

Community Engagement Profile:

Piscataquis County

2024



Introduction

The Maine Shared Community Health Needs Assessment (Maine Shared CHNA) is a collaborative partnership between Central Maine Healthcare, Northern Light Health, MaineGeneral Health, MaineHealth, the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Maine Community Action Partnership. By engaging and learning from people and communities and through data analysis, the partnership aims to improve the health and well-being of all people living in Maine. This is the fifth collaborative Maine Shared CHNA.

The mission of the Maine Shared CHNA is to:

- Create shared CHNA reports,
- Engage and activate communities, and
- Support data-driven improvements in health and well-being for all people living in Maine.

Community Engagement

In order to begin to understand how people interact in their communities and with the systems, policies, and programs they encounter we must build relationships and engage in ways that are mutually beneficial. Drawing on narrative and lived experience we are better positioned to identify the root causes of health and well-being behaviors and outcomes and not just what those behaviors and outcomes are. Qualitative data, resulting from community engagement, provides an important context for the health and well-being outcomes and trends contained in the numbers. In combination, qualitative and quantitative data produce a broader picture of what a community is experiencing and enable a more thorough and well-rounded approach to program and policy development.

The Maine Shared CHNA's community engagement included: focus groups, key informant interviews, and a statewide, community survey.

The Maine Share CHNA recognizes the need to work with communities to build relationships and trust to more respectfully, transparently, and meaningfully work together in an effort to continuously improve upon our community engagement processes.

This document contains a summary of key themes from the County focus groups and a comparison of the County level survey results to the overall Maine results. The Maine Shared CHNA's data commitments are outlined in the Appendix. The community engagement overviews, as well as additional information and data, can be found online at the Maine Shared CHNA's website – www.mainechna.org.

Populations and Sectors Identified for Engagement

Focus Groups

As part of the Community Services Block Grant reporting, the Community Action Programs are required to engage directly with the communities they serve, namely those of lower income. To meet this requirement, the Maine Shared CHNA hosted local focus groups with people with low-income in each Maine County. The focus groups also provide important information and insights to the experiences of people at the County level. Two focus groups were conducted in Aroostook, Cumberland and Penobscot Counties to account for their variation in population and geography. A focus group was planned and recruited for in Sagadahoc County; however, no one was in attendance.

We recognize that for many people, their lives and their health is affected by multiple aspects of their identity and lived experiences or their “intersectionality.” We attempted to recognize participants’ intersectionality by asking them to voluntarily share any other identities they may have. It should be noted the voices we hear in focus groups are not meant to be representatives of their entire identified population or community. The totality of focus group participants also identify as: a Tribal member, older adults, Non-English speaker, immigrant, asylee, migrant, Latino/Latine/Latinx, residents of rural, urban, and suburban areas, people with substance use disorder, people with mental health disorder, members of the disability community, people who are deaf or hard of hearing, people who are incarcerated or formerly incarcerated, people who are unhoused or experiencing homelessness, and caregivers.

Focus groups and key informant interviews were also conducted at the state-level with specific populations and sectors. The findings are outlined in the Maine Community Engagement Overview.

Statewide Community Survey

The Maine Shared CHNA also conducted a statewide, community survey on health and well-being. The survey was developed in collaboration by a small working group comprised of members of the Community Engagement and Metrics Committees, the Maine Shared CHNA Program Manager, and Crescendo Consulting Group, with final approval by the Steering Committee. The survey was open to anyone living in Maine. Respondents were asked to complete 40 questions related to the local resources and strengths of their communities and their own health and well-being and that of those who live in their community.

Focus Group

Number of Participants: 1

Top Themes

- Dental shortage
- Long drive times to see providers
- Mental health services for youth and adults
- Substance misuse
- Transportation

The following sections contain select quotes from focus group participants.

What does a “healthy” community look like to you?

- “Affordable and accessible healthcare”
- “Invest not only in our older population, but also in our youth”
- “Education and prevention are huge. We don’t teach how to be healthy”

What services and resources for becoming and staying healthy are difficult to find?

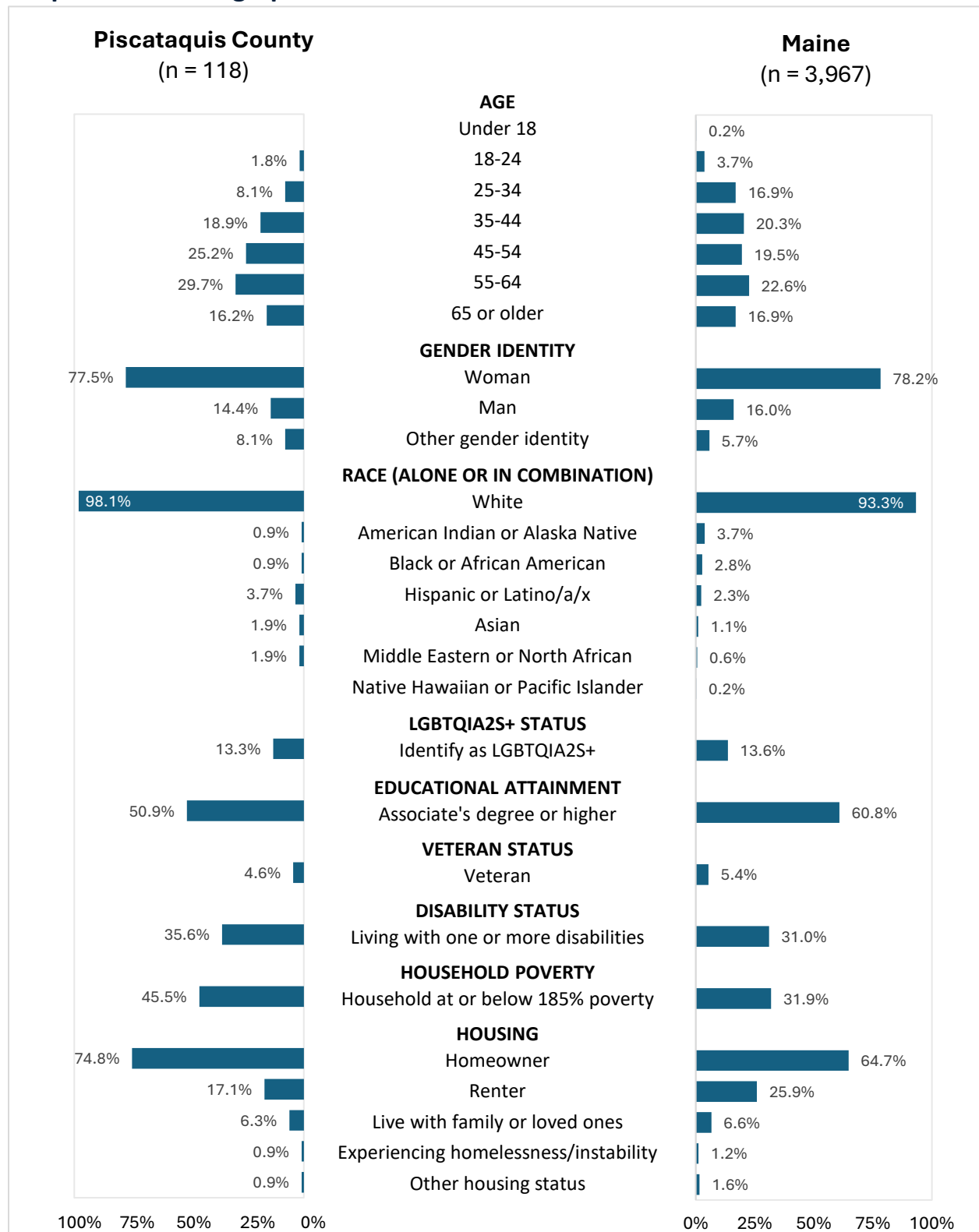
- “Dentists and therapists – it is absolutely impossible. I have lived in Medway for the past two years and after at least 50 phone calls, I found one two hours away and the appointment is for next year. My son needs the help now.”
- “Rural Maine has a drug issue and yet we have no access to alternative forms of treatment and pain management. I have arthritis in all my joints. I go in [to my doctor] and all I get is let’s give you more drugs. I want acupuncture or alternative treatments.”
- “There’s a pharmacy in Milo and we’re supposed to get one in Brownville. A lot of clients I work with get their medicines through the mail, but UPS only comes here once or twice a week so people who need medicines are potentially waiting more time to get them.”

What are the top three social or environmental health needs or challenges in the community?

- “The electric bill just keeps going up and up. Same with food and housing. Our salaries are not keeping up. Everything is becoming unaffordable. My electric bill is \$600, and I do not have that.”
- “I think houses are in really poor condition, like falling down. The town has bought some but doesn’t have the money to do anything with them.”
- “I’ve seen people on Facebook asking for childcare. I think grandmas take care of a lot of kids while mom works.”
- “A lot of people drive to work in Bangor to get jobs with [health] insurance.”

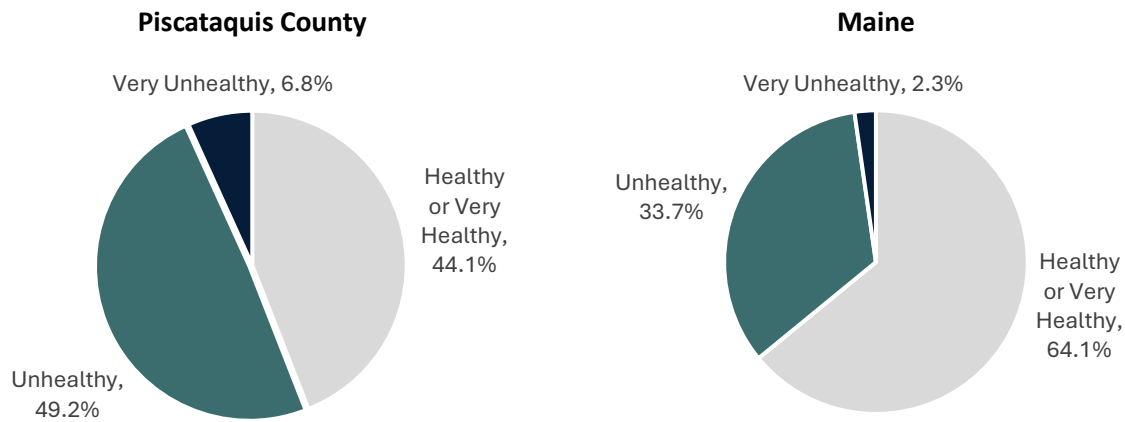
Community Survey

Respondent Demographics



Community Health Status

Overall health and well-being of the community where you live



Top 5 strengths of the community

Piscataquis County	Maine
1) Low crime	1) Safe opportunities to be active outside
2) Safe neighborhoods	2) Locally owned businesses
3) Safe opportunities to be active outside	3) Safe neighborhoods
4) Locally owned businesses	4) Schools & education for all ages
5) Strong sense of community	5) Low crime

Top 5 social concerns that negatively impact your community

Piscataquis County	Maine
1) Low incomes and poverty	1) Mental health issues (anxiety, depression, suicide, etc.)
2) Substance use (alcohol, cannabis, prescription drugs, illicit drugs, etc.)	2) Substance use (alcohol, cannabis, prescription drugs, illicit drugs, etc.)
3) Mental health issues (anxiety, depression, suicide, etc.)	3) Low incomes and poverty
4) Employment opportunities	4) Housing insecurity
5) Obesity	5) Obesity

Community Health Needs

Please indicate if _____ negatively impacts you, a loved one, and/or the community where you live.

Percentage of respondents who answered 'Impacts me, a loved one, and/or my community'

Piscataquis County		Maine	
Chronic health conditions (cancer, high blood pressure, heart disease, high cholesterol, etc.)	80.0%	Economic needs	76.1%
Economic needs	79.8%	Chronic health conditions (cancer, high blood pressure, heart disease, high cholesterol, etc.)	75.7%
Mental health needs	73.6%	Mental health needs	73.6%
Substance use	72.8%	Substance use	68.5%
Housing needs	63.1%	Housing needs	68.5%
Transportation needs	62.2%	Transportation needs	60.9%
Environmental needs	52.6%	Environmental needs	58.4%
Public safety needs	49.1%	Public safety needs	53.7%

Chronic Health Conditions

Please put a check mark if any of the following chronic health conditions negatively impact you, a loved one, and/or the community where you live. (Select all that apply)

	Impacts me	Impacts a loved one	Impacts my community	Doesn't have an impact	I don't know	Not applicable
Asthma, COPD, or Emphysema	19.0%	35.0%	32.0%	9.0%	11.0%	13.0%
Arthritis	43.0%	45.0%	33.0%	4.0%	9.0%	6.0%
Cancer	12.0%	40.0%	49.0%	5.0%	11.0%	11.0%
Diabetes or high blood sugar	17.0%	47.0%	44.0%	1.0%	12.0%	5.0%
Heart disease or heart attack	8.0%	43.0%	41.0%	5.0%	15.0%	15.0%
High cholesterol	27.0%	43.0%	28.0%	4.0%	15.0%	7.0%
High blood pressure or hypertension	26.0%	45.0%	35.0%	5.0%	11.0%	7.0%

	Impacts me	Impacts a loved one	Impacts my community	Doesn't have an impact	I don't know	Not applicable
Overweight/obesity	51.0%	41.0%	50.0%	3.0%	4.0%	10.0%
Stroke	4.0%	23.0%	34.0%	10.0%	25.0%	19.0%
Chronic liver disease/cirrhosis	2.0%	15.0%	28.0%	10.0%	30.0%	21.0%

Economic Needs

Please put a check mark if any of the following economic needs negatively impact you, a loved one, and/or the community where you live. (Select all that apply)

	Impacts me	Impacts a loved one	Impacts my community	Doesn't have an impact	I don't know	Not applicable
Availability of quality educational opportunities	23.7%	20.6%	69.1%	8.2%	11.3%	3.1%
Availability of jobs and employment opportunities	19.6%	25.8%	81.4%	4.1%	5.2%	2.1%
Availability of high-speed internet	39.2%	29.9%	61.9%	12.4%	8.2%	4.1%
Availability of quality, affordable childcare	9.3%	19.6%	70.1%	5.2%	11.3%	6.2%
Ability to contribute to savings, retirement	57.7%	40.2%	66.0%	3.1%	6.2%	1.0%
Access to affordable, quality foods	38.1%	32.0%	83.5%	4.1%	3.1%	0.0%

Mental Health Needs

Please put a check mark if any of the following mental health needs negatively impact you, a loved one, and/or the community where you live. (Select all that apply)

	Impacts me	Impacts a loved one	Impacts my community	Doesn't have an impact	I don't know	Not applicable
Anxiety or panic disorder	55.3%	59.6%	46.8%	3.2%	7.4%	1.1%

	Impacts me	Impacts a loved one	Impacts my community	Doesn't have an impact	I don't know	Not applicable
Depression	45.7%	58.5%	54.3%	2.1%	2.1%	4.3%
Bipolar disorder	11.7%	29.8%	37.2%	6.4%	22.3%	11.7%
Trauma or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)	39.4%	38.3%	47.9%	3.2%	10.6%	6.4%
General stress of day-to-day life	66.0%	50.0%	52.1%	1.1%	3.2%	4.3%
Social isolation or loneliness	30.9%	38.3%	53.2%	5.3%	7.4%	5.3%
Stigma associated with seeking care for mental health or substance use disorders	19.1%	25.5%	57.4%	9.6%	14.9%	6.4%
Suicidal thoughts and/or behaviors	11.7%	24.5%	50.0%	5.3%	21.3%	13.8%
Youth mental health	11.7%	28.7%	55.3%	7.4%	11.7%	6.4%

Substance Use

Please put a check mark if substance use negatively impacts you, a loved one, and/or the community where you live. (Select all that apply)

	Impacts me	Impacts a loved one	Impacts my community	Doesn't have an impact	I don't know	Not applicable
Alcohol misuse or binge drinking	9.2%	35.6%	80.5%	4.6%	3.4%	2.3%
Opioid misuse	11.5%	14.9%	81.6%	5.7%	8.0%	2.3%
Tobacco use	20.7%	51.7%	79.3%	1.1%	0.0%	2.3%
Vaping	10.3%	20.7%	72.4%	6.9%	4.6%	8.0%
Adult cannabis use	16.1%	29.9%	71.3%	10.3%	2.3%	5.7%
Other illicit drug use	6.9%	13.8%	78.2%	5.7%	6.9%	3.4%
Youth substance use	4.6%	14.9%	78.2%	6.9%	8.0%	3.4%

Housing Needs

Please put a check mark if any of the following housing needs negatively impact you, a loved one, and/or the community where you live. (Select all that apply)

	Impacts me	Impacts a loved one	Impacts my community	Doesn't have an impact	I don't know	Not applicable
Housing costs	44.4%	40.0%	77.8%	0.0%	5.6%	0.0%
Availability of affordable, quality homes/rentals	28.9%	32.2%	81.1%	1.1%	4.4%	1.1%
Availability of affordable, quality housing for older adults or those with special needs	16.7%	25.6%	77.8%	1.1%	11.1%	1.1%
Issues associated with home ownership or renting	35.6%	34.4%	72.2%	0.0%	7.8%	3.3%
Health risks in homes (indoor air, tobacco smoke residue, pests, lead, mold)	20.0%	25.6%	66.7%	5.6%	16.7%	4.4%
Homelessness and/or availability of shelter beds	2.2%	10.0%	58.9%	6.7%	25.6%	5.6%
Cost of utilities	52.2%	43.3%	80.0%	0.0%	1.1%	0.0%
Costs associated with weatherization	41.1%	31.1%	73.3%	4.4%	6.7%	3.3%

Transportation

Please put a check mark if any of the following transportation needs negatively impact you, a loved one, and/or the community where you live. (Select all that apply)

	Impacts me	Impacts a loved one	Impacts my community	Doesn't have an impact	I don't know	Not applicable
Access to transportation (for medical appointments, work, childcare)	22.0%	25.6%	81.7%	0.0%	4.9%	1.2%

	Impacts me	Impacts a loved one	Impacts my community	Doesn't have an impact	I don't know	Not applicable
Availability of public transportation (buses, trains, ride shares, taxis)	29.3%	24.4%	84.1%	0.0%	6.1%	1.2%
Availability of transportation that meets a variety of specific needs (older adults, physical or cognitive needs)	22.0%	23.2%	79.3%	2.4%	8.5%	0.0%
Costs associated with owning and maintaining a vehicle (insurance, registration, repairs)	53.7%	41.5%	75.6%	1.2%	4.9%	0.0%

Environmental Concerns

Please put a check mark if any of the following environmental concerns negatively impact you, a loved one, and/or the community where you live. (Select all that apply)

	Impacts me	Impacts a loved one	Impacts my community	Doesn't have an impact	I don't know	Not applicable
Air quality	16.3%	13.8%	31.3%	27.5%	30.0%	5.0%
Water quality	23.8%	15.0%	43.8%	16.3%	26.3%	3.8%
PFAS ("forever chemicals") contamination	13.8%	10.0%	52.5%	11.3%	33.8%	2.5%
Extreme weather events (hurricane, flooding, etc.)	26.3%	16.3%	60.0%	20.0%	11.3%	5.0%
Access to parks and green spaces for recreation	17.5%	13.8%	38.8%	35.0%	13.8%	10.0%

Public Safety

Please put a check mark if any of the following public safety needs. (Select all that apply)

	Impacts me	Impacts a loved one	Impacts my community	Doesn't have an impact	I don't know	Not applicable
Pedestrian (walking) or bicycle safety	16.3%	13.8%	52.5%	17.5%	16.3%	5.0%
Property crime	12.5%	7.5%	56.3%	10.0%	26.3%	2.5%
Community violence (gangs, guns, street crime)	6.3%	2.5%	20.0%	35.0%	32.5%	11.3%
Violence between people (domestic, sexual, bullying)	11.3%	15.0%	65.0%	8.8%	17.5%	2.5%
Racism	7.5%	12.5%	42.5%	17.5%	27.5%	6.3%
Discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, LGBTQIA2S+, age, ability, etc.	13.8%	17.5%	53.8%	15.0%	18.8%	5.0%

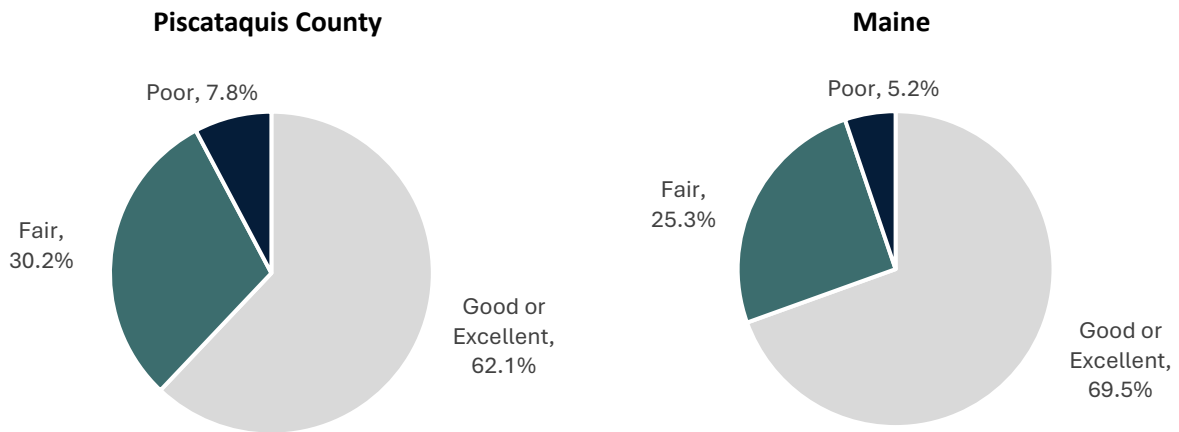
Socioeconomic Empowerment

Top 5 items rated by respondents as ‘very necessary’ steps to help move people out of poverty and to a place of housing stability & financial stability.

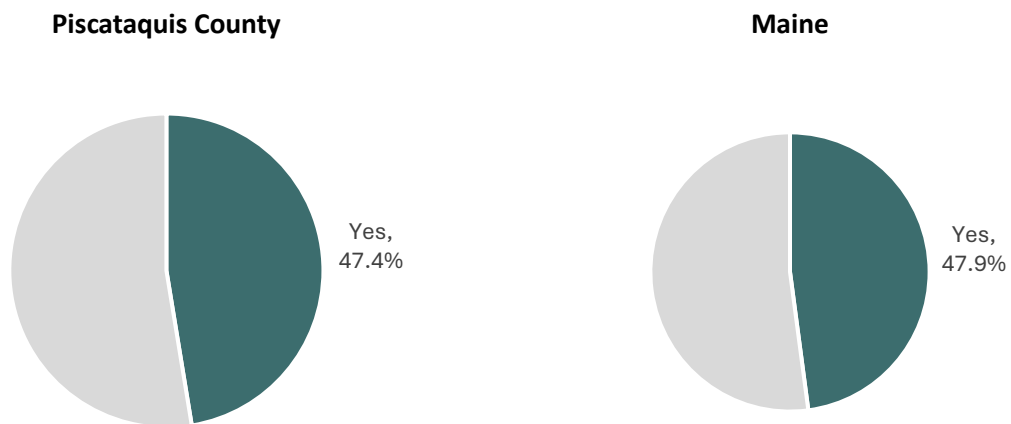
Piscataquis County	Maine
1) Jobs that pay enough to support a living wage	1) Jobs that pay enough to support a living wage
2) Affordable and safe housing	2) Affordable and safe housing
3) Affordable & available health care	3) Mental health care and treatment
4) Mental health care and treatment	4) Affordable & available health care
5) Reduction in substance use (drugs, alcohol)	5) Affordable & quality childcare

Physical Health Status

How would you rate your own physical health?



Within the past year (365 days), have there been 1 or more times when you or a loved one needed health care services but could not or chose not to get it?

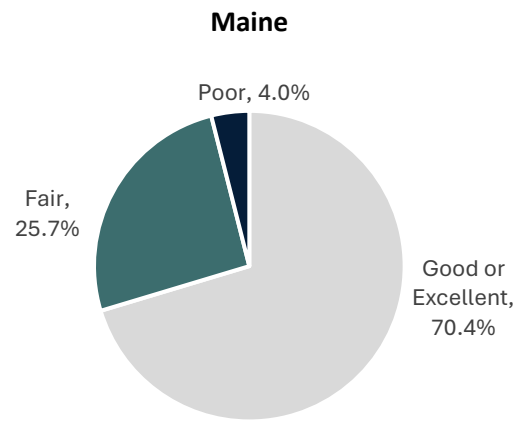
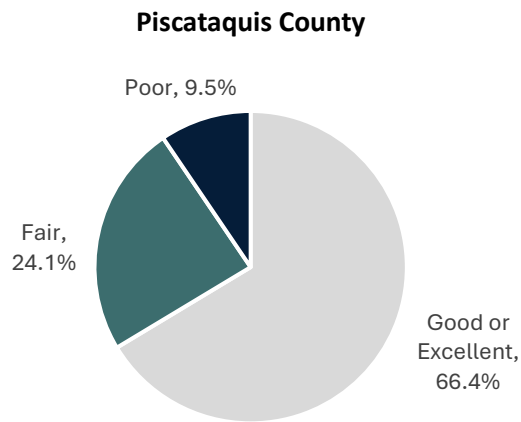


If yes, what stopped you from getting care when you needed it? (Select all that apply)

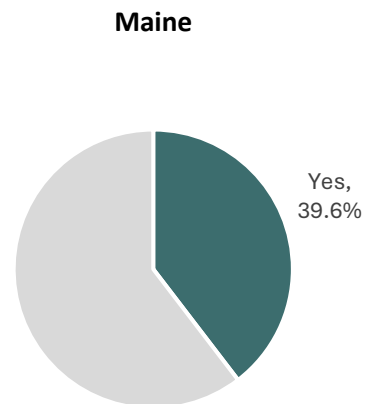
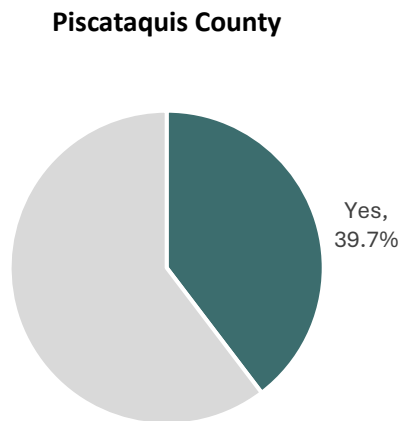
Piscataquis County	Maine
1) Long wait times to see a provider	1) Long wait times to see a provider
2) No evenings or weekend hours to get care	2) Had health insurance, could not afford care
3) Had health insurance, could not afford care	3) No evenings or weekend hours to get care

Mental Health Status

How would you rate your own mental health?



Within the past year (365 days), have there been 1 or more times when you or a loved one needed mental health care services but could not or chose not to get it?



If yes, what stopped you from getting care when you needed it? (Select all that apply)

Piscataquis County	Maine
1) Long wait times to see a provider	1) Long wait times to see a provider
2) Had health insurance, could not afford care	2) Had health insurance, could not afford care
3) Did not feel comfortable seeking help	3) No evenings or weekend hours to receive care

Acknowledgements

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We are grateful to our community partners and stakeholders who took the time to help advertise and recruit for our focus groups, both at the state and county level, and for our statewide community survey. Our utmost thanks also goes to all of the individuals who took part in our key informant interviews. Each of you enabled us to learn more about populations, communities and sectors in Maine. Without all of these efforts we would not have been able to conduct this aspect of our assessment.

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Appendix

Data Commitments

The Maine Shared CHNA uses a set of data stewardship guidelines to ensure data is collected, analyzed, shared, published, and stored in a transparent and responsible manner. Included in these guidelines is a commitment to promote data equity in data collection, analyses, and reporting. These include a commitment to:

- Correctly assign the systemic factors that compound and contribute to health behaviors and health outcomes rather than implying that social or demographic categories are “causes” of disparities. We will use a systems-level approach when discussing inequities to avoid judging, blaming, and/or marginalizing populations.
- Lead with and uplift the assets, strengths, and resources when discussing populations and communities, specifically with qualitative data collection.
- Acknowledge missing data and data biases and limitations.
- Identify and address important issues for which we lack data.
- Share data with communities affected by challenges, including sharing analysis, reporting and ownership of findings.