

Community Engagement Profile:

Statewide Overview:

Top Themes & Community Survey Results

2024



Contents

- Introduction.....2**
- Community Engagement2**
- Focus Groups and Key Informant Interviews3**
 - Community Strengths and Needs 3
 - Comparison of Identified Needs with Other Assessments 4
 - Needs By Population 4
 - Multigenerational Black/African American 6
 - Veterans 7
 - LGBTQ+ 8
 - Women..... 9
 - Youth 10
 - Young Adults 11
 - Migrant Populations (Immigrants, Refugees, Asylees, and Seasonal Workers) 13
 - Older Adults 14
 - Disability Community 15
- Community Survey.....17**
 - Overview 17
 - Respondent Demographics 18
 - Community Health Status 19
 - Community Health Needs..... 20
 - Socioeconomic Empowerment 28
 - Physical Health Status 29
 - Mental Health Status 30
- Acknowledgements.....31**
- Appendix32**
 - Community Engagement Process 32
 - Data Commitments 35

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 sixth 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 Shared 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 key informant interviews, statewide focus groups, and the statewide community survey. In addition, this document discusses the findings from the [2024-2028 Statewide Needs Assessment](#) conducted by the Catherine Cutler Institute, University of Southern Maine on behalf of the Maine State Plan on Aging, Office of Aging and Disability Services (OADS) and the [2023 Health Care Access Survey](#) conducted by John Snow, Inc. on behalf of Disability Rights Maine (DRM).

The Maine Shared CHNA's community engagement process and 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.

Focus Groups and Key Informant Interviews

Focus Group Participants: 31

Key Informant Interview Participants: 26

Community Strengths and Needs

Throughout focus groups and interviews with community members and stakeholders across the state, many individuals discussed themes that spanned across identities. These discussions focused on both the strengths and the needs of all people living in Maine.

Strengths

Participants discussed strengths as they applied to community members across the state rather than specific populations. These statewide strengths included:

- **Strong sense of community**
- **Increased use of telehealth and telehealth accommodations**
- **Creative public health initiatives**

“We all work together. If I couldn’t mow my lawn, my neighbor would do it for me - probably wouldn’t even have to ask [...] we all help each other out and that’s just how it is.”
- *Maine Shared CHNA focus group participant*

Needs

Across focus groups and interviews, participants discussed the needs of the community as a whole as well as needs specific to their unique population. The needs that were common across the state included:

- **Housing and housing support**
- **Transportation**
- **Healthcare access**
- **Social needs**
- **Health equity efforts**

“[...] the system has inequities and none of the people chose to be in the situations they're in. Collectively, we first need education to understand these challenges, [and understand the] impact of a lifetime of disparities. We need to get people out of individual mindset. [...] We need to look at the system to fix these things and then focus on individuals.”
- *Maine Shared CHNA focus group participant*

Comparison of Identified Needs with Other Assessments

Groups within the state of Maine have conducted multiple assessments on statewide needs for certain populations including the Maine State Plan on Aging Needs Assessment (SPOA Needs Assessment) ¹ and an assessment of health access by Disability Rights Maine (DRM).² These reports offer a comprehensive overview of the needs and priorities of their specified populations. These primary needs and priorities identified by these two reports overlapped significantly with the needs identified in this report as indicated in the following table.

	Housing	Transportation	Food and Nutrition Access	Healthcare Access	Social Needs	Health Equity
Maine Statewide Community Health Needs Assessment (Maine SCHNA)	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Maine State Plan on Aging Needs Area Agency Assessment (SPOA)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Equitable Access to HealthCare for Mainers with Disabilities Report (DRM)	✓	✓		✓		✓

Needs By Population

Focus groups were held with populations that are systemically disadvantaged to understand the needs of their communities. These focus groups included **multigenerational Black/African American, veterans, LGBTQ+, women, youth, and young adults**. Although the **migrant population** was unable to provide feedback in a focus group setting, many stakeholders and community members shared their experience regarding the needs of this population. Key stakeholders that work closely with the focus group populations were also interviewed to have a holistic understanding of the needs and concerns of these unique communities. The following qualitative matrix and report focus on population-specific themes identified by both focus group participants and stakeholders in the community. **Discrimination, healthcare access, and community resources** were the most frequently discussed across all groups, however each population often had its specific concerns within these areas. The needs of the **aging adult** population and the **disability community** are also reflected in this report, though this qualitative data was collected and reported within the SPOA Needs Assessment and DRM report. This data has also been included to identify overlapping sentiments throughout this report. The top themes and quotations that follow the matrix are a collection of information gathered through the focus groups and key informant interviews.

¹ Maine Department of Health and Human Services. (2024). *Statewide Plan of Action final report*. <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/sites/maine.gov/dhhs/files/inline-files/SPOA-Final-Report-2024.pdf>

² Disability Rights Maine. (2023). *Equitable access to health care for Mainers with disabilities*. <https://drme.org/assets/brochures/DRM-Equitable-Access-to-Health-Care-for-Mainers-with-Disabilities-Final.pdf>

Maine Shared CHNA Prevalent Needs by Population Matrix

	Prevalent Needs		
Multigenerational Black/African American	DISCRIMINATION Systemic racism Lack of representation	HEALTHCARE ACCESS Inequitable quality of care Cultural competence	
Veterans	STIGMA Internalized	HEALTHCARE ACCESS Mental & behavioral care	COMMUNITY RESOURCES Housing
LGBTQ+	DISCRIMINATION Societal	HEALTHCARE ACCESS Insurance coverage	
Women	HEALTHCARE ACCESS	COMMUNITY RESOURCES Childcare	
Youth	HEALTHCARE ACCESS Oral health Substance use	PUBLIC SAFETY Pedestrian and bike safety	
Young Adult	HEALTHCARE ACCESS Oral health Mental health	COMMUNITY RESOURCES Childcare Housing	
Migrant Immigrant, refugee, asylee, seasonal worker	HEALTHCARE ACCESS Language barriers	DISCRIMINATION & STIGMA Internalized Xenophobia	POLICY Employment
Older Adults	HEALTHCARE ACCESS Oral health	COMMUNITY RESOURCES Transportation Housing Food and Nutrition	SOCIALIZATION
Disability Community	HEALTHCARE ACCESS Communication Physical spaces Provider education Insurance coverage	COMMUNITY RESOURCES Transportation	POLICY Data collection

Multigenerational Black/African American

Top Themes

- Discrimination, including systemic racism and lack of representation
- Healthcare Access, including equity and cultural competence

The following section includes select quotes from focus group participants and interviewees:

Systemic racism

“It's easy to see homogeneous [white] Maine if you don't know any better. There's a wide range of health needs in the community due to diversity, and we need to work harder to reach the most vulnerable because they're spread out.”

“The acknowledgement that there is an issue has been good. The challenge has been that the level of investment in community pales in comparison to long historical underinvestment in these communities, especially for the multigenerational Black community.”

“Until we get to a place where our [morbidity and mortality] numbers are going down and our health is going up, there's a reason why we don't seek a counselor or get help for substance abuse, it's because of systemic racism in our healthcare system.”

“There's so much research on the wage gap, especially with Black women which comes with the ability to buy healthy food, take time off work, choose where you live. And folks who are underemployed don't have the ability to move up the ladder.”

Lack of Representation

“Our biggest need is to be represented and prioritized in process and policies related to [social drivers of health].”

“I would make sure that state health policy and procedures were revamped so that they were built with the most marginalized and vulnerable in mind and that programs and initiatives were designed to address that population first and foremost and that funding would reflect those priorities.”

“If the state continues to push down how race and ethnicity is considered in mechanisms, strategies, and programs, then you get to a point where its meaningless.”

Equity

“We had a white doula because I knew stepping into the room diminished our outcomes. I've come to terms with the fact that me being in a room diminishes the outcomes of my partner and my soon to be child.”

“There is a mistrust in the Black community with the healthcare system due to prior injustices...”

Cultural Competence

[It is important that medical providers,] “have cultural fluency and medical knowledge to understand how black women's bodies and health issues are different than white women.”

“When I go to a dermatologist, I’m looking for help to save things that matter to me. Hair is a thing for us - it’s been vilified, laws about what we can do with our hair. I’m looking for help to save aspects of my identity that are important to me [...] Those things are mitigated if you’re viewed as a whole person.”

“The long game is to reduce unnecessary barriers that prevent more people of color from going into these professions in the first instance. When you are in the process of being trained, having cultural competency be prioritized and included from day one is really important. If issues of race and ethnicity are included in training and education from day one, it gives multiple opportunities for individuals to be sensitive to issue and aware of how it may manifest in different areas of practice.”

“I would procure a greater number of healthcare providers of all backgrounds fitting the populations of the communities they're in.”

Veterans

Top Themes

- Internalized Stigma
- Healthcare Access
- Mental and behavioral health
- Housing

The following section includes select quotes from focus group participants and interviewees:

Internalized Stigma

“A lot of veterans won't ask for help. Think they can do it themselves.”

“People feel ‘I don't want to take a resource from other people to use for myself.’”

“I used to think this way. Recently, I was shown the more people that apply for benefits, the more that is available for everyone.”

“That was my attitude for many years, ‘I can take care of myself. The VA is for someone who can't afford it.’ Once I had access to the care, that's what made it easier for me. I earned it.”

Healthcare Access

“At Togus it is easy. For others, it is not so easy. Especially for the older people who can't drive.” Another shared, “My dad is disabled vet. He's able to use telehealth for his appointments, otherwise he has to go down to Augusta, Bangor, Caribou. Some people can't travel all over to get the care they need.”

“There are some support systems, but they’re in the city or the big veterans’ home is in Augusta, which is a good hundred miles away and is only good if you can get in.”

“Too many veterans don't reach out to get help, so lack of awareness of available support. Even if they do reach out, there are too few practitioners.”

Mental and Behavioral Health

[Needs within the veteran population are,] “different than issues affecting the civilian community who haven't been asked to do the unthinkable.”

“Vets are more likely to open up to other vets rather than civilian therapists [...] this is a barrier for people to get care...mental health providers who are vets, or understand vets” would be beneficial.

“If you need extensive [substance use disorder] services you need to go out of state.”

Housing

“I was homeless on and off three years. A worker for Togus picked me up at the shelter and offered to bring me here. Most of us pay 30% of our income and that includes everything. We need more stuff like this.”

“I would only leave for two reasons: to go to a nursing home or to die. I could not afford somewhere else.”

LGBTQ+

Top Themes

- Discrimination
- Insurance Coverage

The following section includes select quotes from focus group participants and interviewees:

Discrimination

“The healthcare system is not adequate or trauma-informed through race, class, cultural-socioeconomic lens especially for severely radicalized and violent incidents.”

“People shouldn't call services and be told they're too traumatized for services which leaves them to dysfunctional coping strategies.”

“They're talking about mental health issues but not addressing roots of violence, so leaving nonviolent people with mental health needs at risk.”

Insurance Coverage

“This is literally a life and death matter – we need to figure out how to get people healthcare.”

Women

Top Themes

- Healthcare Access
- Childcare

The following section includes select quotes from focus group participants and interviewees:

Healthcare Access

“I was seeing a provider last month, she wasn't working or listening to me [...] so I was transferred to new provider, and I'd have to wait five months to see a new OB-GYN. But I was dealing with women's health issues at the time and needed to see someone and it took me six phone calls before someone got me in to see an interim doctor.”

“Some services have been closed. Some practices aren't willing to see patients who won't be there throughout their pregnancy [...] never mind if providers understand the language and culture.”

Childcare

“Childcare is really expensive. My sister stopped working for two years because it was cheaper for her to stop working than for her to use daycare.”

“There are some nice and affordable options, but long wait lists, like two years. A lot of people choose to stay home or use relatives to watch kids; Childcare is very much needed.”

“Childcare is hard to find. Language plays a big piece for kids who don't speak or understand English. Hard to even be placed on a wait list - they won't get a translator.”

“[We need] treatment supports for moms. If you need to be separated from their child, they would not get the treatment, especially for parents who have substance abuse issues for treatment programs. Hard to go to treatment if you don't have childcare.”

Youth

Top Themes

- Oral Care
- Substance Use
- Pedestrian and Bike Safety

The following section includes select quotes from focus group participants and interviewees:

Oral Care

“Dental disease is the #1 most common preventable disease in kids. Starting early preventive care is key. Access to preventive oral care for all members of the family, because bacteria are transmitted among family members.”

“Dentists don't get enough peds training. We need more hygienists to do cleanings for prevention. Even if there were enough, providers aren't accessible. We should integrate into primary care more; some primary care providers are doing dental screenings.”

“[We need an] army of hygienists out in communities: public health hygienists to work in territories, with at least one covering each county or region. They could train primary care providers and others on dental care.”

Substance Use

“A lot of young people are getting crushed by drugs, and many young people don't have alternatives to substance abuse, no other passion in life or something they've been really good at, or it's been overshadowed by substance abuse. Once addiction sets in, you're not open to other opportunities. What works? Prevention.”

“Vaping is a serious health issue for kids that are still developing, and their brains are still developing.”

“Smoking in general, weed, that was something I used to use and in the moment it was good and then when I was done I was not feeling the best and this impacts people's mental health.”

“Youth treatment for substance abuse is lacking. There is a screening and intervention program in school-based health centers called SBIRT, but when youth screen for severe substance abuse issues they have to wait at least 6 months to receive treatment. Intermediate programs for some support but it's really a waiting game – there are not enough beds for kids that need help. It feels hopeless to parents because there's nowhere to go.”

“If a young person is already in a space where they need treatment, a peer may be beneficial. People in recovery don't generally go into schools because it can be more harmful than helpful. But in other cases, it may help and the state is starting to put more money into peer support.”

Pedestrian and Bike Safety

“People that are stopping to let people go on crosswalks. This is a big thing where I live, cars just don't stop.”

“Watching out for people. There are lot of bikers and you are supposed to go around them and people just drive right next to them.”

Young Adults

Top Themes

- Oral Health
- Mental Health
- Childcare
- Housing

The following section includes select quotes from focus group participants and interviewees:

Oral Health

“We don't have a lot of dental care places that you can get into as a new patient. When we moved here I had a pediatric dentist but I don't qualify for that anymore and I can't get into one.”

Mental Health

“I feel like growing up in the school systems, you're told you can get help with mental health but they don't say where.”

“I feel like people also don't know what are 'mental health problems' they should be aware of. Like they might be experiencing something and not even know it's something they need help from.”

“I feel like we can empathize with somebody but we can't help them. We can say 'you should go there to get help' instead of coaching them through that. We're missing the middle step to talk to them and get them comfortable to go get help.”

Childcare

“Everybody's looking for a daycare. We might have two or three good ones that people say. But I feel like I hear people always say they need a daycare – like a business and not someone's house.”

Housing

“Housing is hard for someone my age. You can't afford a house when you're in college. I think the prices are always on the up and up since COVID and we can't really bring it back down.”

“[We need to] look at housing as infrastructure to increase the supply to catch up with the need. 83,000 homes are needed in Maine and we will need decades to catch up. Federal government needs to fund it as part of healthcare costs.”

Migrant Populations (Immigrants, Refugees, Asylees, and Seasonal Workers)

While one specific focus group was not conducted with members of the migrant, minority, or immigrant communities, these populations were thoughtfully discussed throughout stakeholder interviews and during the focus groups.

Top Themes

- Healthcare Access, including language barriers
- Discrimination, including internalized stigma and xenophobia
- Employment and Financial Barriers

The following section includes select quotes from focus group participants and interviewees:

Language Barriers

“Discharge papers are in English, and that's hard for people whose first language isn't English.”

“Navigating different health plans under MaineCare or otherwise, especially for people whose first language isn't English. Hospitals use an iPad and can chose any language, and someone comes on the screen, but it's still an obstacle for providers – it takes up time, they can see fewer patients, it's costly.”

“Even with people translating, it's a big rush and it's hard to pick apart translation - things are lost in the process. Maine Med has language line and in-person interpreters, the person on the phone is really quick and sometimes they give misinformation. Some in-person interpreters who know people going into appointments. Patients are worried about confidentiality, so there's a huge trust issue going into the doctor.”

Internalized Stigma

“Childhood trauma, generational trauma, depressive disorder, anxiety, PTSD and a few others tend to be most common, but it's hard to talk with them about it due to stigma. We need to talk about symptoms rather than diagnosis.”

“There is stigma of asking for help. Chinese students are going through real mental challenges due to healthcare and housing, but feel like they can't go to counseling because ‘we don't do that,’ and they don't know where to go. There's a culture of ‘we're going to just take it, it will be fine.’ Cultural background is also due to war and trauma. Asking for help is weak.”

Xenophobia

“Hate crimes and bias, which tie into mental health. We need to educate people on where to go for help.”

“Many Asians have been admitting to alcoholism since the pandemic to cope because the community was under such a scope during the pandemic.”

Employment and Financial Barriers

“Some farm workers may make a lot of money in a short period of time, but annually is not a lot. They can't include dependents who live outside the area even though they financially support them [...] some people don't get paystubs or get paid in different ways.”

“Access to food and basic items, people don't know how cold it is and all they have are sandals. Where do people get cold weather clothes? Migrants use last paycheck to get to the right place.”

“There is an influx of asylum seekers from Angola and Congo, and they don't have the same status as refugees and can't get the resources because they're waiting for asylum hearing and have no status.”

Older Adults

Top Themes (from the SPOA Needs Assessment)

- Healthcare Access and Quality
- Transportation
- Housing and Housing Maintenance
- Food and Nutrition
- Socialization

The following section includes select quotes and excerpts from the Maine State Plan on Aging Needs Assessment:

Healthcare Access

“Preventive care is not there, if it's an emergency you go to the ER. Annual wellness exam is a total waste of time; you can't ask any useful questions. I was diagnosed with stage 3 kidney disease, but I had to wait 9 months just for a consultation in Portland.”

“Dental and hearing aid assistance. Too expensive to even consider seeking help to resolve. Eating problems due to missing and rotten teeth. Need dentures but cannot afford.”

Transportation

“People who don't drive in rural areas rely on volunteer transportation programs. If there's a hiccup in those programs, and they become unavailable, then suddenly people are not able to get where they need to go. If there's a downturn in volunteerism, or if there isn't good recruitment in certain corners of the service area, people just try once to get it or try a couple times, and then they give up and don't try anymore. [...]”

Housing and Housing Maintenance

[there was a need for] “building more available housing for the aging or elderly as they are having to sell their homes due to the increase in property taxes.”

“[M]y roof is rotting, and even more damage is happening. But there’s nothing I can do about the process. And I do follow up phone calls. And it’s quite exhausting.”

Food and Nutrition

“It’s hard to get by on \$23 a month in food stamps.”

Socialization

“I just can’t imagine that I would keep asking my congregation members to do a two-hour loop to pick me up and then go back.”

“It is hard for people to learn about things. Many people get community news from Facebook. If you’re not on Facebook – how do you find out about these things? Especially the elder population who may not be online.”

Disability Community

Top Themes (from the DRM Assessment)

- Data Collection
- Provider Education
- Barriers to Care
- Communication
- Physical Spaces

The following section includes select quotes and excerpts from the Disability Rights Maine Assessment:

Data Collection

“Make disability status a standard demographic indicator in data collection and surveillance efforts.”

Provider Education

“It would be really nice if more providers were required to have education on brain injuries and other disabilities. There are a lot of providers who know nothing about brain injuries. Some [provider’s] dismissiveness is not malicious. It’s just that they do not know.”

“[There is a] need for provider education, both in school and continuing education for those already practicing. Front office staff also need training. People aren’t comfortable around people with disabilities - in training learn that it’s okay to mess up. Get creative about ways to provide services.”

Barriers to Care

"I wish it was more affordable to all in this country, as many people, me included, are hesitant to use these services as they cost so much, even for a simple visit to answer a question or get a DX (diagnosis)."

"[There are] lots of public transportation problems for disabled people. It's not right. They don't understand that if you don't get the care, you need it could be serious."

Communication

"I have been through the gamut. I've experienced it all. Most places have no idea what to do when a Deaf person walks in. Some places are compassionate, and some places have no idea. They need so much education. If the shoe was on the other foot, imagine how they would feel, relying on lip reading or writing everything out - especially with medical terminology. For me as a mother, it's already a stressful dynamic there, with my son. A lot of providers don't understand disabilities in general. Of course, there are access issues being Deaf, but when you have added other disabilities, that lack of awareness on the part of the provider is really difficult. It's tenfold when you have additional disabilities."

Physical Spaces

"ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act] scrapes the bottom of the barrel. Doors are always too narrow, getting through is hard; there are too many chairs to park a wheelchair. There are no spaces to park in the waiting room. There's an awkward dance with people. This includes parking lots and maintenance of pathways which aren't safe or accessible. Exam rooms are usually too small to move my chair around."

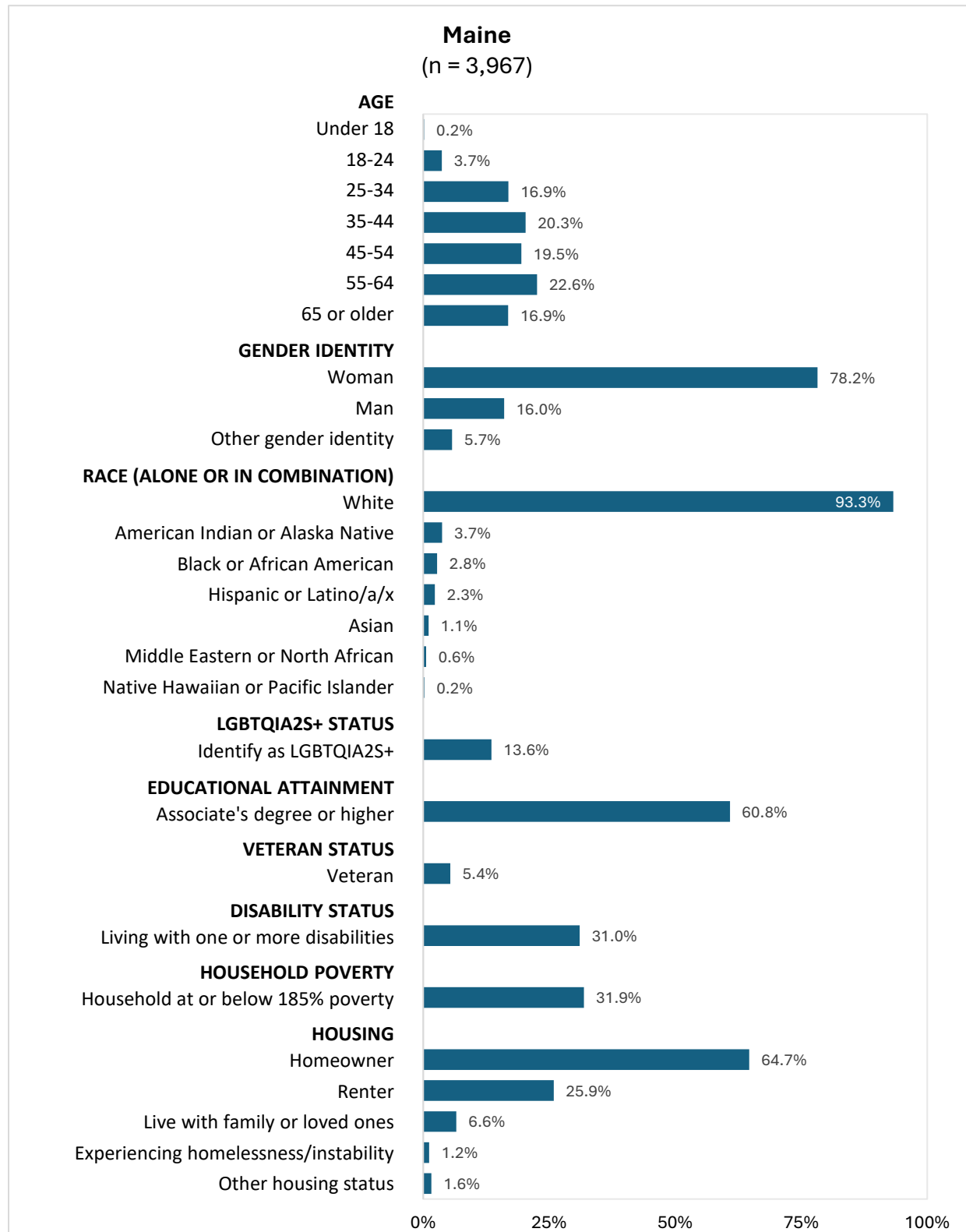
"Another issue sometimes is getting up onto tables. It's not easy for somebody in a wheelchair to get up on a table- it takes three people to get me up onto a table. That is one reason why one time I didn't have a full bone scan because they couldn't get me up on the table to have the bone scan. Those tables are very difficult. I've been having to bring my sliding board with me lately to get from the chair to the table. Those tables can be hard to get up to. When my mom started coming with me, she could help me get up onto the table - one time, they only did a bone scan on my wrist because they couldn't get me up. One time they had to x-ray me in my chair."

Community Survey

Overview

The Maine Shared CHNA conducted a comprehensive statewide survey, engaging nearly 4,000 respondents, to gather insights into the health and well-being status, community assets, and social concerns of communities across Maine. The survey was one part of the broader community engagement process of the assessment, which also included the focus groups and key informant interviews.

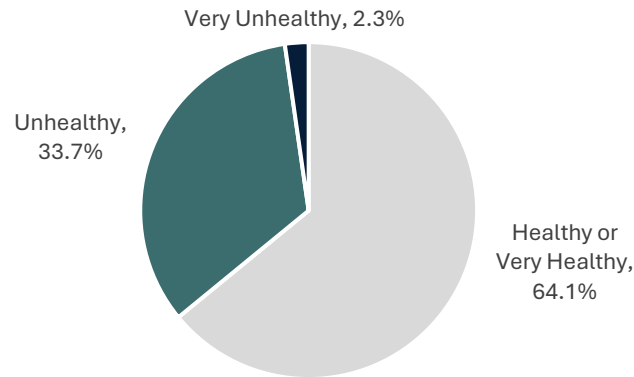
Respondent Demographics



Community Health Status

The survey provided key insights into both positive aspects and areas of concern regarding health in Maine communities. **64.1%** of respondents rated their community’s overall health and well-being as healthy or very healthy.

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



Top 5 strengths of the community

Maine Shared CHNA Statewide Community Survey Responses
1) Safe opportunities to be active outside
2) Locally owned businesses
3) Safe neighborhoods
4) Schools & education for all ages
5) Low crime

Community strengths identified by respondents included safe outdoor spaces, locally owned businesses, safe neighborhoods, and strong educational systems. These factors contribute to the positive health outlook in many areas.

Significant social concerns were noted, particularly around mental health and substance use. Respondents identified mental health issues—such as anxiety, depression, and suicide—as top concerns negatively impacting their communities. Substance use, including alcohol, cannabis, prescription drugs, and illicit drugs, was also a prominent issue. Other pressing concerns included low incomes, poverty, and housing insecurity, which were seen as major contributors to community health challenges.

Top 5 social concerns that negatively impact your community.

Maine Shared CHNA Statewide Community Survey Responses
1) Mental health issues (anxiety, depression, suicide, etc.)
2) Substance use (alcohol, cannabis, prescription drugs, illicit drugs, etc.)
3) Low incomes and poverty
4) Housing insecurity
5) Obesity

Community Health Needs

Survey respondents highlighted the top eight areas of concern affecting Maine residents. These include economic needs, chronic health conditions, mental health needs, substance use, housing needs, transportation needs, environmental needs, and public safety concerns.

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.'

Maine Shared CHNA Statewide Community Survey Responses		
1)	Economic needs	76.1%
2)	Chronic health conditions (cancer, high blood pressure, heart disease, high cholesterol, etc.)	75.7%
3)	Mental health needs	73.6%
4)	Substance use	68.5%
5)	Housing needs	68.5%
6)	Transportation needs	60.9%
7)	Environmental needs	58.4%
8)	Public safety needs	53.7%

Economic Needs

76.1% of respondents indicated economic issues negatively affect them, a loved one, or their community. Key concerns included the availability of quality education, jobs, high-speed internet, affordable childcare, and the ability to contribute to savings or retirement. The availability of affordable, quality foods was also a major concern, with **72.9%** identifying it as an issue.

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	14.5%	18.9%	52.5%	16.3%	16.9%	8.1%
Availability of jobs and employment opportunities	19.9%	27.5%	67.5%	9.0%	10.0%	4.8%
Availability of high-speed internet	26.3%	22.3%	54.0%	15.3%	15.1%	5.5%
Availability of quality, affordable childcare	15.0%	25.8%	72.9%	4.3%	8.5%	7.5%
Ability to contribute to savings, retirement	54.5%	46.6%	63.3%	2.8%	8.9%	2.0%
Access to affordable, quality foods	37.4%	35.1%	72.9%	6.4%	7.0%	2.1%

Chronic Health Conditions

75.7% of participants reported chronic health conditions such as cancer, diabetes, and heart disease affect their community. Overweight and obesity were significant issues, with nearly half of respondents identifying them as a major concern. High blood pressure, arthritis, and high cholesterol were also widely reported as impacting both individuals and the broader community.

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	21.0%	37.7%	33.7%	5.7%	11.2%	13.6%
Arthritis	33.9%	45.2%	27.8%	4.1%	11.1%	8.7%
Cancer	10.9%	44.1%	43.2%	4.3%	9.1%	12.1%
Diabetes or high blood sugar	17.2%	44.9%	40.0%	4.2%	8.1%	9.9%
Heart disease or heart attack	10.1%	39.9%	37.6%	5.3%	12.6%	12.9%
High cholesterol	26.3%	43.6%	29.8%	5.1%	12.2%	10.1%
High blood pressure or hypertension	28.9%	52.0%	33.1%	3.4%	8.4%	7.2%
Overweight/obesity	44.3%	46.8%	47.4%	3.2%	4.4%	6.3%
Stroke	3.6%	21.4%	29.5%	9.5%	20.8%	21.7%
Chronic liver disease/cirrhosis	3.6%	12.7%	25.5%	11.2%	27.1%	24.6%

Mental Health Needs

Mental health issues were a major focus, with **73.6%** of respondents citing them as a concern. Anxiety, depression, and trauma-related disorders (like PTSD) were particularly prominent. Additionally, the stigma around seeking mental health care was a notable barrier, along with issues related to social isolation and loneliness.

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	52.0%	58.9%	47.3%	1.9%	5.4%	2.1%
Bipolar disorder	45.7%	58.1%	52.8%	2.0%	4.5%	2.4%
Depression	7.8%	28.1%	39.6%	7.2%	21.2%	12.7%
Trauma or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)	33.1%	39.2%	48.7%	4.5%	11.3%	6.5%
General stress of day-to-day life	63.9%	57.7%	55.8%	2.3%	5.0%	2.4%
Social isolation or loneliness	27.3%	37.5%	55.9%	4.2%	8.6%	5.7%
Stigma associated with seeking care for mental health or substance use disorders	17.5%	30.2%	54.9%	8.7%	13.7%	8.4%
Suicidal thoughts and/or behaviors	10.9%	27.2%	51.1%	6.4%	16.8%	11.0%
Youth mental health	13.8%	32.7%	56.1%	4.9%	11.2%	9.1%

Substance Use

68.5% of respondents identified substance use as a critical issue. Alcohol misuse was the most prevalent, with **73.4%** saying it affects their community. Opioid misuse, vaping, and youth substance use were also significant concerns, each impacting over **60%** of communities.

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	7.5%	38.9%	73.4%	2.7%	6.6%	3.0%
Opioid misuse	3.9%	18.2%	75.1%	2.9%	11.4%	4.2%
Tobacco use	11.5%	39.8%	71.4%	3.3%	6.4%	3.6%
Vaping	5.4%	26.8%	67.7%	4.8%	11.4%	5.3%
Adult cannabis use	8.9%	31.5%	63.2%	10.9%	8.6%	5.7%
Other illicit drug use	4.0%	19.2%	74.5%	2.9%	11.8%	4.2%
Youth substance use	3.3%	12.7%	70.2%	3.8%	15.1%	6.4%

Housing

Housing was a significant concern, with **68.5%** of participants indicating housing issues, including affordability and availability, impacted them or their community. Over **80%** of respondents identified housing costs and the availability of affordable homes as pressing issues, along with concerns about utilities, weatherization, and health risks in homes.

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	45.1%	46.3%	80.0%	1.1%	3.3%	0.4%
Availability of affordable, quality homes/rentals	31.7%	40.9%	82.4%	1.1%	3.3%	0.9%
Availability of affordable, quality housing for older adults or those with special needs	14.7%	27.2%	77.5%	2.5%	8.3%	2.6%
Issues associated with home ownership or renting	37.9%	39.7%	74.8%	1.5%	6.9%	1.8%
Health risks in homes (indoor air, tobacco smoke residue, pests, lead, mold)	18.8%	23.0%	63.2%	4.8%	18.3%	4.7%
Cost of utilities	4.3%	11.3%	74.4%	4.2%	12.8%	4.7%
Costs associated with weatherization	55.4%	48.5%	76.6%	1.8%	3.5%	0.9%

Transportation

60.9% of respondents noted transportation as a key issue. Many expressed concerns about access to transportation for medical appointments, work, and childcare. Public transportation availability and the costs associated with owning and maintaining a vehicle were additional significant barriers.

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)	15.8%	25.6%	78.0%	2.2%	8.1%	1.8%
Availability of public transportation (buses, trains, ride shares, taxis)	22.2%	25.8%	78.6%	3.1%	7.2%	2.6%
Availability of transportation that meets a variety of specific needs (older adults, physical or cognitive needs)	11.7%	20.5%	76.0%	2.6%	11.7%	2.0%
Costs associated with owning and maintaining a vehicle (insurance, registration, repairs)	48.9%	43.7%	70.3%	2.3%	7.1%	1.3%

Environmental Concerns

58.4% of participants cited environmental concerns such as air and water quality, contamination from PFAS chemicals, and extreme weather events as affecting their communities. Access to parks and green spaces was also identified as having an impact on the community, though it was less of a concern compared to other environmental issues.

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	25.4%	22.3%	44.6%	21.9%	20.5%	5.6%
Water quality	26.9%	21.9%	49.9%	18.1%	20.0%	4.1%
PFAS ("forever chemicals") contamination	23.4%	21.3%	53.9%	7.5%	31.4%	3.3%
Extreme weather events (hurricane, flooding, etc.)	27.9%	24.5%	61.1%	15.1%	10.9%	6.5%
Access to parks and green spaces for recreation	16.9%	14.7%	40.9%	34.5%	10.6%	9.6%

Public Safety

53.7% of respondents expressed concern about public safety. Key issues included property crime, pedestrian and bicycle safety, and violence between people. Additionally, racism and discrimination based on race, gender, or other factors were highlighted as community-wide problems.

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	25.4%	22.3%	44.6%	21.9%	20.5%	5.6%
Property crime	24.7%	20.7%	64.3%	13.7%	12.0%	3.90%
Community violence (gangs, guns, street crime)	12.8%	11.9%	64.7%	8.8%	19.7%	2.6%
Violence between people (domestic, sexual, bullying)	8.9%	9.0%	42.3%	23.7%	23.1%	8.8%
Racism	11.6%	19.0%	76.7%	4.0%	12.5%	2.4%
Discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, LGBTQIA2S+, age, ability, etc.	9.0%	14.6%	57.9%	11.0%	21.9%	5.0%

Socioeconomic Empowerment

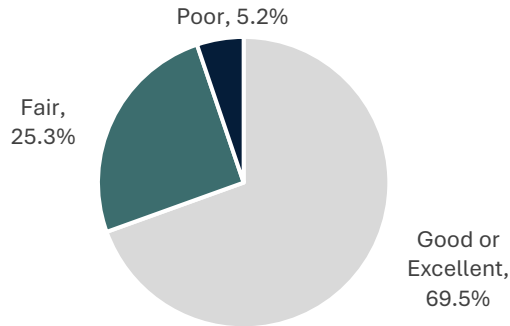
Top 5 items rated by respondents as 'very necessary' steps to help move people out of poverty and to a place of housing stability & financial stability.

Maine Shared CHNA Statewide Community Survey Responses
1) Jobs that pay enough to support a living wage
2) Affordable and safe housing
3) Mental health care and treatment
4) Affordable & available health care
5) Affordable & quality childcare

Physical Health Status

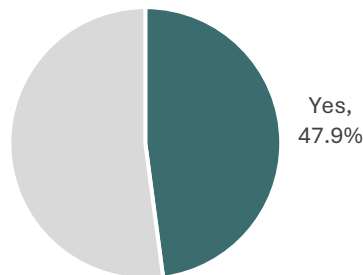
Respondents provided insights into their health and challenges in accessing care. According to the survey, **69.5%** of respondents rated their physical health as good or excellent, while **25.3%** rated it as fair, and **5.2%** described it as poor.

How would you rate your own physical health?



However, **47.9%** of participants indicated that, within the past year, they or a loved one needed healthcare services but were unable to access them.

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)

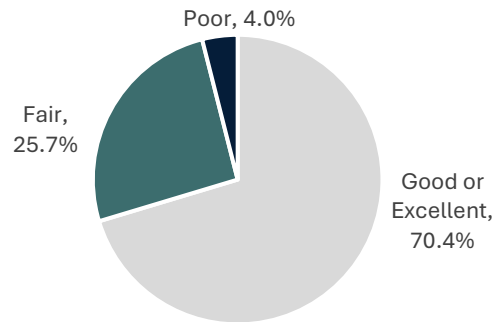
Maine Shared CHNA Statewide Community Survey Responses
1) Long wait times to see a provider
2) Had health insurance, could not afford care
3) No evenings or weekend hours to get care

The most frequently cited barriers included long wait times to see a provider, the inability to afford care despite having health insurance, and the lack of evening or weekend hours for appointments. These barriers highlight significant challenges in healthcare access, particularly related to service availability and financial constraints.

Mental Health Status

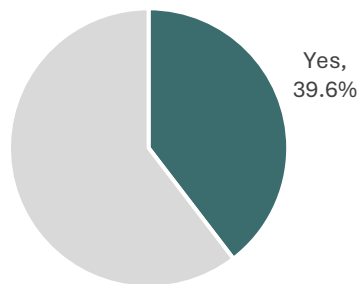
Respondents provided important insights into their mental well-being and access to mental health care. According to the survey, **70.4%** of respondents rated their mental health as good or excellent, while **25.7%** rated it as fair, and **4.0%** described their mental health as poor.

How would you rate your own mental health?



Additionally, 39.6% of respondents reported that, within the past year, they or a loved one needed mental health care services but were unable to access them.

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)

Maine Shared CHNA Statewide Community Survey Responses
1) Long wait times to see a provider
2) Had health insurance, could not afford care
3) No evenings or weekend hours to receive care

The primary barriers to accessing mental health care included long wait times to see a provider, the inability to afford care despite having insurance, and the lack of evening or weekend hours for appointments. These challenges indicate significant gaps in mental health service availability and affordability.

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.

A special thank you also goes to the Catherine Cutler Institute at the University of Southern Maine and Maine DHHS' Office of Aging and Disability Services and John Snow, Inc. and Disability Rights Maine for use of their assessments and ability to include their findings in ours.

Appendix

Community Engagement Process

Considerations for Identifying Populations to Engage With:

The Maine Shared CHNA is charged with taking a broad approach to assessing health and well-being throughout the state. While we have attempted to reach many populations who have disparate health and well-being experiences and outcomes, some choices about which groups to include were necessary. We recognize that for many people, their lives and their health is affected by multiple aspects of their identify and lived experiences or their “intersectionality.” It should be noted the voices we hear in focus groups and interviews are not meant to be representative of their entire identified population or community.

The Community Engagement Committee, one of two standing Committees of the Maine Shared CHNA, is charged with developing a framework for engaging and building relationships with populations and communities to gain a better understanding of their health and well-being strengths, needs and underlying causes of health and well-being behaviors and outcomes. This cycle, the Community Engagement Committee developed considerations to use to identify populations for focus group engagement. The considerations included whether each population:

- Is medically underserved;
- Is historically not involved in CHNA processes;
- Is negatively impacted by structural determinants of health;
- Experiences intersectionality (the interconnection and impact of multiple identities on a person’s life); and/or
- Includes participants ability to gather in-person or virtually.

The Community Engagement Committee also considered the willingness and ability of potential partner organizations to assist with recruitment; whether potential partner organizations represent multiple populations and sectors; and the ability to recruit a minimum number of participants for each focus group.

The Maine Shared CHNA recognizes communities are often overburdened by outside organizations as those organizations seek to learn about health and well-being strengths, resources, and needs. Additionally, with multiple organizations conducting assessments, the Maine Shared CHNA seeks to reduce duplicative work and partner with other organizations to learn from their assessments as opposed to assessing the same Maine communities multiple times. As such, the following criteria were established to identify potential organizations to collaborate with and use aspects of their research:

- The outside organization is agreeable to sharing their needs assessment information, both published reports and any additional data collected.
- For assessments in process or results that will not be completed on time, the outside organization is agreeable to sharing their work in progress.
- The needs assessment is less than two years old.
- The content of the assessment is similar enough to the Maine Shared CHNA for integration of results into Maine Shared CHNA reports.

- All reports/assessments used will be given attribution and referenced in the Maine Shared CHNA reports.
- The organization that conducted the needs assessment is willing to engage to share their assessment process/methodology, outcomes, and any updates from when the original assessment occurred.

Populations and Sectors Identified for Engagement

Focus Groups

Using the former criteria listed above, the Maine Shared CHNA ultimately identified the following populations for community engagement through focus groups:

- Multigenerational black/African American
- Veterans
- LGBTQ+
- Women
- Youth
- Young Adults

As part of the Community Services Block Grant reporting, the Community Action Programs are also 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, conducting two focus groups in Aroostook, Cumberland and Penobscot Counties to account for variation in the population and geography of these counties. These focus groups also provide important information and insights to the experiences of people at the County level.

While we held focus groups with these specific populations and communities, we attempted to recognize participants' intersectionality by asking them to voluntarily share any other identities they may have. In addition to the abovementioned populations, 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.

Key Informant Interviews

The Maine Shared CHNA identified additional populations and sectors to engage through key informant interviews. The populations and sectors were based on: those who did not lend themselves as easily to a focus group; provided a systems and/or programmatic perspective; and/or represent a sector specific topic.

The populations and sectors the Maine Shared CHNA conducted interviews with were:

- Unhoused/Homeless
- Migrant/Agricultural Workers
- Disability Community
- Incarcerated/Formerly Incarcerated
- Child Welfare
- Emergency Management
- Environment/Climate
- Substance Use (including prevention, treatment and recovery)
- Transportation
- Food Security
- Older Adults
- Mental/Behavioral Health
- Oral Health
- Immigrants
- Veterans

Other Assessments Used

The Maine Shared CHNA identified two other assessments to use as part of our assessment using the criteria outlined above. The assessments enabled us to learn about the assets, resources, needs and challenges of the older adult population and the disability community. These assessments are the Maine State Plan on Aging Needs Assessment, prepared by the Catherine Cutler Institute University of Southern Maine for the Office of Aging and Disability Services in January 2024 and Disability Rights Maine's "I Don't Get the Care I Need:" Equitable Access to Health Care for Mainers with Disabilities published in Spring 2023.

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.

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 social or demographic categories. 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.
- Report results in an actionable form to improve the lives of those represented in the data.
- Acknowledge missing data and data biases and limitations.
- Identify and address important issues for which we lack data.
- Empower professionals and community members to use data to improve their work and their communities.
- Share data with communities affected by challenges to share analysis, reporting and ownership of findings.