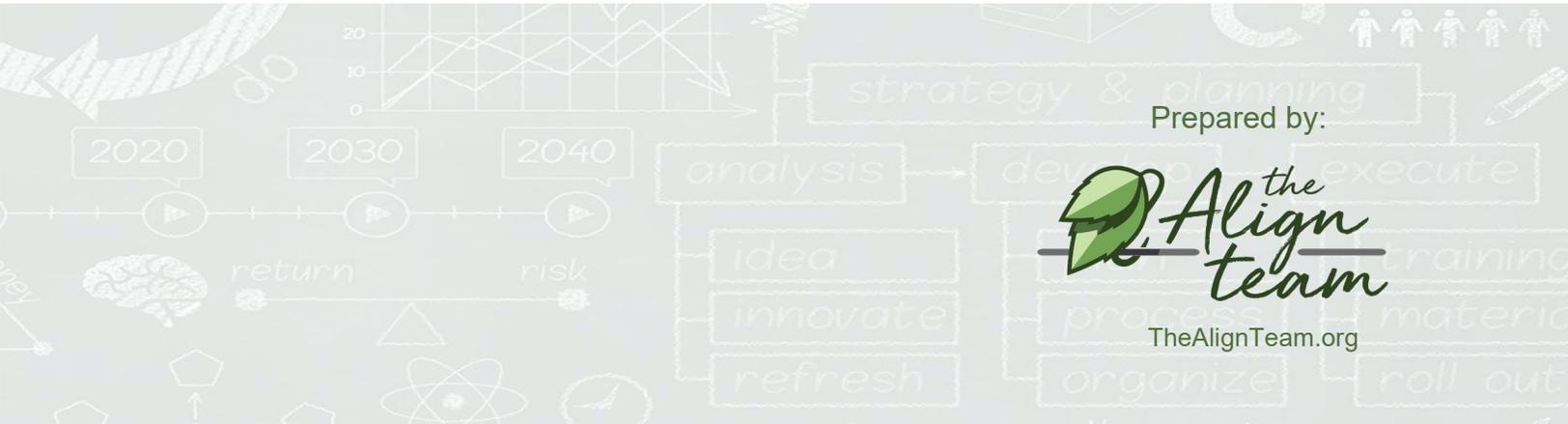


Platte County Community Needs Assessment

Platte County Tripartite Board: Project SAFE

April 2022



Prepared by:



TheAlignTeam.org

Platte County Needs Assessment

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Background

In 1964, Congress passed the Economic Opportunity Act as part of America's War on Poverty. This act created a funding stream for communities to address poverty on the local level. Today, each state receives Community Services Block Grant Program (CSBG) funds according to a statutory formula. In turn, states fund a network of local entities for the purpose of assisting low-income individuals and families with activities and support services that empower them to overcome the effects of poverty and to support their progress towards greater self-sufficiency.

The Wyoming Department of Health administers CSBG funds in Wyoming. Currently, there are 15 CSBG agencies in Wyoming, consisting of public and nonprofit entities. There are three national goals of the CSBG:

1. Individuals and families with low income are stable and achieve economic security.
2. Communities where people with low income live are healthy and offer economic opportunity.
3. People with low income are engaged and active in building opportunities in their communities.

Community Needs Assessments are a requirement of CSBG. The Community Needs Assessment is a systematic process for creating a profile of the needs and resources of a given community or target population. CSBG funding priorities are based on needs and resources in the community. Grantees are required to do a Community Needs Assessment every three years.

In Platte County, Project SAFE, Inc. is the CSBG grantee. The mission of Project SAFE is to provide assistance and support to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and other crimes through prevention, education, and social change. Project SAFE, Inc. contracted with The Align Team to complete this Community Needs Assessment.

Methods

This assessment analyzes and synthesizes many types of information including quantitative and qualitative data from multiple sources. Align collected demographic information, as well as data specific to poverty. Publicly available data was collected in the areas of cost of living, income, housing, food insecurity, employment, education, and health. All sources of information are noted in this report.

Align also collected data from Platte County residents through focus groups, interviews, and the Community Needs Survey. The focus groups were completed by Zoom video conferencing, occurring on January 21, 26, and 27, 2022. Align completed five follow-up interviews by phone and video conferencing, interviewing those who could not attend the focus groups and who represented different groups or geographic areas. Those who participated in the focus group or

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interviews include professionals throughout the community. We spoke with representatives from healthcare, mental health centers, low-income service providers, public officials, and education. The complete list of focus group participants and interviewees is at the end of this report. The Community Needs Survey was conducted online.

The following CSBG domains were utilized as the basis for the community survey.

- Employment
- Housing
- Education and Cognitive Development
- Income and Asset Building
- Health and Social/Behavioral Development
- Civic Engagement

In addition to the above topics, the survey included a question on support services.

The survey was open from February 14, 2022 to March 1, 2022. As an incentive for completing the survey, respondents could choose to provide their first name and phone number to be entered in a drawing for a \$100 gift card. These names and phone numbers were kept confidential and this information is not contained in any part of this report or in the survey results. There were 40 validated responses to the survey.

Following the Introduction and Key Findings, the report is broken into sections by topic area. In addition to publicly available data on each topic, most sections include findings from the focus groups, interviews, and surveys (hereafter identified as *perception data*). The complete survey results follow at the end.

Project SAFE and Align are extremely grateful to the people and agencies that contributed to this report. Without the information provided from agencies and the thoughtful input from residents of Platte County, this assessment would not have been possible.

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Key Findings

Based on our findings, Platte County's highest needs relate to:

- Income and Assets
- Employment
- Housing
- Healthcare
- Youth Development and Education

Platte County is a rural area in southeast Wyoming, with five small, incorporated towns: Wheatland, Chugwater, Guernsey, Glendo, and Hartville. Located along the east slope of the Laramie Range, Platte County is home to two state parks: Guernsey and Glendo State Parks. The communities in Platte County are known for their friendly and welcoming demeanor with many residents and visitors enjoying open spaces year-round and lake activities in the summer.

Focus group and interview participants described their communities as supportive, helpful, and tight-knit. One participant described it this way, "When there is a need, [we] come together strongly, especially in emergency situations." When asked about the communities' strengths, almost every respondent spoke about people helping their neighbors.

With that said, Platte County is an isolated, rural area with many needs. Platte County poverty rates are higher than the Wyoming average. While it remains below the national level, Platte County has averaged a slightly higher poverty than the state for the past decade. Median household income in Platte County is more than \$14,000 lower than the state median.

Like many parts of the country, Platte County is experiencing a worker shortage. Major employers like the Platte County Memorial Hospital and Platte County School District #1 are experiencing major staffing shortages, making the provision of services very challenging. The industry that employs the most people in Platte County is the local government, which has experienced a 6.3% decrease in employees in the past year and saw a decrease in average weekly wages.

There is a high need for affordable housing options in Platte County. With only five properties of affordable housing in Platte County and 40% of renters being housing cost burdened, Platte County residents are struggling to find affordable housing. Still, Platte County home prices remain below state average.

Medical care is also scarce in the county. While Wheatland does have a hospital, residents need to travel outside the county for any kind of specialty care. Veterans and the elderly are particularly burdened by the long distances required to receive medical care. Platte County also has a need for mental health services. The county does have some providers, but not enough to meet the demand.

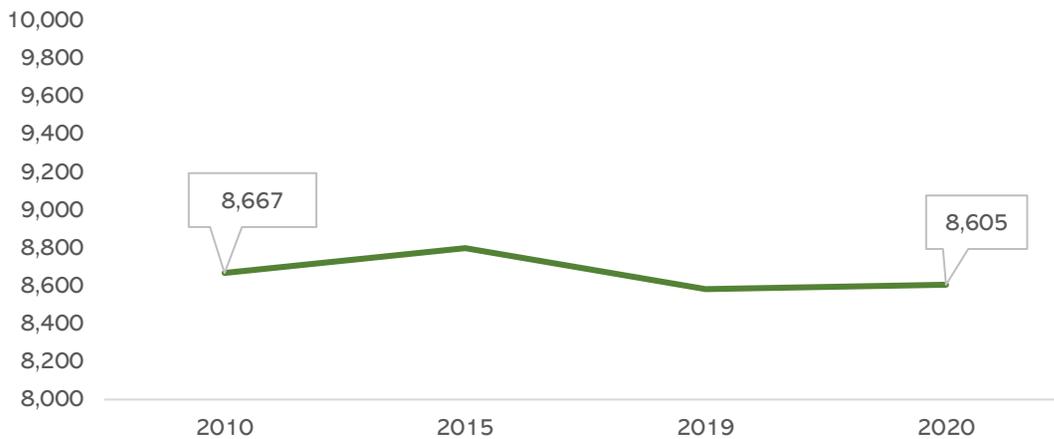
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Platte County graduation rates are below state average, childcare facilities are scarce (especially for infants under the age of 1) and costly, and there are few community/rec centers where children and teens can spend time. Platte County has a need for additional support services for children and teens.

Demographics

The population of Platte County is currently 8,605. The population has essentially stayed the same since 2010 (8,667). The population for the state of Wyoming increased overall by 2.3%.

Platte County Population, 2010-2020



U.S. Census Bureau – 2020 & 2010 Census, 2011-2019 Annual Population Estimates

Like all other counties in Wyoming, Platte County has a very low population density, with 4.1 persons per square mile, lower than the state average, which is 5.9 persons per square mile (2020 Census Demographic Data Map Viewer).

The county’s population is slightly older than the state average: 80.1% of Platte County’s population is age 18 and over, compared to the state average of 76% (2020 Census Demographic Data Map Viewer). The median age of residents in Platte County is 49.2 with 46.5% male and 50.4% female (2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables). Most Platte County residents (89.9%) are White, 0.8% are American Indian or Alaska Native, 0.2% are Black or African American, 0.5% are Asian, 0.1% are Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 2.5% are another race not listed, and 5.9% are two or more races. The percentage of people in Platte County who are Hispanic, or Latino is 8.1% (2020 Census Demographic Data Map Viewer).

Wheatland is the largest town in Platte County, holding about 40.3% of the county’s population. Other incorporated towns include Chugwater, Glendo, Guernsey, and Hartville.

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Population of Incorporated Cities and Towns

	2010	2019
Chugwater	212	201
Glendo	205	201
Guernsey	1,147	1,124
Hartville	62	60
Wheatland	3,627	3,462
All others	3,414	3,345

U.S. Census, Population Division – Annual Estimates of the Resident Population for Incorporated Places in Wyoming; 2010 Census, 2019 Population Estimates

The percentage of housing units that are occupied in Platte County is 82.2%, close to the percentage for Wyoming at 86.4%. The percentage of those living in group quarters (either institutional or non-institutional) is less in Platte County (1.3%) compared to statewide (2.3%; 2020 Census Demographic Data Map Viewer).

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Cost of Living

The cost of living is lower in Platte County, compared to the rest of the state. The State of Wyoming’s Economic Analysis Division produces the Wyoming Cost of Living Index (WCLI) Report biannually. The Comparative Cost of Living Index compares each county’s cost of living in one period to the statewide average (100). Price data is collected in Wyoming cities and towns and is used to build a Comparative Cost of Living Index by county. There are 140 consumer items surveyed and then aggregated into six categories. These categories are then weighted to reflect their overall importance in the average consumer’s budget. The categories and respective weights for the 2nd Quarter of 2021 are:

Housing	48.7%
Transportation	15.2%
Food	14.1%
Recreation & Personal Care	9.7%
Medical	8.9%
Apparel	3.4%

For the 2nd quarter of 2021, the Comparative Cost of Living Index ranked Platte County at 90 for all items, which is lower than the statewide average of 100. The highest category was Apparel at 113. The lowest category was Housing at 82. These values reflect relative price levels at the time of data collection, not over time.

Platte County Cost of Living Index

All Items	Food	Housing	Apparel	Transportation	Medical	Recreation & Personal Care
90	96	82	113	99	86	102

Wyoming Economic Analysis Division - The Wyoming Comparative Cost of Living Index: 2nd Quarter, 2021

Perception Data related to Cost of Living

Participants in the focus groups and interviews discussed the costs of food, housing, transportation, and medical services as barriers in their communities. Participants talked about the effects of inflation and the skyrocketing prices for food. The cost of housing across the county is a major concern. Many homes are selling very quickly at high prices. Many participants described the need for low-income housing and more affordable housing options.

Many participants also talked about the need to travel to larger towns for groceries and medical care. The need to travel longer distances especially affects residents of smaller towns (Glendo,

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Guernsey, Chugwater), who need to drive to Wheatland, Douglas, or Cheyenne for medical and mental health services. Even trips to the grocery store require a 20–30-minute commute one-way. The price of gas and transportation is a big strain on budgets. Focus group participants mentioned that many families are noticing higher prices caused by inflation, especially for groceries.

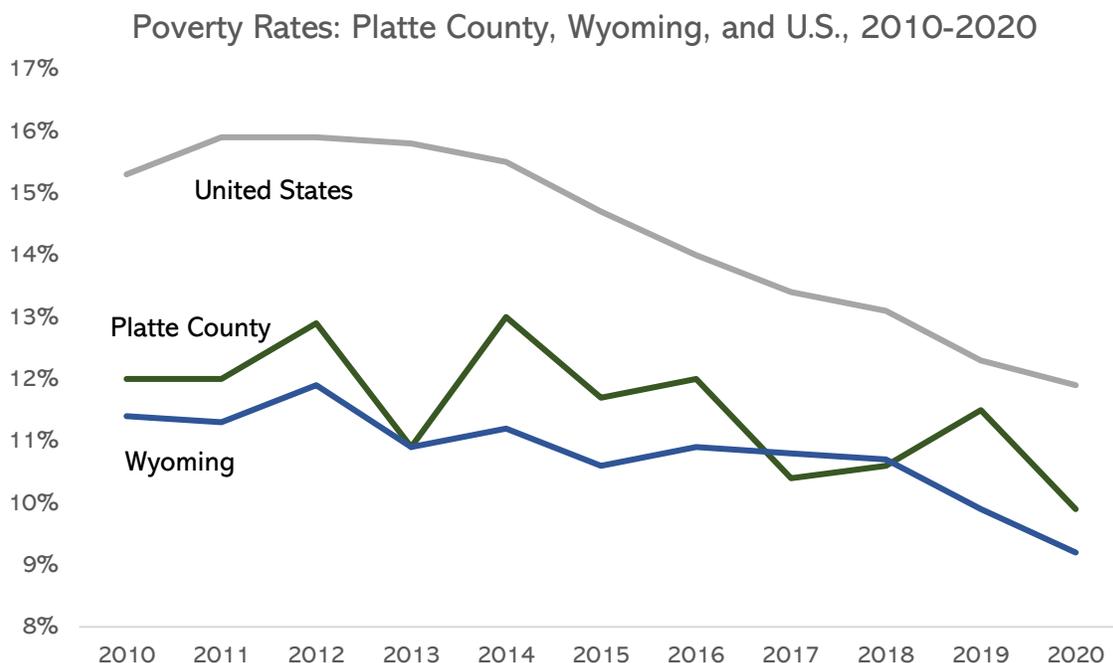
When asked if they have received financial assistance for particular needs in the past 12 months (fuel/transportation, rent/housing, food/nutrition, utilities, phone/internet, prescriptions, and personal medical alert), the plurality of survey participants (24%) reported receiving financial assistance for food and nutrition, indicating this may be a greater need for low-income families.

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Poverty

The U.S. Census Bureau reports poverty data from several different household surveys and programs. This report contains two different estimates: The Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) and the American Community Survey (ACS).

SAIPE are model-based estimates of income and poverty produced annually for school districts, counties, and states. The U.S. Census Bureau states “SAIPE estimates are specifically designed for use in annual Title 1 allocations to school districts. The SAIPE methodology combines the 1-year American Community Survey (ACS) estimates with other data sources to provide more timely, precise, and stable estimates than the 5-year ACS estimates.” SAIPE provides these estimates for the administration of federal programs and the allocation of federal funds to local jurisdictions.



U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE)

According to the SAIPE model, Platte County has averaged a higher poverty rate than the state for the past decade but has remained below the national average.

The ACS is an ongoing survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. It includes indicators related to society, housing, economics, and demographics. The percentage of people who are living below the poverty line in Platte County is slightly higher than the rest of the state.

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Poverty Rates for Platte County and Wyoming, by Gender, Age, and Race

	Percent below poverty level	
	Platte County	Wyoming
All population	13.9%	11.0%
Male	13.7%	9.7%
Female	14.1%	12.3%
Under 18 years	--	12.6%
18 to 34 years	--	16.6%
35 to 64 years	7.6%	7.9%
65 years and over	9.2%	8.0%
White	14.2%	10.5%
Black or African American	--	15.3%
American Indian or Alaska Native	--	23.8%
Asian	--	13.0%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	--	8.6%
Some other race	--	13.4%
Two or more races	--	14.1%
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	--	19.2%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	12.8%	9.6%

-- Denotes unavailable data due to small sample sizes.
 US Census - 2019: ACS 5-Year Estimates

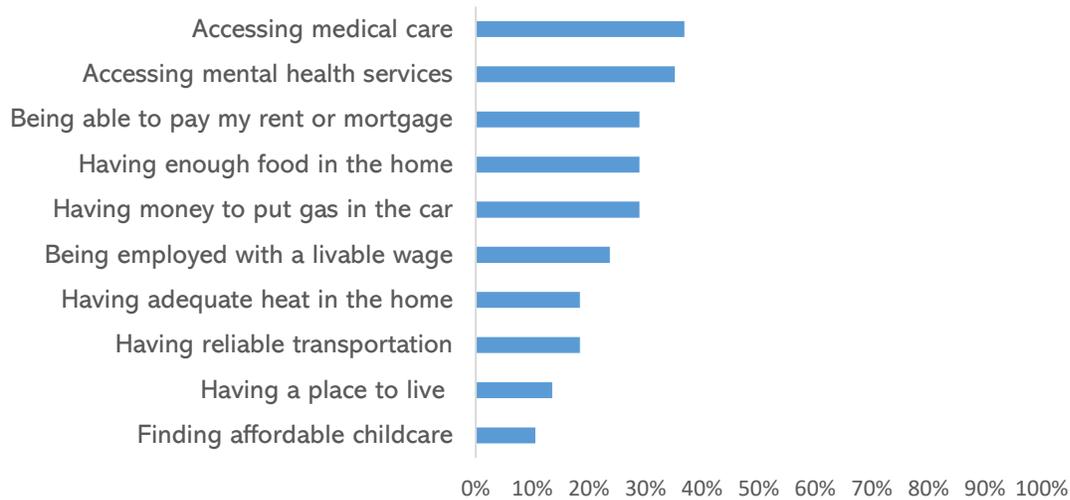
Perception Data related to Poverty

Participants in the focus groups and interviews talked about the cyclical nature of poverty; poverty prevents people from being able to afford a house and a car, which often prevents their ability to find a better job. Lack of financial resources impacts everything, including housing, food, and childcare. The small communities in Platte County do not always have sufficient resources and services. For instance, transportation was mentioned several times as a barrier. Most communities in Platte County have extremely limited public transportation, if any at all.

More survey participants revealed that accessing medical care and mental health services are difficult *most of the time* or *sometimes*, compared to other responsibilities.

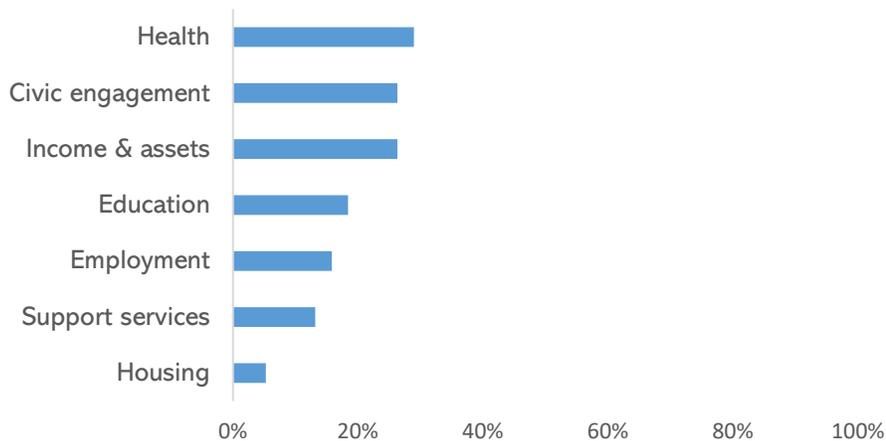
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Survey Results:
Percentage of Respondents Who Reported Things are
Difficult for Them



When asked what needs they had, survey respondents ranked *health, civic engagement, and income/assets* above other needs.

Survey Results:
Needs of Households

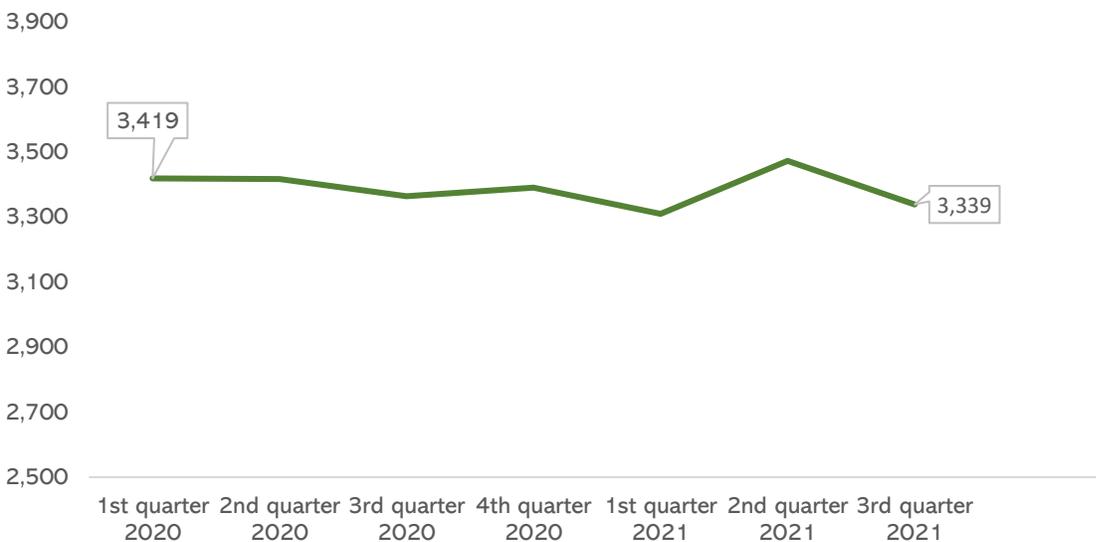


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Employment

According to the Wyoming Department of Workforce Services, Research and Planning Division, Wyoming's economy is starting to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. From 3rd quarter 2020 to 3rd quarter 2021, Wyoming gained 8,967 jobs, a 3.4% increase, and total wages increased by \$312,432,093, a 9.8% increase. On the other hand, Platte County's average monthly employment decreased slightly by 0.8%, but wages increased in that same period by 4.5%.

Employment in Platte County, by Quarter, 2020-2021

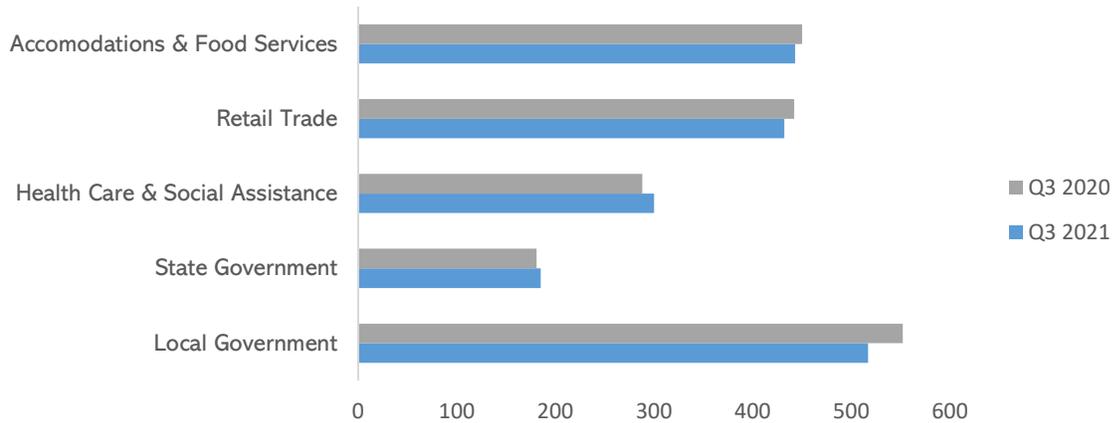


Wyoming Department of Workforce Services, Research & Planning – Wyoming Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

The industry that employs the most people in Platte County is the local government. Many industries saw a decrease in the number of employees from 3rd quarter 2020 to 3rd quarter 2021. The biggest drop (of the top five industries) occurred in the local government; going from a monthly average of 552 employees to 517, a 6.3% decrease. State government and health care/social assistance all saw *increases* in the number of employees.

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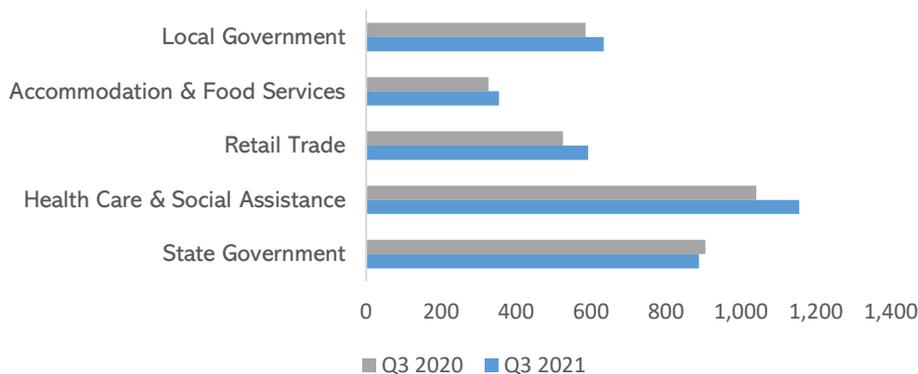
Monthly Average Number of Employees in Platte County's Top Five Industries, Q3 2020 & Q3 2021



Wyoming Department of Workforce Services, Research & Planning – Wyoming Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

Average weekly wages for four of the five top industries in Platte County increased from 3rd quarter 2020 to 3rd quarter 2021. Only state government had a slight decrease in wages (from \$905 to \$888).

Average Weekly Wages for Employees in Platte County's Top Five Industries, Q3 2020 & Q3 2021



Wyoming Department of Workforce Services, Research & Planning – Wyoming Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

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According to Geographic Solutions, Inc, within the above industries, the largest *employers* in Platte County include:

- Laramie River Station
- Platte County School Districts
- Covenant Lutheran Church
- Platte County Memorial Hospital

wyomingatwork.com

Perception Data related to Employment

A top concern for focus group and interview participants was the worker shortage. Many businesses are struggling to find employees. Participants suggested this was due to many reasons including families leaving for better-pay jobs elsewhere, retirement, health concerns related to COVID, and the concern of losing government benefits for a job that pays insufficient wages. One participant looked at the website for Platte County School District #1 and found that they have 16 open positions. There is also a need for more substitute teachers. Recruiting and retaining employees is a significant challenge for industries in Platte County.

Many job opportunities, especially in the smaller communities, are for part-time work and do not offer benefits. Many residents work outside their residential town (sometimes outside the county), making commutes difficult in winter months.

One interviewee discussed the need for more job openings for teens. One suggestion was for the town to hire kids (14 and up) to mow lawns or help the elderly. That way, basic needs are cared for while providing employment for adolescents who could benefit from keeping busy, especially in summer months. Also coordinating services to provide jobs for those who have physical or mental challenges would be mutually beneficial for employers and employees.

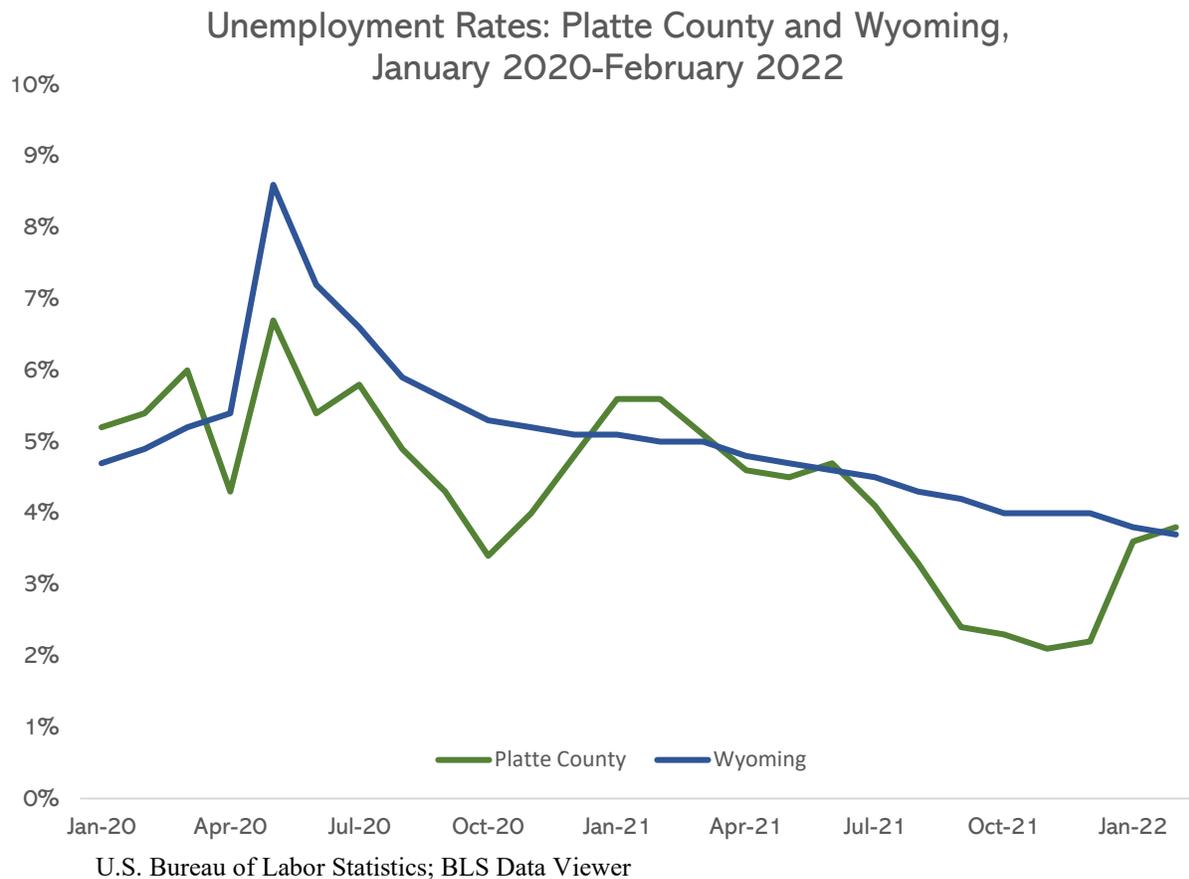
Most survey respondents (53%) reported that they have no barriers to employment. Of those who reported barriers to employment, 21% reported *physical health issues*, 21% reported that *pay is too low to support family*, and 18% reported *mental health issues*.

When asked what employment-related needs they have, the most common answer was *more jobs with better pay and benefits*.

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Unemployment

As of February 2022, the unemployment rate in Platte County was about the same as the statewide rate (3.8% vs. 3.7%, respectively). The statewide rate has had a continuous decrease since the pandemic-related peak in May 2020. The Platte County rate has been more variable but has generally been lower than the statewide rate.



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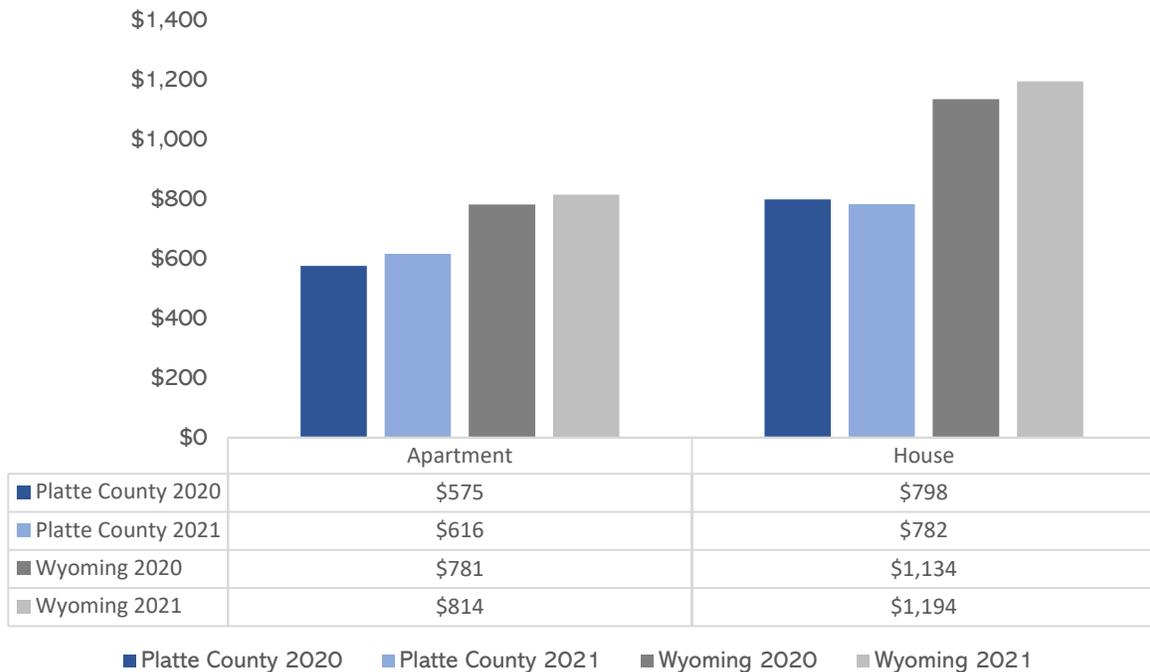
Housing

Rentals

The Wyoming Cost of Living Index (WCLI) produced by the Wyoming Economic Analysis Division reports average rental rates. The average rental rates reported in the WCLI are broken down by specific types of housing. Apartment averages are for two-bedroom, unfurnished units without gas and electric. Houses are two or three-bedroom, single family, and exclude gas and electric. Average rental rates are collected by pulling information from newspapers, online sources, and real estate companies that handle rentals. Income-restricted rentals are not included in the data, nor are any housing units located outside the city limits or in rural parts of the county.

The cost of renting increased in Platte County from the 2nd quarter of 2020 to the 2nd quarter of 2021. Still, rental costs are lower in Platte County than statewide.

Average Rental Rates, Platte County and Wyoming, 2nd Quarter 2020 vs. 2nd Quarter 2021



Wyoming Cost of Living Index - 4th Quarter of 2020 – Average Rental Rates 4Q20 & 4Q19 Wyoming Economic Analysis Division

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Housing Cost Burdened

Households that spend more than 30% of their income on housing are termed “housing cost burdened.” If you are renting, this percentage includes utilities. According to the US Census, American Community Survey 2019 5-Year Estimate: 40.3% of renters and 20.3% of homeowners in Platte County are housing cost burdened.

According to the website directory of the Wyoming Community Development Authority (WCDA), there are five (5) properties of various types of affordable housing currently in Platte County.

Multi-Family Housing

- Rock Creek Apartments – 12 units
- Platte Manor Apartments – 18 units
- M & A Properties – 13 units

Senior Housing

- Platte County Apartments – 28 units

Special Needs Housing

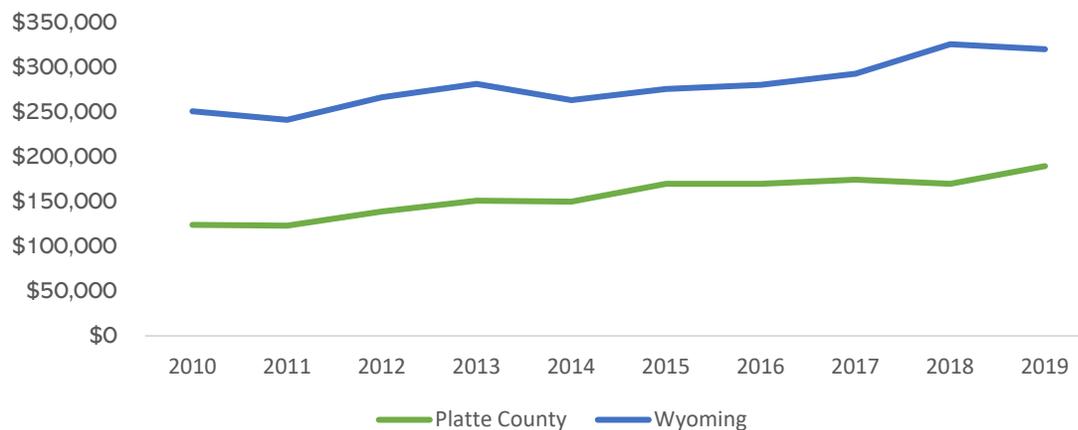
- Project Safe

Home Ownership

The *average* sales price for homes in Platte County is less than the rest of Wyoming. Additionally, the *median* cost of homes is lower in Platte County. This suggests that Platte County has a lower proportion of higher-end homes and a greater proportion of lower-value homes. In fact, 21.5% of owner-occupied units in Platte County are valued at \$300,000 or more, compared to 30.9% of these units in Wyoming. Overall, the median home value in Platte County is \$188,500, compared to the Wyoming median home value of \$220,500 (ACS 2019 5-Year Estimates). On the other hand, the *average* sales price of existing, detached, single-family homes in Platte County was \$189,623 in 2019. This represented a 11.7% increase from the previous year. Wyoming’s average was \$320,317, a change of -1.68% over the previous year (Wyoming Community Development Authority, 2021).

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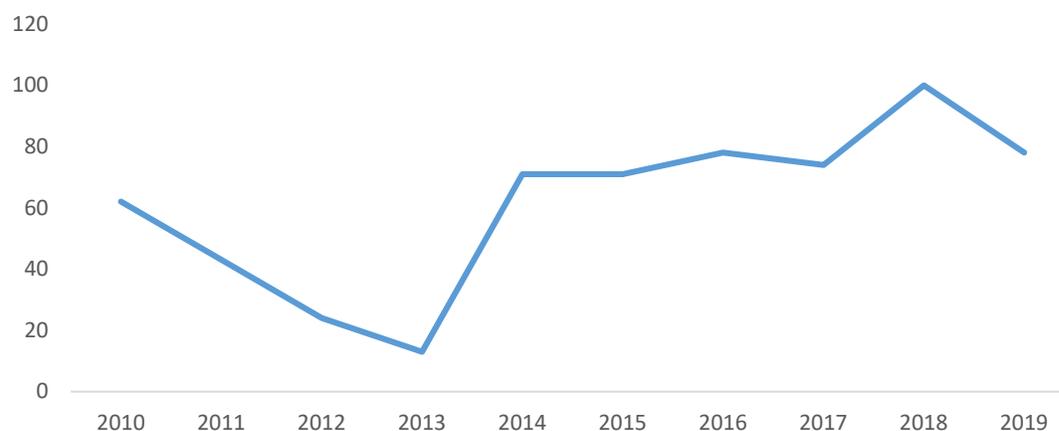
Average Sales Price - Single Family Homes,
Platte County vs. Wyoming, 2010-2019



Wyoming Department of Revenue, Wyoming Community Development Authority, County Profile (Final Report March 5, 2021)

The number of home sales has increased in the past few years in Platte County, from a low of 13 in 2013 to a high of 100 in 2018.

Number of Sales - Single Family Homes,
Platte County, 2010-2019



Wyoming Department of Revenue, Wyoming Community Development Authority, County Profile (Final Report March 5, 2021)

Of the 3,013 owner-occupied units, 1,504 have a mortgage. The monthly owner cost median is \$1,279 (ACS 2019 5-Year Estimates). The US Census includes the sum of payment for mortgages, real estate taxes, various insurances, utilities, fuels, mobile home costs, and condominium fees in the monthly owner cost calculation.

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Perception Data related to Housing

Housing was a major theme in the focus groups and interviews. Almost everyone mentioned that the availability of affordable, good housing is a major problem in the county. When housing prices are high, those who are lower income cannot afford a good home and sometimes end up with unsafe living conditions. Representatives from the school district mentioned that they know a few homeless youth, living in a camper and they are seeing a trend of more people living in RVs.

In the lake town of Glendo, the population soars in summer months, driving housing prices very high. In Glendo and other communities within Platte County, affordable housing is really hard to find and difficult to rent because of the high demand. Most communities have some low-income housing, but they are currently at capacity and they need more.

Focus group members talked about the need for emergency shelter, transitional housing, and long-term shelter in all communities.

Financial assistance for home repairs appears to be a need as well. Of survey respondents who experienced housing problems, 33% reported they *cannot afford to make need repairs on [their] home*. Similarly, 28% of respondents reported that they need *more programs to provide free home repair*. Other common answers included *more affordable housing* and *more income-based rental housing for those who are disabled or elderly* (both at 17%).

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Education

Platte County School District #1

There were 85 students in the 2020-2021 cohort. A cohort year is a group of students expected to graduate on time (4 years) at the end of the same school year. Of the 85 students, 68 graduated for an 80% graduation rate. A further breakdown is given in the table below.

Platte County District #1 Graduation Rates – 2020-21 Cohort

	Platte County #1	Statewide
All Students	80.0%	82.4%
Male	72.5%	85.9%
Female	86.7%	79.3%
Lunch Eligible*	75.0%	70.1%

*Students who qualified for free or reduced lunch
Wyoming Department of Education

All Students	Graduation Rate	Total # of Students in Cohort
Wheatland High School	83.6%	67
Peak High School	61.5%	13
Chugwater High School	66.7%	3
Glendo High School	100.0%	2

Wyoming Department of Education

Platte County School District #2

There were 13 students in the 2020-2021 cohort. A cohort year is a group of students expected to graduate on time (4 years) at the end of the same school year. Of the 13 students, 12 graduated for an 92.3% graduation rate. A further breakdown is given in the table below.

Platte County District #2 Graduation Rates – 2020-21 Cohort

	Platte County #2	Statewide
All Students	92.3%	82.4%
Male	100.0%	85.9%
Female	88.9%	79.3%
Lunch Eligible*	87.5%	70.1%

*Students who qualified for free or reduced lunch
Wyoming Department of Education

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All Students	Graduation Rate	Total # of Students in Cohort
Guernsey Sunrise High School	92.3%	13

Wyoming Department of Education

Education Attainment

Education attainment refers to the highest level of education that an individual has completed. This is different from the level of school the individual is attending. The table below provides the educational attainment levels and percentages for Platte County residents over 25 years old.

Educational Attainment - 25 years and over

	Percent
Population 25 years and over	
Less than high school graduate	6.8%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	38.3%
Some college, no degree	20.9%
Associate degree	11.2%
Bachelor's degree or higher	20.7%

U.S. Census Bureau – 2019: ACS 5-Year Estimates

Perception Data related to Education

Almost every town in Platte County has a K-12 school, although some of them are quite small. One issue with the education system goes back to the employment problem—school administrators are having a difficult time finding qualified employees who live in town or are willing to commute. For those who do work in the smaller schools, like Glendo, longevity is a concern because administrators and teachers alike move on to bigger schools after a few years. The Glendo school is also at risk of closing every year, causing concern for parents and staff.

Focus group participants discussed the idea of focusing on vocational and technical programs to replace tradespeople who are retiring. They have a need for electricians, plumbers, and mechanics. Participants expressed concern over poor student graduation rates, student success milestones, and college/career readiness.

Guernsey, Chugwater, Glendo, and Wheatland all offer preschool, and some are relatively new programs. Participants reported those programs are going well. Higher education is only offered in other towns or online. Participants did speak to the need of higher ed outreach from places like Eastern Wyoming College in Torrington (Goshen County).

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One interview participant saw a need for more consistent contact with students, especially through the summer. Many low-income students are in need of educational and social support. For many students, school serves as a lifeline providing daily meals and consistent structure.

Early Childhood Education and Childcare

There are three different licensing categories in Wyoming:

- Child Care Center – Care provided for 16 or more children
- Family Child Care Center – Care provided in a residential or commercial structure for no more than 15 children
- Family Child Care Home – Care provided in the provider’s own home for up to 10 children

In Platte County, there are only 4 licensed childcare providers.

- Piccadilly Play School LLC
- Platte County Daycare/Kids Kastle
- Wyoming Child & Family Development Wheatland Early Childhood Center
- Wyoming Child & Family Development Guernsey Early Childhood Center

Statewide Training and Resources Center (STARS)

It is important to note that Child Care Centers can be operating as a preschool and may only be offering limited hours.

Perception Data related to Childcare

Childcare was a concern for focus group and interview participants. They reported a lack of childcare options, especially for infants under the age of 1. Childcare is also quite expensive for many families. The cost of childcare often exceeds wages earned at entry-level jobs, making it impossible for parents to work.

Participants from every town talked about the need for more youth activities to keep kids occupied year-round. Besides school and some limited extracurricular offerings, there is not a lot of things for kids to do. Communities need an activity center or recreation center with organized summer programs.

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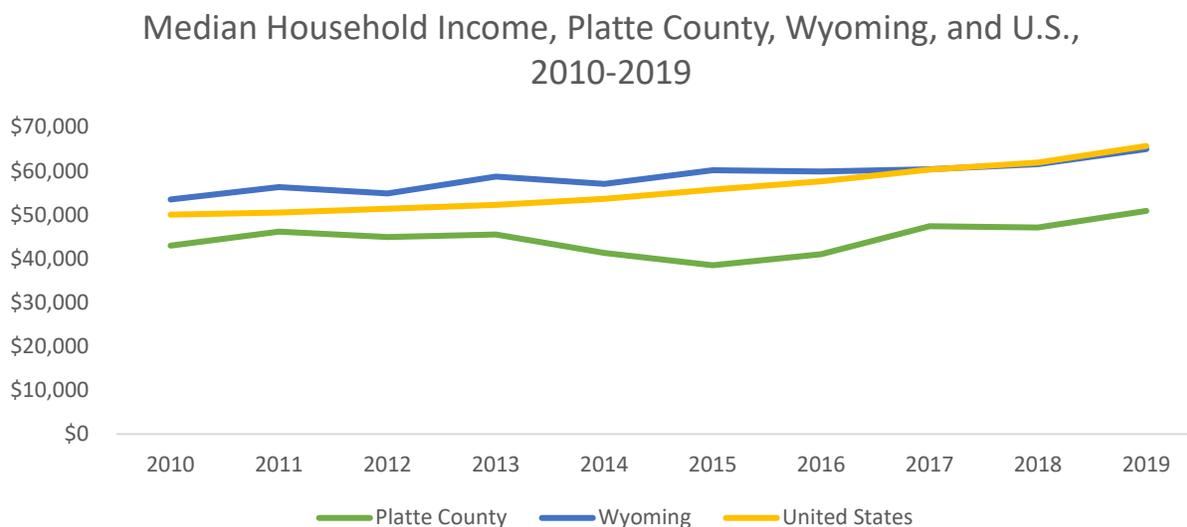
Income

In 2019, the median household income in Platte County was lower than Wyoming and the United States.

Area	Median Household Income
Platte County	\$50,903
Wyoming	\$65,003
United States	\$65,712

U.S. Census Bureau – 2019: ACS 5-Year Estimates

Platte County’s median household income is currently below the United States and Wyoming; while it has fluctuated the last 10 years, it has stayed below the state and national medians.



U.S. Census Bureau: ACS 5-Year Estimates from 2010 to 2019

Perception Data related to Income

Focus group participants discussed the need for financial literacy and budgeting classes. Ultimately, poverty comes down to a lack of resources, primarily income. The Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) has been a godsend to several residents in Platte County. The program has processed more than 100 applications. This has helped relieve some of the financial strains.

When asked what financial-related needs they have, survey respondents most often reported *more access to low interested loans (20%), information on how to access free credit counseling (14%), and more information on how to access financial resources (14%).*

Platte County Needs Assessment

Health and Social/Behavioral Development

The Wyoming Facility Directory, produced by the Wyoming Department of Health, listed the following licensed health facilities in Platte County:

- Platte County Legacy Home Assisted Living
- Platte County Memorial Hospital
- Platte County Home Care
- Register Cliff Rural Health Clinic

Health Rankings

For this Community Needs Assessment Report, the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps (CHR&R) program is being used as the primary source of information. CHR&R is a collaboration between the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. As stated on their website, “CHR&R program provides data, evidence, guidance, and examples to build awareness of the multiple factors that influence health and support community leaders working to improve health and increase health equity.” The county rankings provide a measurement of the overall health of each county in the United States. They also evaluate different measures that impact future health of communities. For example, high school graduation rates, access to healthy foods, rates of smoking, children in poverty, and teen births.

Health Outcomes

The overall rankings in health outcomes represent how healthy counties are within the state. Health outcomes are measured by length and quality of life. The healthiest county in the state is ranked #1 (currently Teton County). Platte County ranked 14 out of the 23 counties in overall health outcomes, landing it in the lower 25-50% of counties in Wyoming.

Length of life is measured by premature death which is years of life lost before age 75. In looking at Length of Life, Platte County ranked 20 out of the 23 counties. Years of Potential Life Lost is used to measure the rate and distribution of premature mortality.

The other component of Health Outcomes is Quality of Life. This is measured by the percentage of adults reporting poor or fair health, poor physical health days and poor mental health days. In addition, low birthweight is factored in. This data is provided by National Vital Statistics System. Births are counted in the county corresponding to the mother’s address on the child’s birth certificate, not the county the child was born. In looking at Quality of Life, Platte County ranks 10 out of the 23 counties.

Health Factors

Health Factors are the things that people can change to improve health for all. The ranks are based on four types of measures: health behaviors, clinical care, social and economic factors, and physical environment. Overall, Platte County ranked 16 in Health Factors. The four components and their rankings for Platte County are outlined below.

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Health Behaviors – Platte County ranked 11 out of the 23 counties. The areas to explore for improvement include:

- Adult obesity (29%)
- Excessive drinking (21%)
 - Alcohol-impaired driving deaths (34%)
- Physical inactivity (22%)
- Adult smoking (20%)

Clinical Care – Platte County ranked 19 out of the 23 counties. An area of strength was *uninsured* and *dentists*. One area to explore for improvement:

- Primary care physicians
- Preventable hospital stays

Social & Economic Factors – Platte County ranked 16 out of the 23 counties with no areas to explore for improvement

Physical Environment – Platte County ranked 6 out of the 23 counties. An area of strength was *air pollution – particulate matter*.

Health Insurance

According to the US Census Small Area Health Insurance Estimates (SAHIE) for 2019, 15.0% of the Platte County population under 65 years old are uninsured.

Perception Data related to Health and Social/Behavioral Development

When it comes to health, focus group and interview participants talked about the need to travel for medical care. Wheatland does have a hospital that is a good size for the size of the town, but residents still need to travel for any specialty care. Traveling for medical care is particularly hard on seniors. Finding qualified employees for the hospital is also a major concern and relying on travel nurses has proven to be quite expensive.

Poor access to healthcare particularly affects veterans. The closest Veteran Affairs facility is in Cheyenne and veterans with high needs (e.g., dialysis, oxygen, diabetes management) need to travel to Cheyenne for care. One person suggested having a VA representative travel to Platte County on a regular basis to assist with these needs.

Platte County has an aging population with higher medical needs. They need nutritional services, counseling, and social support. They are often on fixed incomes and do not have the ability to pay for these services, even if they were available.

Other concerns for participants were the number of uninsured and underinsured people in the county, the language barrier for Spanish-speaking residents, and communicating public health

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messages. Trying to communicate from Wheatland to the smaller towns in the county about the pandemic has been challenging.

Mental health services are extremely scarce in Platte County. The few providers in the county are at capacity and not taking new clients. There are no inpatient care options in Platte County. In fact, inpatient beds are scarce throughout the state. Representatives from the smaller towns (Guernsey, Chugwater) mentioned that the schools have counselors, but they are quite busy and only available to students. Participants suggested that some mental health providers from nearby towns might be able to travel to Glendo or Chugwater to see clients and help fill the gap of mental health services.

Survey respondents reported that they have a need to receive *help with health eating habits* (22%) and *more mental health help for youth* (19%).

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Food Insecurity

Feeding America, the nation's largest domestic hunger-relief organization, defines food insecurity as follows:

Food insecurity refers to the USDA's measure of lack of access to enough food for an active healthy life for all household members and limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods. Food-insecure households are not necessarily food insecure all the time. Food insecurity may reflect a household's need to make trade-offs between important basic needs, such as housing or medical bills, and purchasing nutritionally adequate foods.

According to Feeding America, the Platte County food insecurity rate in 2019 (before COVID-19) was 13.6% or an estimated 1,170 people. Feeding America has released data on how food insecurity may have increased in 2020 due to COVID-19. The projected overall food insecurity rate for Platte County goes up to 15.2% in 2020 and 14.4% in 2021.

Prior to the pandemic, the child food insecurity rate was 19.9% or 310 children. The projected child food insecurity rate for 2020 is 22.6% and 20.9% in 2021.

For comparison, in 2019, Wyoming's overall food insecurity rate was 11.7%. The child food insecurity rate was 14.4%.

Of the estimated 1,170 food insecure individuals:

- 44% are below 130% poverty and qualify for SNAP, free lunch meals, WIC.
- 16% are between 130% and 185% poverty and qualify for WIC and reduced-price school meals.
- The remaining 40% do not qualify for federal programs

Map the Meal Gap 2021. Feeding America, 2021.

Food costs in Platte County are slightly lower than the statewide average. Based on the Wyoming Comparative Cost of Living Index for 2nd Quarter of 2021, Platte County's index for food was 96. The statewide average is 100.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides monthly benefits that help low-income households buy the food they need for good health. According to the Wyoming Department of Family Services, for most households SNAP funds account for only a portion of their food budget. They must also use their own funds to ensure they have enough food for the month. According to the U.S. Census, 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates, only 427 (~5.0%) of households in Platte County participate in SNAP.

According to Wyoming Department of Education data for 2019-2020 data:

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- 29.39% of students enrolled in Platte County School District #1 are eligible for free lunch. 6.52% are eligible for reduced lunch.
- 27.13% of students enrolled in Platte County School District #2 are eligible for free lunch. 14.17% are eligible for reduced lunch.

According to the Wyoming Hunger Initiative website, the food pantries in Platte County include the Guernsey Community Food Bank, Platte County Commodities, Wheatland United Church of Christ Food Pantry, and Services for Seniors

Perception Data related to Food Insecurity

Stakeholders expressed concern over the high food prices. Wheatland does have a food bank, but it does run low on food, especially over the holidays. Chugwater does not have a grocery store. Focus group participants did mention the farmer's market in Wheatland in the summer. It is wonderful to purchase directly from the farmers. Overall, the cost and consistent access to nutritious food is a concern for Platte County residents.

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Community Needs Survey

The Community Needs Survey was conducted online. Project Safe distributed the link, targeting those who are low wage earners. The survey was open from February 14th, 2022 to March 1st, 2022.

As an incentive for completing the survey, respondents could chose to provide their first name and phone number to be entered in a drawing for a \$100 gift card. These names and phone numbers were kept confidential and this information is not contained in any part of this report or in the survey results.

There were 40 surveys completed. Only respondents who indicated that they live in Platte County are included in this number.

Where do you live?

Response	Percentage
Guernsey	51.22%
Wheatland	34.15%
Glendo	4.88%
Chugwater	4.88%
Hartville	2.44%
Other	2.44%

Answered 41; Skipped 1

Platte County Needs Assessment

Household Information

Including yourself, how many people live in your household?

Responses	# of responses	Response %
One	4	10.00%
Two	18	45.00%
Three	6	15.00%
Four	6	15.00%
Five	3	7.50%
Six +	3	7.50%

Answered 40; Skipped 2

Of those in your household, including yourself, how many are adults over the age of 18?

Answer Choices	# of responses	Response %
1	5	12.50%
2	27	67.50%
3	8	20.00%
4	0	0
More than 4	0	0

Answered 40; Skipped 2

Of those in your household, how many are children under the age of 18

Answer Choices	# of Responses	Response %
0	24	60.00%
1	4	10.00%
2	5	12.50%
3	4	10.00%
4	2	5.00%
5	0	0.00%
6	1	2.50%
7	0	0.00%
8	0	0.00%
More than 8	0	0.00%

Answered 40; Skipped 2

Platte County Needs Assessment

Which of the following best describes your family type within your household?

Answer Choices	# of Responses	Response %
Two adults without children at home	13	32.50%
Two parents with children living at home	12	30.00%
Single parent with children living at home	4	10.00%
Adult children living at home with one or two parents	4	10.00%
Single individual	4	1.00%
Extended family living together (aunts, uncles, grandparents)	2	5.00%
Other	1	2.50%
Grandparents raising children	0	0.00%

Answered 40; Skipped 2

Personal Difficulties and Needs

Mark what is difficult for you most of the time, sometimes difficult, or not difficult for you.

Answer Choices	Difficult for me most of the time	Sometimes difficult for me	Not difficult for me	Not applicable
Having a place to live	0.00%	13.51%	81.08%	5.41%
Being able to pay my mortgage	5.26%	23.68%	63.16%	7.89%
Having enough food in the home	5.26%	23.68%	71.05%	0.00%
Being employed with a livable wage	7.89%	15.79%	73.68%	2.63%
Having reliable transportation that meets my needs	0.00%	18.42%	81.58%	0.00%
Having money to put gas in my car	5.26%	23.68%	71.05%	0.00%
Having adequate heat in the home	5.26%	13.16	81.58%	0.00%
Accessing medical care	7.89%	28.95%	63.16%	0.00%
Accessing mental health services	8.11%	27.03%	48.65%	16.22%
Finding affordable childcare	7.89%	2.63%	15.79%	73.68%

Answered 38; Skipped 4

Platte County Needs Assessment

Mark up to three needs of you or your household.

Answer choices	Response %
No needs	39.47%
Health	28.95%
Civic engagement (participating in activities that improve your community)	26.32%
Income and assets	26.32%
Education	18.42%
Employment	15.79%
Support services (legal, youth abuse, transportation, etc.)	13.16%
Housing	5.26%
Other	0.00%

Answered 38; Skipped 4

In the last 12 months, have you or a household member received financial assistance for any of the following?

Answer Choices	Yes, one time	Yes, more than once	No
Fuel/Transportation	7.89%	10.53%	81.58%
Rent/Housing	2.63%	15.79%	81.58%
Food/Nutrition	2.63%	21.05%	76.32%
Utilities	5.26%	13.16%	81.58%
Phone/Internet	7.89%	10.53%	81.58%
Prescriptions	0.00%	15.79%	84.21%
Personal medical alert	0.00%	7.89%	92.11%

Answered 38; Skipped 4

Housing

Which of the following best describes your current housing situation?

Answer choices	Response %
Homeowner with a mortgage or loan	48.65%
Free and clear homeowner without a mortgage or loan	21.62%
Renter	21.62%
Living in a RV, camper, van, or other vehicle	2.70%
Living with others and not paying rent or mortgage	2.70%
Other	2.70%
Homeless	0.00%
Living in a shelter	0.00%
Living with others and assisting with rent or mortgage	0.00%

Answered 37; Skipped 5

Platte County Needs Assessment

How much is your monthly mortgage payment?

Answer choices	Response %
\$200 or less	0.00%
\$201 - \$400	5.88%
\$401 - \$600	5.88%
\$601 - \$800	11.76%
\$801 - \$1,000	5.88%
\$1,001 - \$1,200	35.29%
\$1,2001 - \$1,400	11.76%
\$1,401 - \$1,600	0.00%
\$1,601 - \$1,800	11.76%
\$1,801 - \$2,000	0.00%
More than \$2,000	11.76%

Answered 17; Skipped 25

How much is your monthly rent payment?

Answer choices	Response %
\$200 or less	12.50%
\$201 - \$400	25.00%
\$401 - \$600	37.50%
\$601 - \$800	25.00%
\$801 - \$1,000	0.00%
\$1,001 - \$1,200	0.00%
\$1,2001 - \$1,400	0.00%
\$1,401 - \$1,600	0.00%
\$1,601 - \$1,800	0.00%
\$1,801 - \$2,000	0.00%
More than \$2,000	0.00%

Answered 8; Skipped 34

Platte County Needs Assessment

Do any of these housing problems apply to you? Mark all that apply.

Answer choices	Response %
None of the above	62.16%
I cannot afford to make needed repairs on my home	10.81%
Bad credit makes it hard to find a place to rent	10.81%
I cannot find affordable housing to rent	10.81%
I cannot find affordable housing to buy	8.11%
I am at risk of eviction from home that I rent	5.41%
Criminal background makes it hard to find a place to rent	2.70%
I am at risk of foreclosure on home that I own	0.00%

Answered 37; Skipped 7

Mark up to three housing needs of you or your household.

Answer choices	Response %
No needs	58.33%
More programs to provide free home repair	27.78%
More income-based rental housing for those who are disabled or elderly	16.67%
More affordable housing	16.67%
More monthly rental assistance programs	11.11%
More grants to make home ownership and home rehab affordable	11.11%
More grants to provide services that reduce energy cost	11.11%
Increased availability of security/utility deposit programs	8.33%
More counseling resources for homeowners	5.56%
More community support for homeless families	2.78%
Other	2.78%
Increased availability of emergency housing (temporary shelters)	0.00%

Answered 36; Skipped 6

Platte County Needs Assessment

Employment

What is your current employment status?

Answer Choices	# of Responses	Response %
Employed, working full-time	28	75.68%
Employed, working part-time	3	8.11%
Not employed, NOT looking for work	2	5.41%
Retired	2	5.41%
Disabled, not able to work	2	5.41%
Not employed, looking for work	0	0.00%
Student	0	0.00%

Answered 37; Skipped 5

What is the employment status of the other adult(s) in your household? Mark all that apply.

Answer Choices	# of Responses	Response %
Employed, working full-time	18	48.65%
Retired	6	16.22%
Student	5	13.51%
Not employed, NOT looking for work	4	10.81%
Not applicable; no other adults in the household	4	10.81%
Employed, working part-time	3	8.11%
Not employed, looking for work	3	8.11%
Disabled, not able to work	0	0.00%

Answered 37; Skipped 5

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What are your barriers to employment?

Answer Choices	Response %
No barriers	52.78%
Physical health issues	19.44%
Pay too low to support family	19.44%
Mental health issues	16.67%
Physical disability	11.11%
No jobs available	5.56%
Childcare issues	5.56%
Other	5.56%
Learning/developmental disability	2.78%
Transportation limitations	2.78%
Lack of training, skills, or experience	2.78%
Criminal background	2.78%

Answered 36; Skipped 6

Mark up to three employment needs of you or your household

Answer Choices	Response %
No needs	61.11%
More jobs with better pay and benefits	22.22%
Affordable transportation to work and from work	13.89%
Work clothes	11.11%
Career information options	8.33%
Affordable childcare during work hours	5.56%
More training on job search strategies, interview skills, resume writing, etc.	2.78%
Other	2.78%

Answered 36; Skipped 6

Platte County Needs Assessment

Income and Asset Building

What is your annual income from all sources?

Answer Choices	Response %
No income	2.78%
Less than \$10,000	2.78%
\$10,001 - \$20,000	13.89%
\$20,001 - \$30,000	5.56%
\$30,001 - \$ 40,000	8.33%
\$40,001 - \$50,000	11.11%
\$50,001 - \$ 60,000	11.11%
\$60,001 - \$70,000	2.78%
Above \$70,000	41.67%

Answered 36; Skipped 6

Mark up to three financial-related needs of you or your household

Answer Choices	Response %
No needs	51.43%
More access to low interest loans	20.00%
Information on how to access free credit counseling	14.29%
More information on how to access financial resources	14.29%
Anonymous and confidential savings counseling	11.43%
Anonymous and confidential budget counseling	11.43%
More education on how to build assets	11.43%
More access to recreational resources	11.43%
More access to broadband	8.57%
Increased availability of public transportation	5.71%
Other	2.86%

Answered 35; Skipped 7

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Development

Mark up to three developmental needs of you or your household.

Answer choices	Response %
No needs	54.05%
Help with healthy eating habits	21.62%
More mental health help for youth	18.92%
Help for victims of domestic violence	8.11%
Help with reducing substance use	5.41%
Help with personal hygiene	5.41%
Other	5.41%

Answered 37; Skipped 5

Civic Engagement and Community Involvement

Mark up to three needs of you or your household related to community involvement.

Answer choices	Response %
No needs	55.88%
More knowledge on civic activities (voting, volunteering, etc.)	26.47%
More education on how to join neighborhood associations, community boards, advisory groups, or similar organizations	20.59%
Skills and knowledge to become a leader	17.65%
More citizenship classes	8.82%
Other	2.94%

Answered 34; Skipped 8

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Support Services

Mark up to three needs of you or your household related to support services.

Answer choices	Response %
No needs	62.16%
Life skills programs and services	18.92%
Youth services	13.51%
Meal programs	8.11%
Transportation services	8.11%
Emotional abuse services	8.11%
Legal services	5.41%
Substance misuse resources	5.41%
Sexual abuse services	2.70%
Physical abuse services	2.70%
Other	2.70%
Child support	0.00%

Answered 37; Skipped 5

Demographics

What is your gender?

Response	Percentage
Woman	89.19%
Man	10.81%
Nonbinary	0.00%
Not listed	0.00%

Answered 37; Skipped 5

Platte County Needs Assessment

What is your age?

Response	Percentage
Under 18	0.00%
18-24	0.00%
25-34	16.22%
35-44	21.62%
45-54	24.32%
55-64	32.43%
65+	5.41%

Answered 37; Skipped 5

What best describes your race and ethnicity?

Response	Percentage
White or Caucasian	83.33%
Hispanic or Latino	5.56%
American Indian or Alaska Native	2.78%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	2.78%
Biracial or Multiracial	2.78%
Other	2.78%
Black or African American	0.00%
Asian or Asian American	0.00%

Answered 37; Skipped 5

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Answer choices	Response %
Less than high school	2.70%
High school graduate	8.11%
GED or high school equivalent	2.70%
Vocational or trade school	10.81%
Some college (or currently in college)	24.32%
Two-year college degree	10.81%
Four-year college degree	5.41%
Graduate college degree	32.43%
Other	2.70%

Answered 37; Skipped 5

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What is the highest level of education of the other adult(s) in your household?

Answer choices	Response %
Less than high school	8.11%
High school graduate	18.92%
GED or high school equivalent	8.11%
Vocational or trade school	10.81%
Some college (or currently in college)	13.51%
Two-year college degree	2.70%
Four-year college degree	16.22%
Graduate college degree	16.22%
Not applicable; no other adults in the household	13.51%
Other	2.70%

Answered 37; Skipped 5

Platte County Needs Assessment

Focus Group Participants and Interviewees

Dana Bell, Billing Clerk, Town of Guernsey
Deanna Brant, Executive Director, Platte County Housing Authority
Jennifer Clark, Clerk/Treasurer, Town of Chugwater
Nicol Dahlstedt, ERAP Assistant, Project Safe
Mary Evans, Program Educator, Cent\$ible Nutrition Program
Ronda Evans, Director, Kids Castle Daycare
Brenda Hagen, Clerk/Treasurer, Town of Glendo
Merit Hartman, City Council Member, Town of Glendo
Pam Hebbert, Clerk/Treasurer, Town of Guernsey
Merry-Ann Keane, Chief Executive Officer, Platte County Memorial Hospital
Nellie Knight, Social Services Supervisor, Department of Family Services
Kari Magnuson, Counselor, West Elementary School, Platte County School District #1
Stephanie Marker, Counselor, Wheatland High School, Platte County School District #1
Essie McCall, Clinic Director, Volunteers of America
Lori Milnes, Center Coordinator, Wyoming Child and Family Development
Shawna Reichert, Executive Director, Platte County Chamber of Commerce
Liesl Sisson, Principal, Sunrise Academy Guernsey
Terry Stevenson, Emergency Management Coordinator, Platte County Emergency Management
Carolyn Teter, Executive Director, Services for Seniors, Inc.
Tania Trujillo, Licensor, Little Hearts Daycare
Doug Willadsen, Police Chief, Wheatland Police Department
Kim Yeoman, Employment Specialist, Wyoming Department of Workforce Services
Sara Zappa, P&R Program Coordinator, Public Health