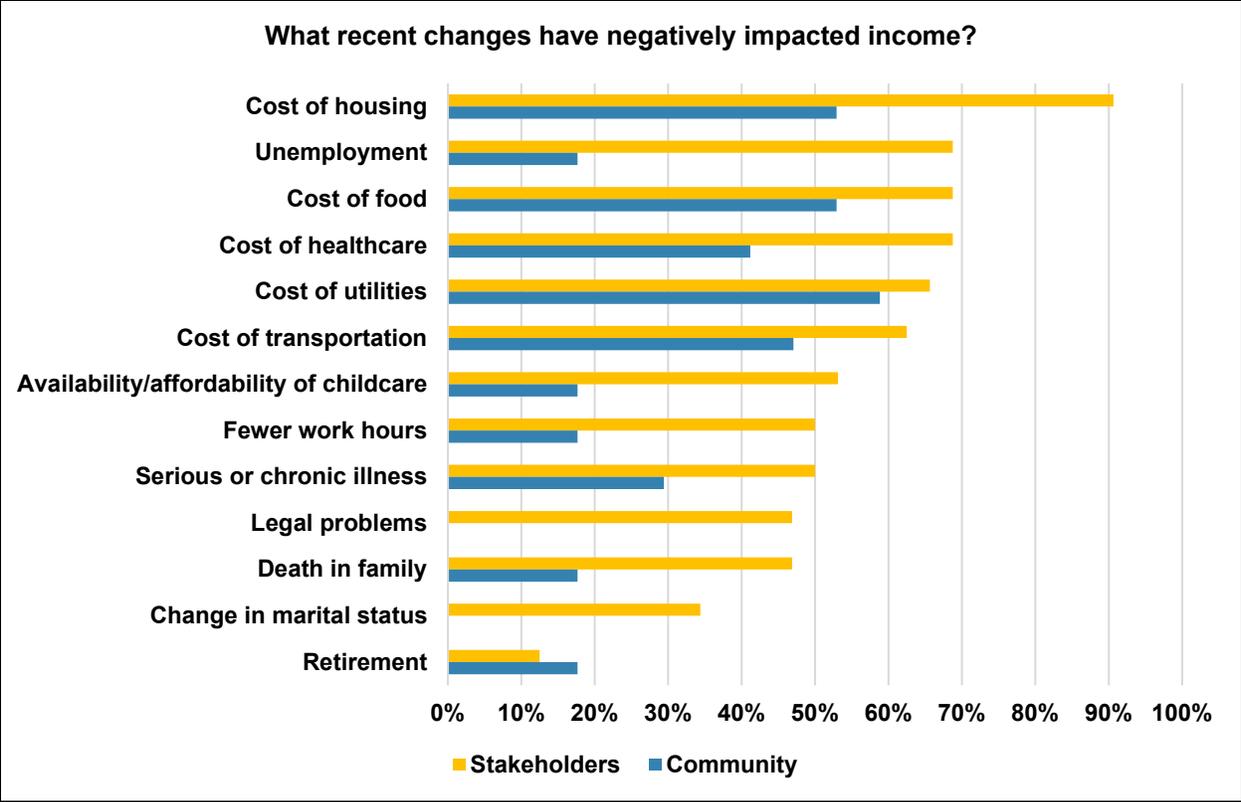
While the community survey responses were limited in number, the stakeholder surveys received a better response. More weight should be given to that survey's results, simply because of the greater numbers. But it has also been CBI's experience that stakeholders are some of the best-informed decision makers, so their opinions should be carefully considered.

The concerns being expressed by both surveys is supported by objective data sources. In particular, comparisons of county health rankings are helpful. For the last several years, the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute has produced County Health Rankings for every county in the nation. Sheridan County ranks in the top quartile of all counties in Wyoming for both health outcomes and health factors. However, individual data points that factor into those top rankings identify room for improvement in two key areas:

- Sheridan County has a high percentage of alcohol-impaired driving deaths (50%). This is just one indicator of substance abuse that supports what the survey respondents are saying.
- Sheridan County's Mental Health Provider Ratio is 205:1, which is one of the lowest in Wyoming. The state ratio is 290:1. This means that there are more providers available per capita in Sheridan County than most areas of the state. Given the need for mental health services, this strength should be more promoted.

Changes that Impact Income

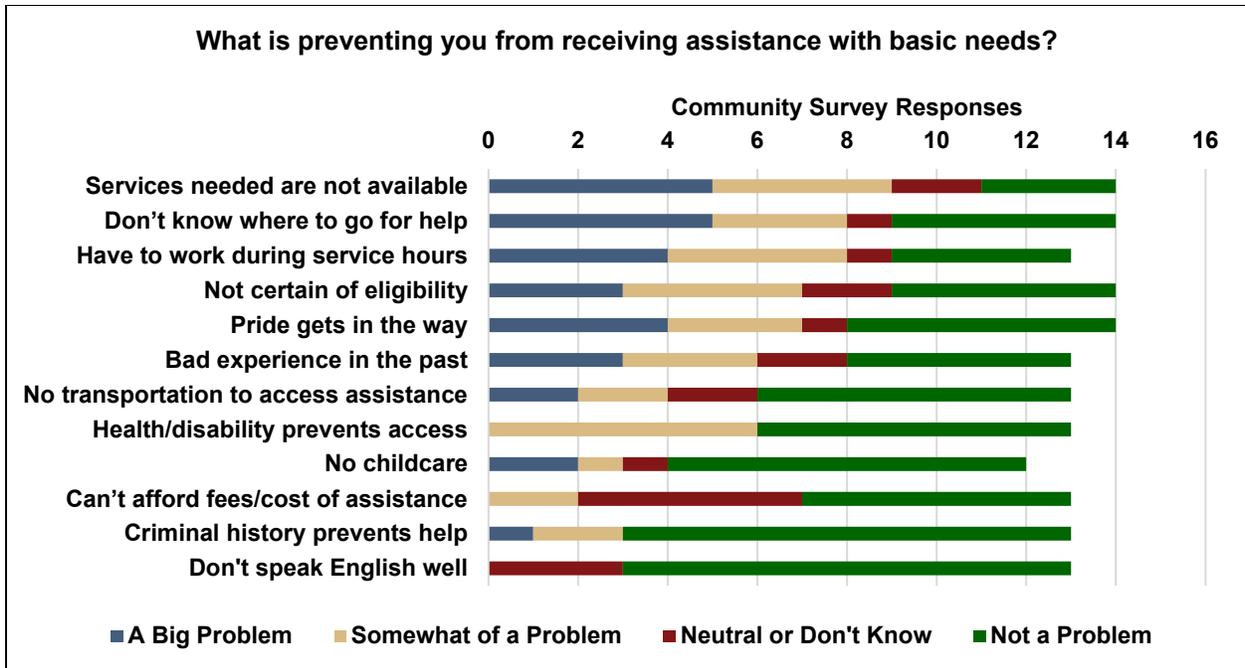
Stakeholders and clients were asked about changes that impacted their income in the past 12 months. While their responses are markedly different with regard to magnitude, the perceptions of the community and stakeholders are generally consistent, as shown below.



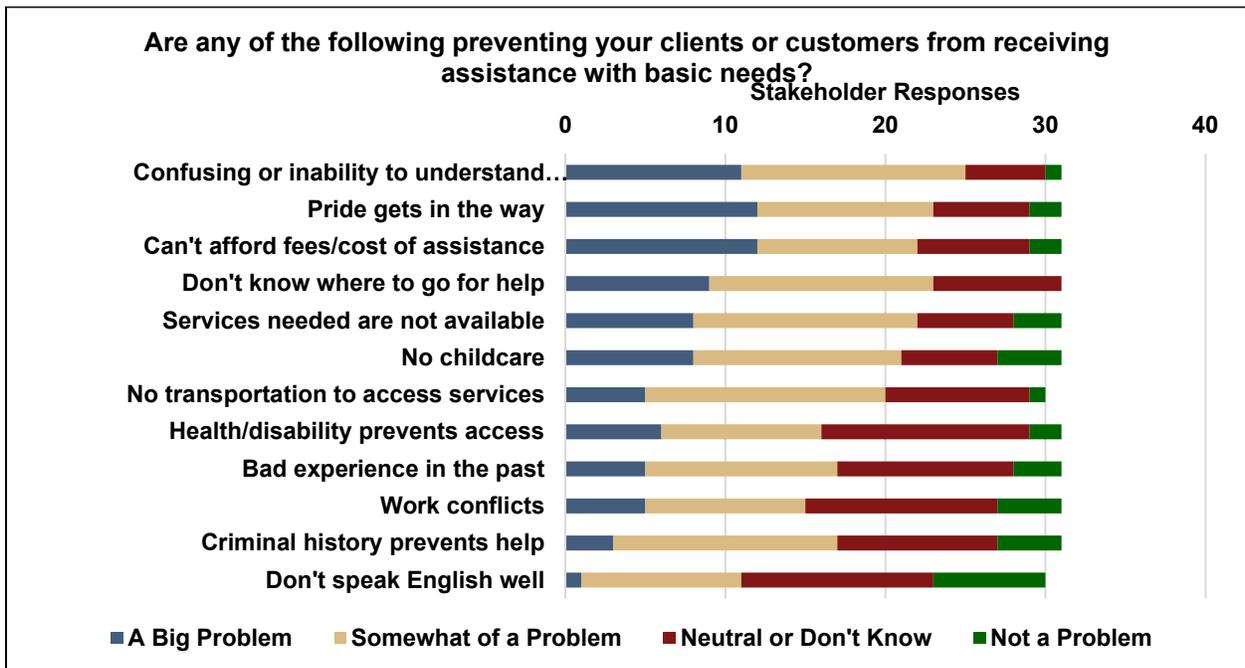
Stakeholders often feel that job-related impacts have a greater impact on clients than clients do. Conversely, clients cite things like the cost of living.

Services Available/Factors that Prevent People from Receiving Assistance

The community survey provided insight to the types of services that are available and being used in Sheridan County. Clients reported that they cannot always find or afford the assistance they need. A top concern is confusion about eligibility. These and similar concerns expressed by community survey respondents suggest that an educational effort may help them overcome many such barriers. The following chart identifies the barriers identified in the community survey (in priority order). Note that the survey was provided in English only, and so one should not be surprised that no respondent identified speaking English as a potential problem.



Many stakeholders would agree with the top barriers identified by the community. In addition, the Stakeholder/Provider survey listed “Pride” as a top barrier and recognized that some needed services are not available. These are difficult barriers to overcome, requiring substantial investment and effort. The following chart illustrates the obstacles faced by people living in poverty, from the perspective of the Stakeholders who provide services to them.



Poverty Indicators

The two major questions to be analyzed in this Needs Assessment are the following:

1. What is the *current status* of poverty and the conditions with which low-income residents struggle?
2. What are the *trends* in poverty and conditions that may impact low-income residents in the future?

Poverty Rate

According to the Census Bureau, the poverty rate in Sheridan County (for 2019, which is the most recent data available) is very low (5.9%). By comparison, Wyoming's poverty rate is 11.0% and the nation is 13.4%. In real terms, this means that there are approximately 1,726 residents of Sheridan County who are living in poverty, including about 170 families (local poverty rate for families is 2.1%).

The poverty rate should also be considered for different cohorts. For most areas, minors (under 18 years old) and residents who are 65 years and over are more likely to be living in poverty; and women are more likely to be living in poverty than men.

| Poverty Status for past 12 months | USA | Wyoming | Sheridan Co. |
|------------------------------------|-------|---------|--------------|
| Poverty rate for entire population | 13.4% | 11.0% | 5.9% |
| | | | |
| Poverty rate by age | | | |
| Under 18 years | 18.5% | 12.6% | 5.3% |
| 18 to 64 years | 12.6% | 11.1% | 6.5% |
| 65 years and over | 9.3% | 8.0% | 4.7% |
| | | | |
| Poverty rate by sex | | | |
| Male | 12.2% | 8.6% | 5.4% |
| Female | 14.6% | 8.0% | 6.4% |
| | | | |
| Poverty in families | 9.5% | 6.8% | 2.1% |

In Sheridan County, there are so few residents who are not white that the relative percentage of those living in poverty can vary wildly. The most current rates for poverty are so low, and the numbers of non-White races is so low, that race appears to not be a significant factor in Sheridan County. This is not a typical situation, which can be appreciated by comparing poverty rates with the state and nation, as shown below.

| Poverty Status for past 12 months | USA | Wyoming | Sheridan Co. |
|--|-------|---------|--------------|
| Poverty rate for entire population | 13.4% | 11.0% | 5.9% |
| | | | |
| Poverty rate by age | | | |
| White alone | 11.1% | 10.5% | 5.9% |
| Black or African American alone | 23.0% | 15.3% | 0.0% |
| American Indian and Alaska Native alone | 24.9% | 23.8% | 10.7% |
| Asian alone | 10.9% | 13.0% | 11.8% |
| Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone | 17.5% | 8.6% | - |
| Some other race alone | 21.0% | 13.4% | 0.0% |
| Two or more races | 16.7% | 14.1% | 0.0% |
| | | | |
| Hispanic or Latino (any race) | 19.6% | 19.2% | 6.5% |

A high school education (or equivalent) is a key milestone for avoiding poverty. That rule of thumb is clear in Sheridan County, where workers who have less than a high school education are much more likely to live in poverty than the rest of the population, as shown below. Local poverty rates for educational attainment are similar to Wyoming and the nation, as shown below.

| Poverty Status for past 12 months | USA | Wyoming | Sheridan Co. |
|--|-------|---------|--------------|
| Poverty rate for entire population | 13.4% | 11.0% | 5.9% |
| | | | |
| Poverty rate by education | | | |
| Less than high school graduate | 24.9% | 20.9% | 21.5% |
| High school graduate (incl. equivalency) | 13.5% | 10.6% | 6.8% |
| Some college, associate degree | 9.6% | 8.2% | 5.1% |
| Bachelor's degree or higher | 4.3% | 4.2% | 2.6% |

Full-time employment is the single best strategy to avoid poverty. Working part time (or part-year) helps, but those who worked full-time for the past 12 months were the least likely to be impoverished.

| Poverty Status for past 12 months | USA | Wyoming | Sheridan Co. |
|--|-------|---------|--------------|
| Poverty rate for entire population | 13.4% | 11.0% | 5.9% |
| Poverty rate by employment/work experience | | | |
| Employed | 6.3% | 6.5% | 2.7% |
| Unemployed | 30.8% | 28.6% | 23.8% |
| Worked full-time, year-round | 2.7% | 2.8% | 1.6% |
| Worked part-time or part-year | 16.3% | 16.1% | 7.4% |
| Did not work | 21.4% | 18.0% | 11.9% |

Poverty rates can be much higher in families with young children, especially for female householders when no husband is present. The following table compares poverty rates among families.

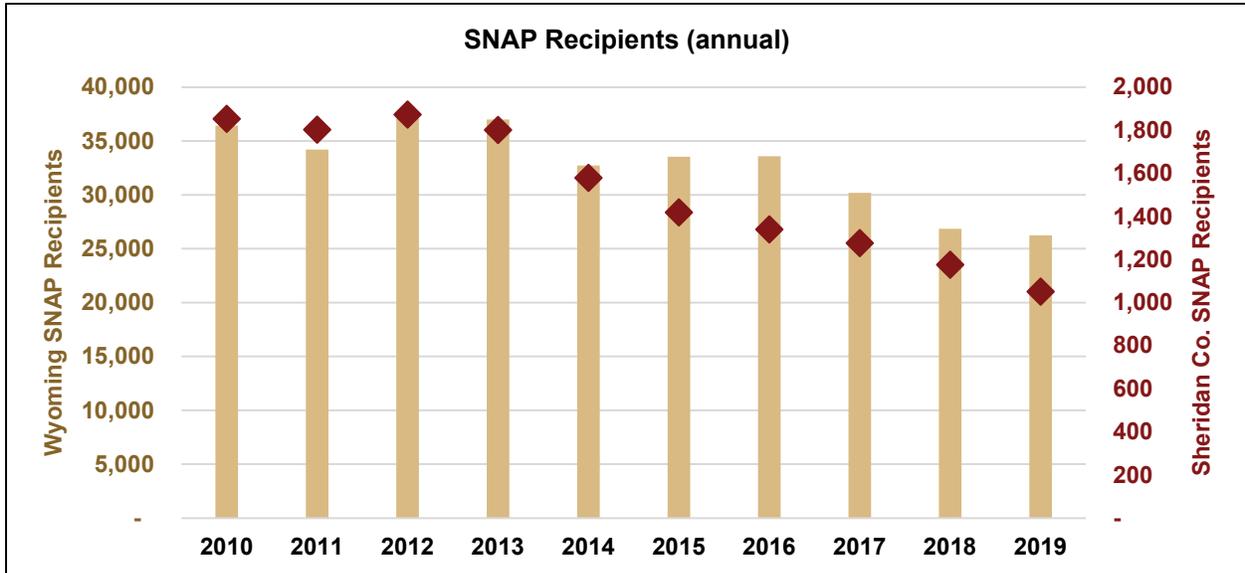
| Poverty status for the past 12 months of families | Sheridan County | | |
|---|-----------------|----------------|-----------|
| | All Families | Married couple | Female HH |
| ALL FAMILIES | 2.1% | 1.3% | 7.2% |
| With related children of householder under 18 years | 4.2% | 2.2% | 12.2% |
| With related children of householder under 5 years | 4.4% | 0.7% | 7.0% |
| With related children of householder under 5 and 5-17 | 2.7% | 0.0% | 14.0% |
| With related children of householder 5 to 17 years | 4.5% | 3.1% | 12.8% |

Sheridan County residents access food stamps via the federally funded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Locally, the focus appears to be on getting assistance to children and young families.

| FOOD STAMPS (SNAP) | USA | Wyoming | Sheridan Co. |
|--|------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Percentage of households receiving SNAP benefits | 11.7% | 5.4% | 3.5% |
| With one or more people in the household 60 years and over | 33.8% | 26.8% | 51.4% |
| No people in the household 60 years and over | 66.2% | 73.2% | 48.6% |
| | | | |
| HOUSEHOLD TYPE | | | |
| Married-couple family | 25.2% | 24.2% | 12.6% |
| Other family: | 42.9% | 39.6% | 33.4% |
| Male householder, no wife present | 8.0% | 10.2% | 15.0% |
| Female householder, no husband present | 34.9% | 29.4% | 18.4% |
| Nonfamily households | 31.9% | 36.2% | 54.0% |
| With children under 18 years | 50.1% | 52.8% | 40.5% |
| Married-couple family | 17.1% | 18.7% | 12.6% |
| Other family: | 32.4% | 33.6% | 27.8% |
| Male householder, no wife present | 5.3% | 7.3% | 13.5% |
| Female householder, no husband present | 27.0% | 26.3% | 14.3% |
| Nonfamily households | 0.6% | 0.5% | 0.0% |
| No children under 18 years | 49.9% | 47.2% | 59.5% |
| Married-couple family | 8.1% | 5.6% | 0.0% |
| Other family: | 10.6% | 6.0% | 5.6% |
| Male householder, no wife present | 2.7% | 2.9% | 1.5% |
| Female householder, no husband present | 7.9% | 3.1% | 4.1% |
| Nonfamily households | 31.2% | 35.6% | 54.0% |
| | | | |
| POVERTY STATUS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS | | | |
| Below poverty level | 47.3% | 48.0% | 40.7% |
| At or above poverty level | 52.7% | 52.0% | 59.3% |
| | | | |
| DISABILITY STATUS | | | |
| With one or more people with a disability | 46.1% | 50.4% | 53.5% |
| With no persons with a disability | 53.9% | 49.6% | 46.5% |

SNAP Recipients

More than 1,000 Sheridan County residents receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. This number of SNAP recipients is consistent with statewide trends for the last ten years, as shown below.



Free & Reduced-Price Lunch Program

According to the Wyoming Department of Education, there are about 1,150 students in Sheridan County who currently qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. This amounts to 24% of all enrolled students, which is lower than Wyoming's rate (28%). This number of students receiving assistance has been declining, even though total enrollment in Sheridan schools has increased.

Analysis of Core Issues

Improving Family and Individual Economic Security

By analyzing the core issues of family and individual economic security, this assessment seeks to identify the barriers for individuals to develop the skills and assets they will need to gain and keep family-supporting jobs and assets. Identification of community resources that can help remove these barriers is also critical.

- **Snapshot and trends of economic security/insecurity**
 - Sheridan County has approximately 1,726 residents living in poverty as of 2019, or about 5.9% of the population. This is a lower percentage of residents than the Wyoming average (11.0%), and much lower percentage of residents in poverty than the United States (13.4%).
 - The total number of residents living in poverty has declined steadily during the last 10 years
 - Sheridan County’s income levels have dropped in comparison to the nation and the state.
 - Sheridan County’s Median Household Income as of 2019 is \$60,807, which is 3.2% lower than the nation’s and 5.1% lower than Wyoming’s
 - Sheridan County’s Median Family Income as of 2019 is \$81,833, which is 5.9% higher than the nation’s and 2.6% higher than Wyoming’s
 - Sheridan County’s Per Capita Income as of 2019 is \$35,254, which is 3.4% higher than the nation’s and 5.7% higher than Wyoming’s
 - These income measures (compared in the following table) suggest that Sheridan County tends to have higher incomes and families with multiple wage-earners

| Income Measure | USA | Wyoming | Sheridan County |
|-------------------------|----------|----------|-----------------|
| Median household income | \$62,843 | \$64,049 | \$60,807 |
| Median family income | \$77,263 | \$79,782 | \$81,833 |
| Per capita income | \$34,103 | \$33,366 | \$35,254 |

- Unemployment in Sheridan County is currently at 2.1%, which is lower than the nation (3.9%) and Wyoming (2.4%). Translated into real terms, there are about 339 individuals (preliminary estimate) currently looking for work in Sheridan County. Unemployment is a huge driver of poverty, and Sheridan County’s low unemployment rates mean that very few workers face this risk.
- County’s home values are much higher than the nation and the state. High prices make it more difficult for residents to buy their own house. The median home value in Sheridan County is \$272,400, which is 25.2% higher the national median (\$217,500) and 23.5% higher than the Wyoming statewide median (\$220,500).
- Unlike home values, the median gross rent paid for living units is lower in Sheridan County and Wyoming than elsewhere. According to the Census/ACS data, the gross rent paid in Sheridan County for a monthly residential rental property is

\$836. Nationwide, gross rent averages \$1,062; in Wyoming the average gross rent is \$855 per month. Low rents keep the cost of living lower for Sheridan County residents and help to ease the impact of poverty. Local rent may be lower because of the high number of college student dormitories, HUD apartments, senior housing, and investment properties in Sheridan County.

- **Community deficits that threaten a more secure future**
 - Affordability and access to housing must be improved if Sheridan County wants its labor force to grow
 - On a related note, high utility costs place residents at risk
 - Unemployment rates are low, but this appears to be because many workers left the area to seek employment elsewhere
- **Individual and family assets and deficits**
 - Mental health services are the biggest need for local residents
 - Substance abuse prevention and treatment are also top priorities
- **Agency resources**
 - There are many resources available in Sheridan, though many have become more dependent on virtual delivery (particularly due to COVID)
 - There is a general lack of community awareness of these resources, including confusion about eligibility
 - Stakeholders could work together on to raise awareness and educate local residents about available services

Improving the Well-Being of Families and Children

- **Community, cultural, social, and economic assets**
 - Sheridan is home to several leading charities and philanthropic organizations, many of which contribute directly to local service providers
 - 24% of students (or about 1,150 students) are enrolled in free/reduced price lunches in Sheridan County compared to a Wyoming average of 37.3% (2021-22)
 - Sheridan County has 1,051 SNAP (food stamp program) participants (2019)
 - Sheridan County ranked third out of 23 counties in the 2021 County Health Rankings National Database in terms of health outcomes, and 6th for health factors
- **Community deficits that threaten a more secure future**
 - Affordability of healthcare (including cost of health insurance) is a common barrier
 - Behavioral health, including mental health and substance abuse issues, are top priorities for residents and stakeholders alike

- **Individual and family assets and deficits**
 - Pride and the visibility of living in a small town often hinders an individual’s willingness to walk into a helping agency
 - There are a number of households with special needs persons, including adults, who may not be receiving the individual agency support needed.
 - Continuation of strong senior support services will minimize the threat of poverty for the elderly population in Sheridan County

- **Agency resources**
 - Wyoming 2-1-1, which keeps a database on social service agencies throughout the State of Wyoming, is a little-known entity in Sheridan County and should be more visible
 - Working together, Sheridan County agencies should raise awareness and educate local residents about the resources available to fight poverty

Improving Community Economic Vitality

- **Community, cultural, social, and economic assets**
 - There is a great deal of support for senior citizens in the county – a great senior center, senior housing options (never enough), assisted living facility, and nursing homes
 - Low residential rents keep the cost of living lower for Sheridan County residents, and help to ease the impact of poverty

- **Community deficits that threaten a more secure future**
 - There are not enough multi-family units in Sheridan County (17.6% of all housing units), particularly those that are targeted to low-income residents. In contrast, other communities in Wyoming and the rest of than nation have significantly more multi-family housing units (20.5% and 32.1%, respectively)
 - While home values are high, the cost to rent housing is relatively low
 - More affordable housing is needed

- **Individual and family assets and deficits**
 - For economic reasons, many adults are sometimes living together in the same home, resulting in fewer traditional family units (but higher family incomes)

- **Agency resources**
 - Stronger collaboration with community organizations may help resolve the root causes of poverty in Sheridan County, particularly if mental health is a priority
 - More community education/awareness of how to manage one’s health may help improve outcomes for residents

Key Opportunities

- **Threats and opportunities**
 - Budget cuts will reduce already strapped social service agencies and their ability to provide much-needed services
 - Unclear what impacts COVID pandemic have had on poverty
 - There is an opportunity to raise awareness and educate local residents about available resources

- **Assets and resources**
 - There are good services available and good referral to those who can help – There seem to be good linkages among various providers of services and resources
 - There are statewide partners (Wyoming 2-1-1 and CSNOW) that want to improve the entire CSBG assessment process and delivery system

The community assessment report becomes a primary tool to inform Sheridan County's CSBG strategic investment decisions. Accordingly, it is not the final authority on the agency's decisions, though it does make recommendations. The assessment can serve as a dependable source of information, allowing others in Sheridan County to use it to support public presentations, decisions, and strategies.

Appendices

- **News Release**
- **Community Survey Instrument**
- **Stakeholder Survey Instrument**