



# Community Needs Assessment

## 2021

St. Lawrence County Community Development Program, Inc. (CDP) surveys the community, partners, and stakeholders to develop a comprehensive community needs assessment every three years. This assessment helps us determine future programming by gathering information on the community conditions throughout the county.

February 17, 2021

# Executive Summary



## Key Findings:

Several needs emerged as a result of the Community Needs Assessment process. The top 5 needs are as follows:

- **Affordable home repairs:** Community members feel that necessary home repairs are too costly and that prevents them from completing the repairs and properly maintaining their homes.
- **Utility Costs:** Affording utilities such as heating and electric is a struggle for our community members.
- **Access and affordability of quality food options:** Food insecurity is one of the top concerns in St. Lawrence County. This concern was noted on the Bridge to Wellness Community Health Improvement Plan as well.
- **Access and affordability of medical and dental services:** Community members, partners, and staff all agree that access and affordability of medical and dental services (including mental health) is a struggle for our county.
- **Transportation:** In a large geographic county, transportation presents a barrier for accessing services, food, and employment options.

## Recommendations:

- Continue programs such as Weatherization, Empower, etc. and look at opportunities to expand these services.
- Continue to provide emergency utility services and diversify funding to support these services.
- Expand food pantry accessibility with a mobile food pantry that also assists with outside service applications.
- Continue to utilize partner services who can assist our customers with enrolling in affordable health care options. Consider expanding this opportunity to other service areas and making sure customers in all departments are aware of this service.
- Work with public transportation on their efforts to expand transportation services throughout the county.
- Provide education to the community on the services currently available, both through CDP and through our partner agencies.

# Executive Summary: Covid-19 Concerns



## Key Findings:

We asked about Covid-19 concerns as part of this year's Community Needs Assessment. Here are the top concerns specific to the pandemic:

- Community members are struggling financially due to job loss, hours cut, and their children being home and therefore expenses increasing. They are concerned about paying their normal household bills.
- Many locations in our county lack the internet services to work from home and attend school remotely, or the services available are unaffordable.
- Mental health and isolation was a recurring concern for community members as the pandemic continues.
- The final topic that arose from the surveys was a general concern for safety including other people wearing masks and access to the vaccine.

## Recommendations:

- Continue to advertise CARES funds to the community to assist households with their basic needs due to being financially impacted by covid-19.
- Work with remote communities to determine if there are locations for hot-spots and internet options that can be accessed from a car or the parking lot.
- Begin providing covid-19 information in food boxes and other customer communication to include the importance of masks, vaccine locations, and how to obtain a vaccine appointment.
- Advocate for a task force to work on enhancing internet access in our county, or assist if one is already created.

# Introduction and Methodology

St. Lawrence County Community Development Program, Inc. (CDP) conducted a Community Needs Assessment in 2020-2021. The assessment is intended to assist CDP in their strategic planning process and review of CDP programs. Community Action Agencies are required through legislation to conduct a community needs assessment every three years.

The Community Needs Assessment process utilized the following methodologies:

- Collected and analyzed relevant census and social indicator data.
- General information on needs/concerns were shared by customers through customer satisfaction surveys and informal conversations with staff members.
- Online surveys were conducted with CDP customers, general community members, CDP staff, and community partners in St. Lawrence County. Feedback from these surveys is integrated into this report.
- Community meetings were held in which poverty and needs in the county were discussed.
- The Bridge to Wellness's 2019 Community Health Improvement Plan was referenced for health concerns in the county.

## Overview of St. Lawrence County Service Area

St. Lawrence County is the largest county in New York State. It is approximately 2840 square miles and is the fifth largest county east of the Mississippi River. The county is bordered on the east by the Adirondack Mountains and on the north by Canada and the St. Lawrence River. Due to the county's geographic location, winters are long and can be very harsh. The county is comprised of thirty-two towns, fifteen villages, and one city. Five of those are considered major population areas: Canton (the county seat), Gouverneur, Massena, Potsdam, and the City of Ogdensburg. St. Lawrence County is predominately rural and sparsely populated in comparison to its size. Censu.gov uses Vintage 2019 Population Estimates, which estimate St. Lawrence County's population to be 107,740. This is lower than the estimate indicated in our 2018 Community Needs Assessment.

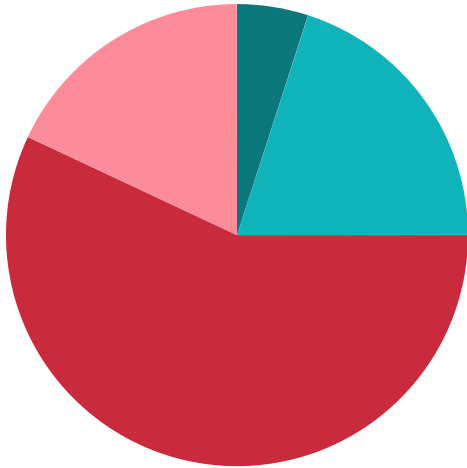
The St. Regis Mohawk Reservation is located in part in the eastern portion of the county. It is also known by its Mohawk name, Akwesasne. The reservation is adjacent to the Akwesasne reserve in Ontario and Quebec, straddling 12 miles of the US-Canadian Border. The reservation contains the village of St. Regis and borders the village of Hogansburg in the Town of Bombay. The population was 3,288 at the 2010 census. The reservation is home to the Akwesasne Mohawk Casino and the Mohawk Bingo Palace.



# St. Lawrence County Demographics

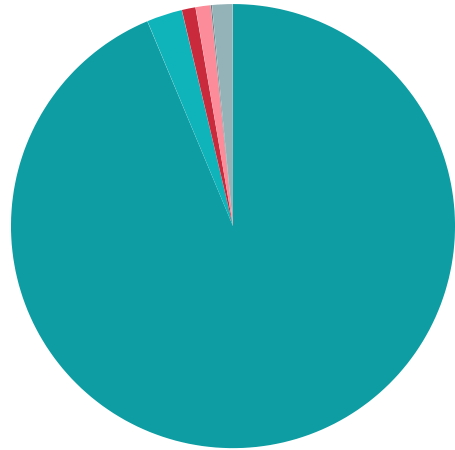
Data from Census.gov Quick Facts

### % Population by Age



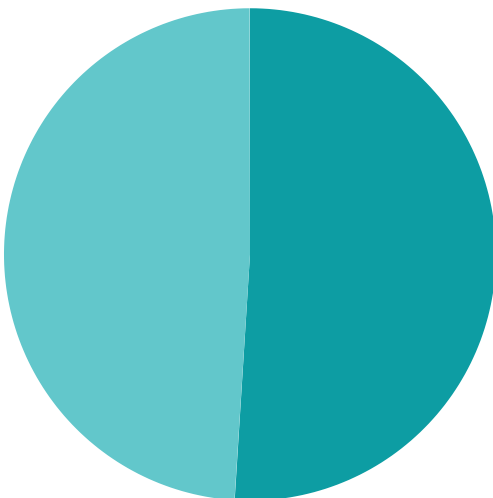
- Youth Under Age 5 (5%)
- Youth Under Age 18 (20%)
- Adults Age 18-65 (57%)
- Adults Age 65+ (18%)

### % Population by Race



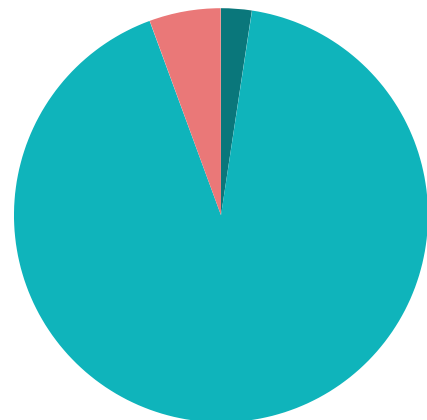
- White (93.7%)
- Black or African American (2.6%)
- American Indian and Alaska Native (1%)
- Asian (1.1%)
- Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (0.1%)
- Two or More Races (1.5%)

### % Population by Gender



- Male (51%)
- Female (49%)

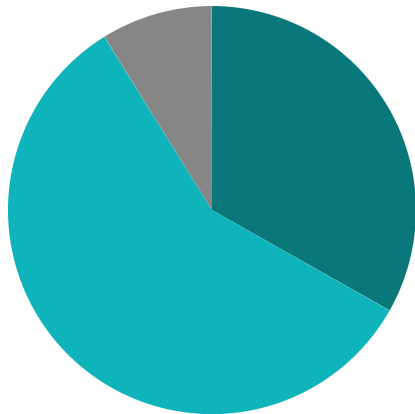
### % Population by Hispanic Origin



- Hispanic or Latino (2.4%)
- White, Non Hispanic or Latino (92%)
- Unknown (5.6%)

# St. Lawrence County Poverty Data

## Demographics of Individuals Living in Poverty



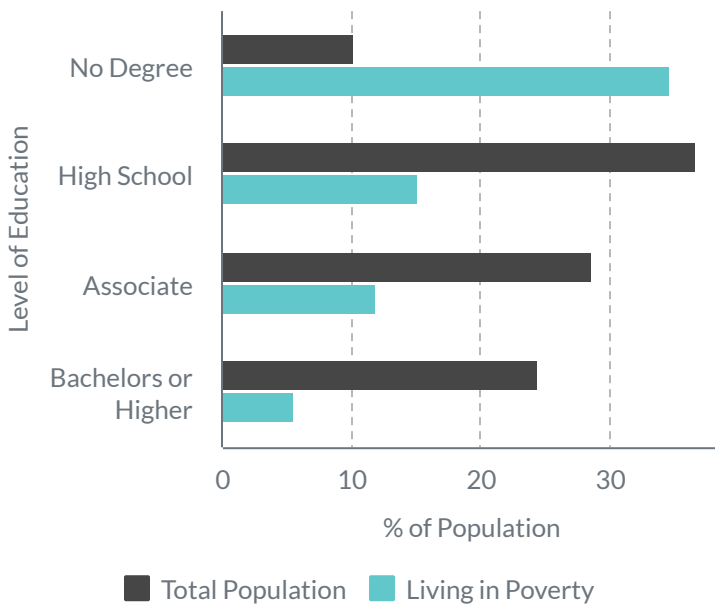
■ Children (Under 18) (33.19%) 
 ■ Adults 25+ (57.96%) 
 ■ Seniors 65+ (8.85%)

## Causes of Poverty in St. Lawrence County

According to our community member, staff, and partner surveys, several employment barriers exist in the county, including:

- Transportation, and/or reliable transportation
- Lack of living wage jobs
- Lack of the employment skills necessary to obtain an available job
- Insufficient child care
- Lack of sufficient education to qualify for higher paying jobs

## Education and Poverty



**As of 2018:**  
**13,972**  
**households**  
**participating in**  
**SNAP, or 12.9%**

Number of Individuals in Poverty: 17,248  
 Percent of Population in Poverty: 17.69%

St. Lawrence County is 8th in the state for poverty rate.

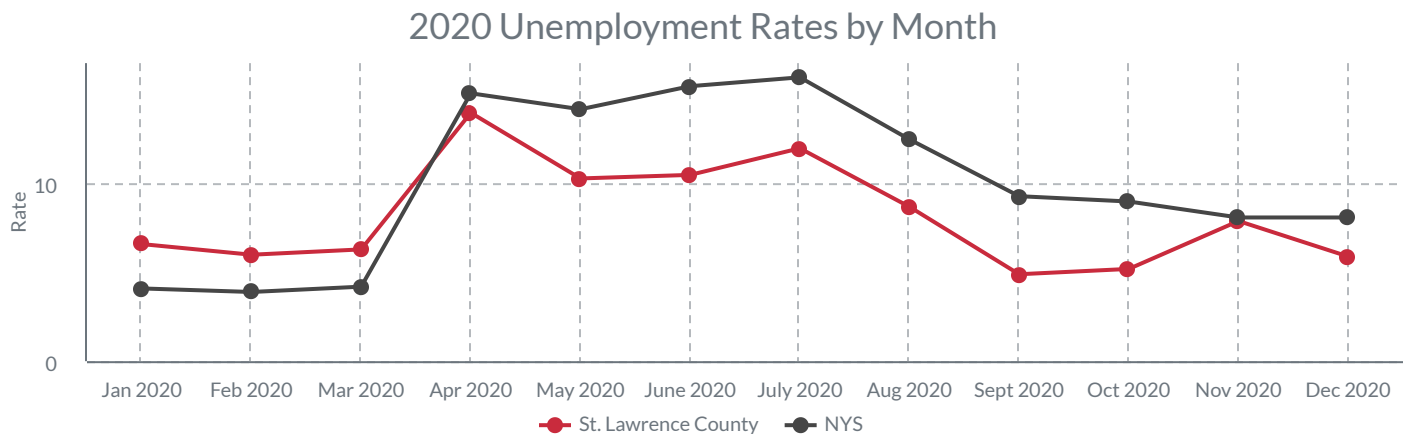
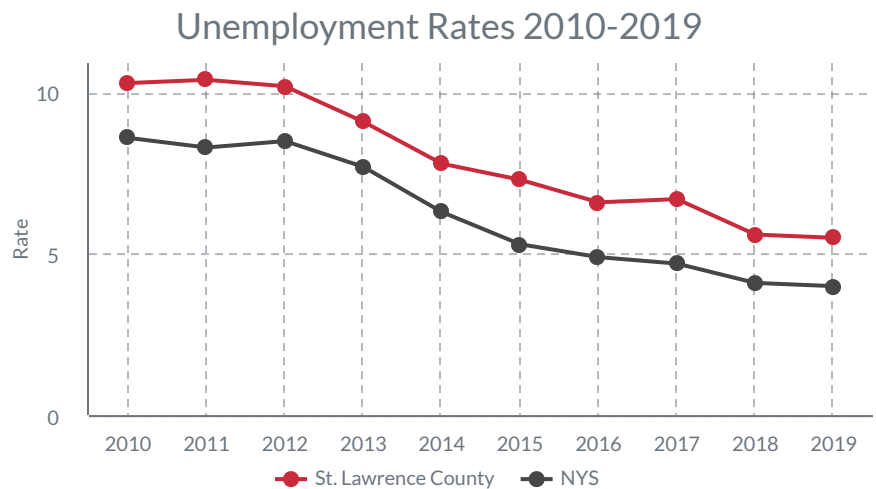
\*Source: American Community Survey

# St. Lawrence County Poverty Data

## Conditions of Poverty in St. Lawrence County

### High Unemployment Rates

- December 2020, St. Lawrence County's unemployment rate was 5.9% (labor.ny.gov)
- While the state unemployment rates for 2020 have been higher than St. Lawrence County, St. Lawrence County has had rates higher than the state average for the past decade



### Inability to meet expenses, including food, utilities, and rent

Of the low income individuals responding to our survey

- 36% indicated that affordable food was a need
- 4% indicated they needed help with heating or electric bills
- 17% indicated they were behind on their rent or mortgage
- 38% had been contacted by a bill collector in the past 6 months

### Isolation

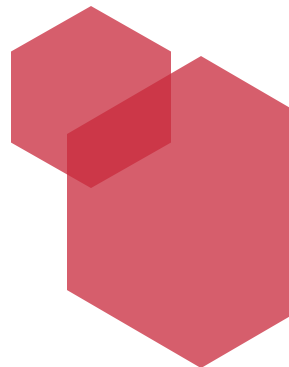
When asked about concerns and barriers, isolation and access to services was a theme. Some of those comments were:

- "Isolation has worsened my depression and anxiety tremendously. It is difficult to get away from home without owning a car."
- "Emotional wellbeing, isolation feeling, depression"
- "Lack services and transportation, isolation"

### Insufficient access to affordable medical (including mental health and dental services)

Of the community members responding to our surveys:

- 21% of all respondents identified affordable medical care as a current need
- 17% of low income respondents identified affordable medical care as a current need
- 36% of all respondents identified affordable dental care as a current need
- 38% of low income respondents identified affordable dental care as a current need
- 20% of all respondents identified mental health services as a current need
- 22% of low income respondents identified mental health services as a current need



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Appendices and survey data utilized to compile this report are available upon request. Submit requests to [info@slccdp.org](mailto:info@slccdp.org)

