

Solid Ground's 2022

COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Executive Summary



Solid Ground believes poverty is solvable – and that people know best what they need and should be involved in decisions that affect their lives. We conduct a Community Needs Assessment (CNA) every three years to gather input from the communities we serve toward the goal to ensure our programs and services support people to create the lives they want to live.

Three goals of this work:

- 1) Identify how well our services align with the needs of people living on low incomes.**
- 2) Identify barriers that limit participants' capacity to access the resources they need to live their best lives.**
- 3) Infuse Solid Ground's upcoming Strategic Planning process with this information to enhance our ability to address these challenges.**

As society navigates the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, social inequities increasingly impact people living in poverty in the Puget Sound region.

Solid Ground's 2022 Community Needs Assessment (CNA) underscores both the mounting challenges for underserved communities and suggests opportunities for improved services and new ways of doing business that have the potential to greatly contribute to solving poverty in our communities.

Through an exhaustive review of publicly available data from the U.S. Census and other resources, and a comprehensive survey of our program participants and other community members living on very low incomes, we've distilled the following key findings.

Research by F. Javier Flores, Solid Ground Strategic Information Systems Manager

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Money Matters

Low- and even middle-income people struggle to survive in our region.

Housing, childcare, transportation, health care, and other basic survival costs are beyond the reach of too many people.

People need to earn much more money and have access to additional resources to live healthy, stable lives in our region.

Economic issues disproportionately impact BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and other people of color) communities.

“For regular people, there are rarely any living wage jobs one can find that will allow you to make enough to afford housing, etc. Washington is basically pushing low-moderate and low-income residents out onto the streets or out of the state completely with the out-of-control cost of homes and rentals.”



Location, Location, Location

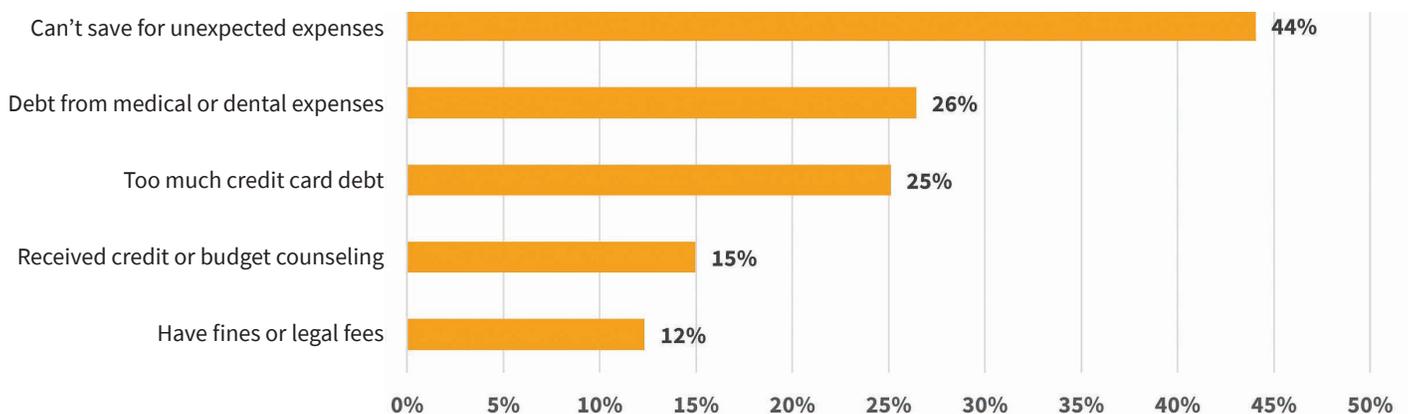
Our region continues to attract additional residents from other parts of Washington state, the U.S., and other countries.

Many are settling in our more affordable communities, especially in South King County, which typically don't have adequate access to basic infrastructure such as transportation, healthy food, and social and health services.

In addition, higher-income earners displace low-income residents and drive up the cost of housing and other essentials in these communities.

This pushes folks living on low incomes further away from access to jobs, services, resources, and community gathering points – although new virtual and non-place-based services have taken hold in response to pandemic gathering limits.

CNA Survey: Top 5 Financial Challenges Experienced in the Last 12 Months



Top Community-Identified Needs

Housing Help

- ▶ 92% of respondents report they used some housing resource in the last year.
- ▶ The increasing cost of housing drives many respondents to seek housing outside of the area.

Affordable Dental Care

- ▶ Survey respondents consistently rank this as extremely difficult to access and very important to their household.
- ▶ Lack of insurance is also a barrier to dental care.

Legal Help

- ▶ Legal issues are a barrier to employment for 9% of respondents.
- ▶ Fines and legal fees are also a financial hardship for 12% of respondents.

Access to Living-Wage Jobs

- ▶ 51% of respondents report that getting or keeping a good job was hard for them or someone in their household during the last 12 months.
- ▶ Respondents say the lack of living wage jobs prevents them from meeting basic needs across all survey categories.

Mental Health / Family Counseling

- ▶ 31% percent of respondents report fair or poor mental health.
- ▶ 41% of respondents had childhood experiences with mental illness and/or addiction.



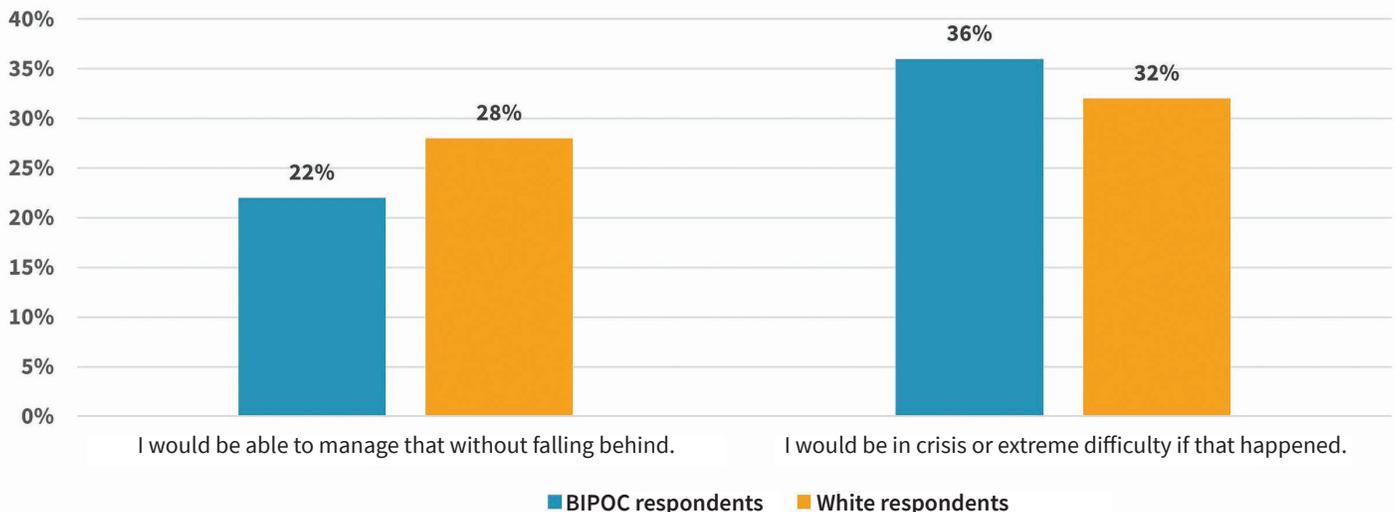
Searching for Hope

While hope lives in every human soul, people increasingly have trouble finding it.

Community members need better access to mental health services, family counseling, and community connections to reinforce hope that everything can and will get better.

“I am a single mom with three children, including one child with special needs. I cannot work full time because of [my] special needs child. I’m in desperate need of affordable, adequate housing for me and my children.”

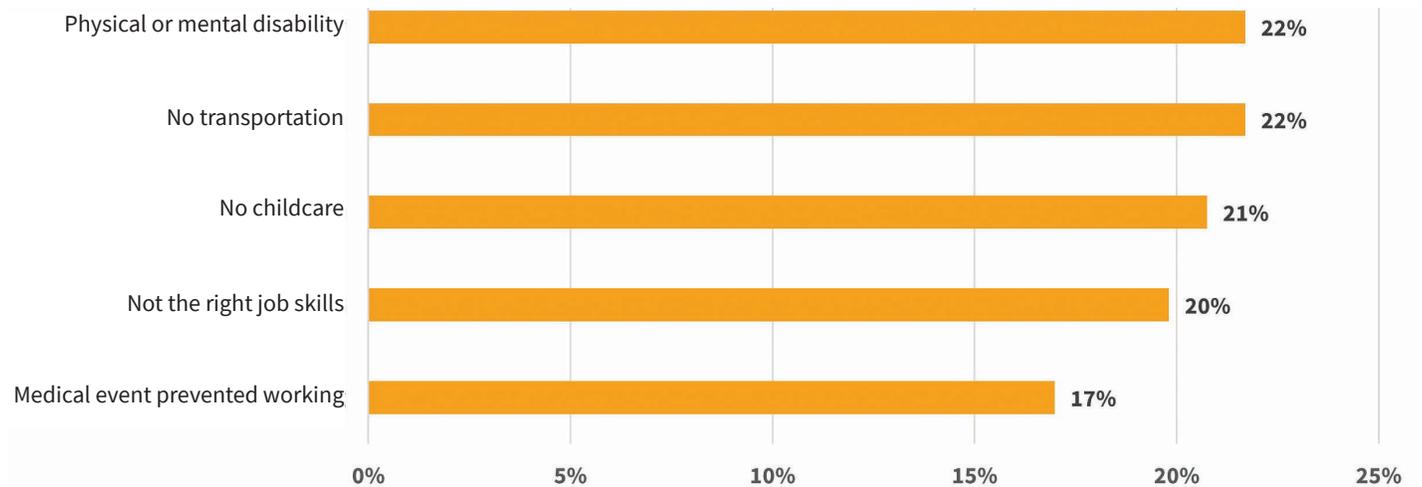
CNA Survey: Impact of a \$500 Financial Emergency





“Even skilled and licensed trade jobs are no longer paying a wage that covers the minimum cost of living for a single mother and child in Seattle anymore.”

CNA Survey: Top 5 Barriers to Getting or Keeping a Job



A Note on Methodology

For this 2022 CNA, we referenced data and templates from prior reports and developed data topics through a cross-departmental team at Solid Ground. The CNA data topics and survey were also reviewed by Solid Ground’s Community Accountability Council (CAC), made up of Solid Ground community members with lived experience navigating social services systems.

CNA Sources

This assessment used a variety of data collection methods to obtain a full picture of resident and participant experiences and the specific needs in our service area. These include:

- ▶ Local, state, and national data and reports, including updated U.S. Census data.
- ▶ Review of reports and studies relevant to Solid Ground service populations.
- ▶ Data from the CNA survey conducted for this report.

Survey Outreach and Distribution

Solid Ground translated our CNA Survey from English into Amharic, Persian, Chinese (Simplified), Spanish, Tigrinya, and Vietnamese and posted it on our website and promoted it via social media.

Print copies were available on request and distributed to all Solid Ground locations. In addition, our staff conducted direct outreach to residents and program participants.

Partners from a variety of social and community services also shared information with their clients via their social media, e-newsletters, and posted flyers. All survey respondents received modest gift cards as an incentive to participate.