



2024 PASSAIC COUNTY HOUSING AND FOOD INSECURITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

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July 1, 2024

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Executive Summary

This needs assessment was conducted from August 2023 to May 2024 to identify key needs and propose potential solutions for individuals facing housing and food insecurity in Passaic County, New Jersey. Foregrounded in our report is a critical focus on social justice. We address individual needs, community integration, and systemic issues within social structures that influence resource distribution and equitable access.

We recognize our role both as insiders and outsiders for the Passaic County community, deeply engaged with issues of housing and food insecurity. The needs assessment was conducted in collaboration with stakeholders from this community, involving a conscientious exchange of ideas, acts of humility, and a gracious spirit. We acknowledge the generosity of individuals who contributed to this project. Many shared their time and insights, shedding light on the barriers to reducing housing and food insecurity in our community. They expressed both the challenges faced by those in need of support and the efforts of those working to meet those needs.

As outlined in this needs assessment, Passaic County hosts a critical network of community-based organizations that not only provide support to affected individuals but also articulate and address the underlying causes, striving towards sustainable solutions to end housing and food insecurity. Together, these organizations represent a growing consensus that housing and food insecurity are issues to be resolved, not merely managed. Nevertheless, the underlying causes of poverty and the shortage of affordable housing significantly hinder efforts to reduce and eliminate food and housing insecurities. This report underscores the primary issues identified by stakeholders as major barriers to progress in meeting the county's needs for individuals facing housing and food insecurity. The barriers to resolution extend to the individual navigating bureaucratic processes and lack of personal resources, to community-based organizations strategizing to provide their valuable services under conditions of scarce resources, and community/society-wide structures as well as state policies and practices that shape resource allocation and use.

Described in this report are several key findings from our survey, interviews, and usability studies of people and practices shaping the experiences of individuals facing housing and food insecurity:

1. The availability of affordable housing,
2. Sustainability of services provided by community-based organizations to enable access to housing and food resources,
3. Coordination of services and state/federal programs, and
4. Access to consistent and livable incomes in the county.

While these challenges are significant, Passaic County is strengthened by a vibrant community rich in culture and spirit. There exists a wealth of valuable resources that we can better utilize. Therefore, we offer several recommendations to strengthen the efforts underway in Passaic County to move toward a resolution of housing and food insecurity.

Our key priority recommendations (each with several suggestions on how to address it) to the Passaic County department of Human Services are the following:

1. Address structural issues preventing affordable housing and sustainable job opportunities in Passaic County;

2. Create a multi-agency collaborative information network to coordinate services, and share information and resources on / for people experiencing homelessness and food insecurity;
3. Enable the coordination and streamlining of resource allocation & collaboration among community-based service providers within the county;
4. Address staffing issues for community-based organizations serving people experiencing housing and food insecurity;
5. Address information deficit & communication needs of people experiencing housing and food insecurity

We propose streamlining systems and utilizing community spaces to engage with those requiring support. This could involve supporting programs that enhance access to experts in libraries or community spaces, as well as responding more proactively to early indicators of need, such as requests for utility assistance. Additionally, enhancing mobile services for food distribution and consultations would expand outreach capabilities within the community. Furthermore, we acknowledge significant shortages in affordable housing and jobs with livable wages. Addressing these barriers will require strategic investments at both the community and statewide levels. To do so involves directing future housing developments thoughtfully and investing in training and education for our community.

1. Introduction

The 2024 Needs Assessment Report focuses on the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness and/or housing insecurity in Passaic County, New Jersey. This study also addresses the needs of those facing food insecurity, an issue inextricably linked with homelessness and housing insecurity. To contextualize the findings of this report within the broader landscape of homelessness in the United States and the state of New Jersey, we briefly reference the 2023 report presented by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to Congress. Additionally, we provide a concise summary of current insights into the factors influencing homelessness nationwide and approaches being considered for solutions.

1.1. Summary of Key Findings of National Assessment

As described in the 2023 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR)¹, 653,100 individuals (on a single night) were without any home, temporary shelter, or residence in the USA. This is an increase of 12 percent from 2022. Further, the report notes:

- a disproportionate number of people who identify as Black or African American, and a significant increase of homelessness among those who identify as Hispanic/Latin(o)(a)(x), Asian American, and Native American/Pacific Islanders
- about 28% of those experiencing homelessness in 2023 were part of a family with children, around 20% were 55 years or older, and the numbers of veterans increased by 7% from 2022, and
- over half (53%) of those experiencing homelessness were in the top-50 most populous cities in the USA (falling within the major city Continuum of Care or CoCs. CoCs are planning bodies charged with coordinating services for the unhoused in designated areas).

In that 2023 count, New Jersey was reported to have 10,264 individuals experiencing homelessness or about 11 persons per 10,000 residents. That count is a 17.3% increase from 2022. Interestingly, the report also noted that although much of the COVID pandemic-related funding had ended, there was an overall increase from 2022 to 2023 in the national inventory of beds in shelters and permanent housing of 6.4%.

1.2. Key Understandings of and Solutions for Homelessness by National Studies

Over the past several decades, through scholarly research and community and state-based interventions, a clear set of insights has emerged regarding homelessness. In this section, we summarize key understandings and solutions that provide context for the findings and recommendations of this report.

For many years, scholarly discourse on homelessness often portrayed it as a fixed or static trait and a characteristic of specific segments of the population. However, with the accumulation of long-term studies and data, this perspective has evolved toward a more dynamic understanding of “homelessness as a ‘moving target’ rather than a stable state both at the micro level, where individuals pass through

¹ [The 2023 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report](#) (AHAR), US HUD.

homeless episodes with beginnings, middles, and endings; and at the macro level, where shifting structural conditions and social policies influence rates of homelessness and who is most likely to succumb” (Lee et al 2021).² This evolving scholarship allows us to view individuals experiencing homelessness not as a static population but as a highly heterogeneous group with patterns of transition through 'entry, pathway, and exit' sequences or trajectories.

As a result, contemporary scholarship now routinely identifies two sets of determinant factors that compound and complexly shape episodes of homelessness—structural (systemic, historical, institutional) or macro factors, and conjunctural (situational and individual) or micro factors. Structural factors encompass widespread and persistent poverty and unemployment, systemic forms of social exclusion, discrimination and stigma (such as racism, sexism, homophobia, exploitation, and ableism), lack of affordable housing, and policies and regulations governing landlord-tenant relations, evictions, social welfare, mental health and substance use services, and the criminal justice system. More recently, large-scale health crises like the COVID-19 pandemic have also emerged as significant structural factors influencing homelessness. Conversely, micro-level factors include individual experiences of entry, pathways, and exits from homelessness, mental health and substance use conditions, mobility, domestic situations including family violence, pregnancy and childcare responsibilities, and reentry experiences.

Solutions for homelessness therefore include both kinds – macro/structural and micro/experiential. A clear sense of the urgency to think of ‘ending homelessness’ has now emerged due to the valuable role of a variety of community-based service and advocacy organizations. Not surprisingly ‘housing first’ has emerged as a key macro intervention – to provide adequate, affordable, and accessible housing for those who need it and to address other needs for sustainability after a person is housed.³ Such a solution requires community-based advocacy and lobbying to make legislations and change policies at the local, state, and federal levels. A housing first solution is effective in complement with efforts to address individual mental health needs, to identify and address systemic racial and economic inequalities and bias in housing, with changes in the criminal justice and mental health systems, and the appropriation of resources for services at the local level. The consensus among scholars is that homelessness is a multidimensional issue and, hence, any targeted services need to address the holistic needs of individuals -- including food insecurity, mental health and substance use needs, and job training with placement.

This report resonates with much of the extant insights and solutions. It also takes the approach that further elaboration on the macro-micro framework is needed for a report like this to be useful in its recommendations. Therefore, our methods and analysis as well as articulation of findings and recommendations reflexively move between the individual/experiential, the meso-level organizational / institutional, and the macro-level societal/policy levels of homelessness and its solutions.

² Lee, B. A., Shinn, M., & Culhane, D. P. (2021). Homelessness as a moving target. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 693(1), 8-26.

³ See the classic study - Tsemberis, Sam. 2010. *Housing first: The pathways model to end homelessness for people with mental illness and addiction*. Center City, MN: Hazelden. Advocacy groups such as the [National Alliance to End Homelessness](#) and various Housing Justice and Housing First initiatives all over the USA including in New Jersey (e.g., [Camden Coalition](#), [Fair Share Housing](#)) are at the forefront of showing why this approach works.

1.3. Language and Terminology

Throughout this report we use the term “persons experiencing homelessness” (henceforth, PEH) to refer to those individuals or persons who are experiencing a range of life situations or *states of being* including being unhoused, sheltered and unsheltered homeless, being viewed as homeless, being chronically homeless, unaccompanied minors, and living in unsteady places of residence with a threat of eviction. To be clear, PEH as *states of being* is dynamic, not static as argued above. This term is part of the attempt to humanize individuals as persons *not defined by a trait* (i.e., homelessness) but instead as *experiencing a state of being* in the everyday process of producing the material and symbolic resources needed to sustain themselves. Such a state can be viewed only within its larger context of socially imposed ‘disabilities’ and continual burdens of stigma, exclusion and marginalization within a cycle of poverty. Therefore, PEH are to be viewed as being in a temporary state that could change or be changed through intentional policy and social interventions.

2. Passaic County Description

Passaic County is rich with a diversity of peoples and cultures. The 2022 Census found that in Passaic County 49.8% of people speak a language other than English at home, and more than 60% of the county is bilingual/multilingual. The majority non-English language used is Spanish (53%) but there are sizable representations of Arabic, Begali, Gujarati, Tagalog, Polish, Russian, Italian and Hindi speakers. The county demographics are estimated to include 61.6% traditionally under-represented minority populations, see Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 New Jersey 2022 Census Estimates of Racial/Ethnic Demographics in Passaic County

Ethnicity	Percentage
African-American/Black	15.1%
Asian/Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	6.1%
Caucasian/Non-Latin or Hispanic	38.8%
Indigenous/Native American/Aleutian	1.7%
Latino/Hispanic	44.3%
Two or more	2.8%

2.1. PIT count trends (unhoused) and New Jersey findings

This Point-in-Time (PIT) count is an annual effort to quantify the number of PEH within a given region. The PIT is a federally mandated activity and is reported to Housing and Urban development and congress. It entails counting PEH during a single 24-hour period. Surveyors circulate within each county, seeking to count all PEH individuals and to distribute charitable goods. The PIT data of Passaic are summarized below to clarify some of the trends in who is counted among PEH and potential needs. As the PIT is completed as a self-report survey, there are always individuals who might opt not to participate or provide inaccurate information. With respect to that caveat, the 5-year PIT (2018-2023) trends are shown below for traits and attributes within the demographics.

This important period was directly affected by COVID-19 and the exponential rise of diagnosed COVID cases from 2019 to 2021, with an evolving public policy in response from 2020 to 2022. The State of New

Jersey enacted protections against eviction and rent increases from March 1, 2020, to August 31, 2021 (aligned with the federal Tenant Safe Harbor Act, Chapter 127 enacted in 2020). Reported by the Center for Community Progress (2022), after the Safe Harbor Act expired, the eviction rate in New Jersey rose to 13.5% and higher levels than pre-COVID. Rent.com data showed that median rent increased 8.38% in New Jersey, this following a 5-year rate increase of 5.6% from 2016 to 2020. The impacts of the pandemic have been widespread and devastating. One of those impacts has been rising housing costs, while median household incomes have *fallen 8.8%* for those living in poverty (US Census, 2023). The impact of rising housing costs, with falling incomes among impoverished households has affected the annual PIT data and contributed to the number of PEH.

In **Figure 2.11** there are some important findings that can be used to clarify the needs in Passaic County. There has been an increase in the number of people unhoused for greater than 1 year and an increase in the number of chronically unhoused. There has been some increase in the numbers of surveyed individuals over 55 years of age and an increase in younger individuals (<18 years of age). The ratio of males to females has remained relatively steady among those surveyed (although there are indications of an increasing proportion of female PEH in 2024). In the figure below, individuals tend to report *multiple* categories of association bringing the percent representations to values over 100%.

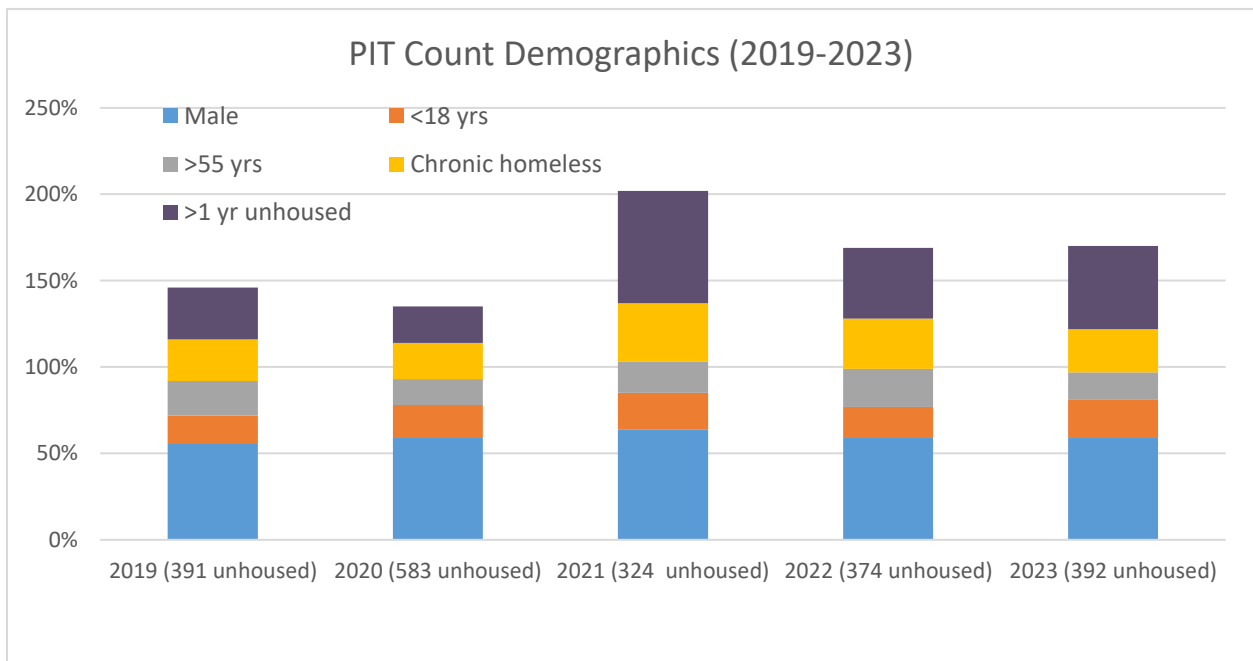


Figure 2.11 PIT demographics for gender, duration of homelessness, and age. The number of individuals reporting unhoused status of greater than 1 year has increased over these last five years, as has the number of chronically homeless.

2.2. NJ211 trends in basic needs referrals: housing, utilities, and food

The referral service NJ211 is central to the processes for PEH and food insecure populations. This system is operated by the partnership between Inform USA and the United Way and serves to aggregate information about charitable service organizations and governmental programs that provide support services. It is a no-cost referral service for anything from housing shelters to legal consultation. If an individual has need of a housing shelter or housing assistance, vouchers, or a TRA, by policy they are required to use NJ211 to initiate that request and to make use of the referral that NJ211 provides. For this reason, NJ211 is a critical indicator of PEH needs.

Figure 2.21 shown below provides data on calls for basic needs to NJ211 during the months of February and March in 2022, 2023, and 2024. February and March represent a period with a large amount of below freezing days in Passaic County and an indication of how the NJ211 services are used in response. Highlighted for these days are the **BASIC NEEDS** contacts in which people request housing, utility, food, material goods, and transportation requests. The number of basic needs calls totaled around 10,000 each of these years and we can see the proportion of different types of requests.

The most common requests Basic Needs requests via NJ211 were for **assistance with Utilities or Housing/Shelter**. An important trend is that in 2022 the Utility needs were requested 40.5% and Housing/Shelter 26.2%; 2023 Utility was 33.7% and Housing/Shelter was 30.0%; and 2024 Utility was 30.0% and Housing/Shelter was 37.5%. That is a proportionate **increase in the housing referrals by 11.3% and a proportionate decrease in the utility referrals by 10.5% from 2022 to 2024.**

This trend, among the other findings, suggests that the conditions that initially created the needs for an utility intervention within stable housing may have led to a need for a housing intervention. If the request for utility assistance can be taken as an early warning of losing one's home, then how that referral is addressed would either increase or decrease a future need for referrals to housing/shelter. In other words, **this three-year trend may indicate that more effective support and intervention for life stabilization following a utility referral could alleviate a future and more catastrophic need for support and intervention with a housing issue.**

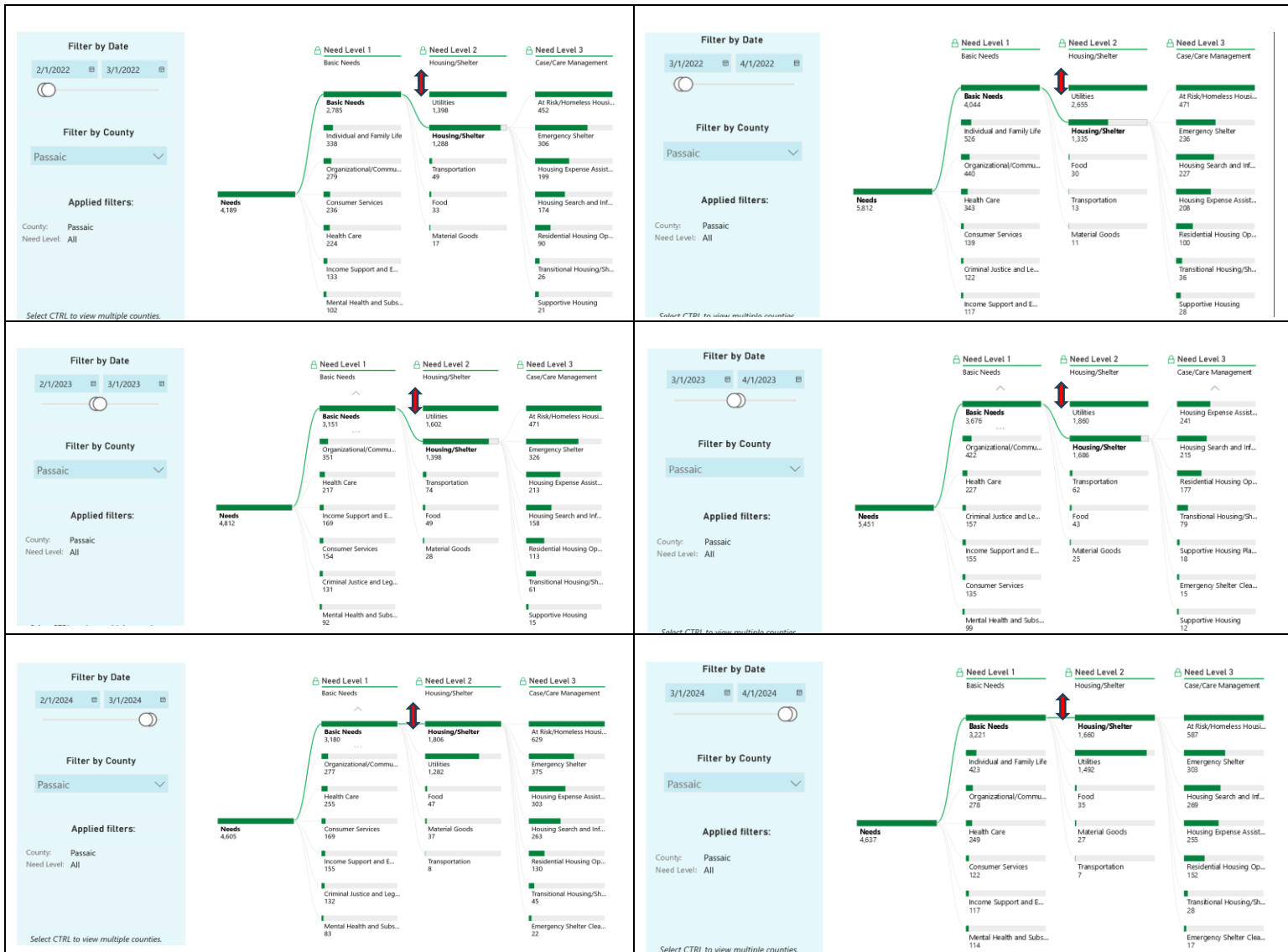


Figure 2.21 NJ211 data on basic needs calls/referrals with Passaic County during February and March of 2022 (top), 2023 (mid), and 2024 (bottom). During this period the most referred basic need switched from Utility assistance to Housing/Shelter assistance.

Figure 2.21 also shows the **food requests** during this period. Per the interviews with stakeholders and the usability study, many individuals connect to food pantries and soup kitchens through word-of-mouth referrals and via the websites unaffiliated with NJ211. However, we can see that the number of food referrals also increased proportionately from 2022 to 2024 (increase of 2.6%). These food referrals averaged only about 8% of the basic needs with Passaic County requests to NJ211. Data on food requests seems to indicate that (a) NJ211 is a small referral system for food insecurity relative to other networks and (b) the needs for food interventions are rising steadily.

Archival analysis of the NJ211 referral data for Passaic County is indicative of several important issues. The ratio of utility referrals relative to housing/shelter referrals has shifted over the most recent three period. That shift suggests preventative referral measures may have been insufficient to stave off a

greater housing risk and an increase in the number of individuals seeking housing. If the basic needs referrals for food and utility can be used to proactively, it could provide a means to reduce an elevated need for shelter/housing at a future date.

2.3. Passaic county human service data (unhoused & food)

The ImpactPassaic website provides search utilities to enable individuals to find support programs within Passaic County and local areas. This website is operated by FindHelp and their analytics provide some indications of user access: clarifying which services, locations, and frequencies of usage from 2022. The ImpactPassaic analytics are consistent with NJ211 in their usage: the most frequent searches are for:

- (1) Utility assistance (e.g., 317 referrals for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program) and
- (2) Housing/Shelter (e.g., 177 referrals for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program). In addition, there are a substantial number of referrals for
- (3) Food/goods assistance (e.g., CUMAC was referred 164 times).

Based on these top searches, in 2022 there was a very high need for assistance with utilities, and common needs for rental assistance and food.

The ImpactPassaic data also provides regional data using zip codes. The top-10 most common originating zip codes for searchers can be seen **Figure 2.31**:

Figure 2.31 Map showing the 10 most common zip codes of ImpactPassaic search users

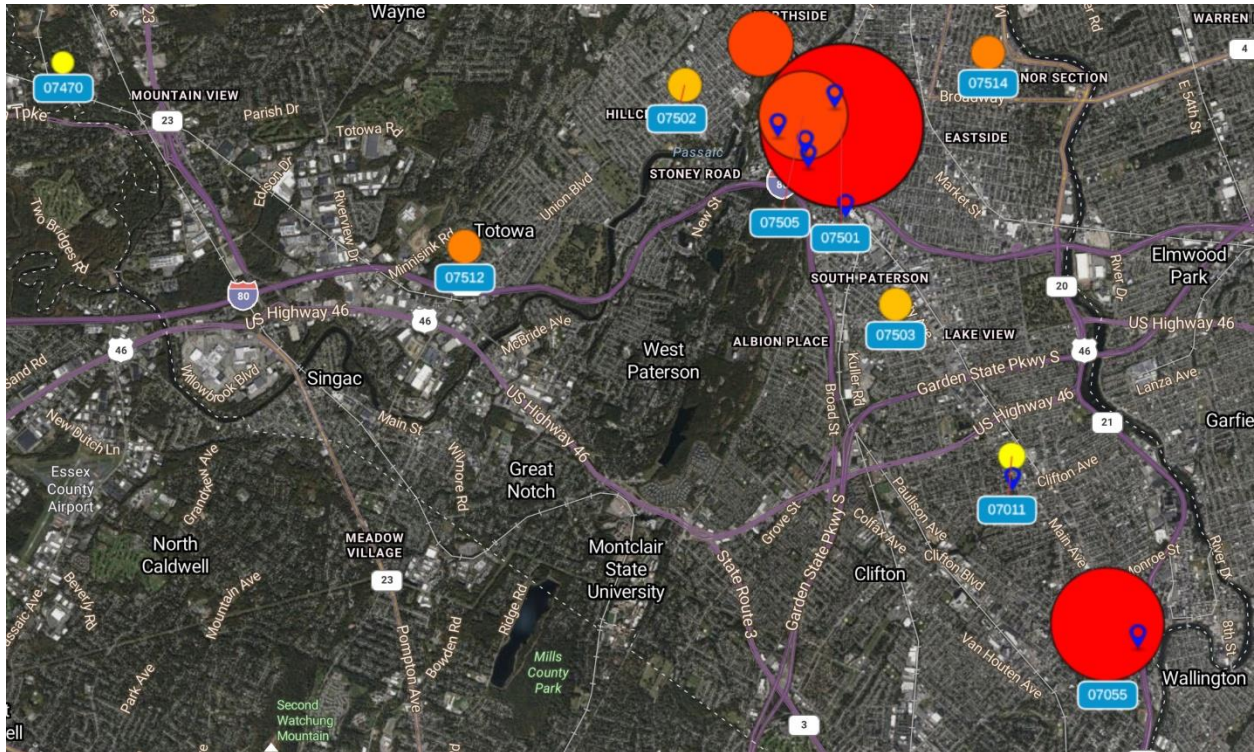


Figure 2.31 shows a map and associated zip codes for the top ten most common zip codes associated to people searching for support from ImpactPassaic. The larger brighter red circles indicate usages over 1000 times, while the smallest yellow circles indicate 430 searchers or fewer. Blue pins are dropped to indicate locations for several of the larger food pantries (e.g., CUMAC, Father English).

3. Needs Assessment Methodology

3.1. Survey

A brief survey was modeled on the established protocols from Housing and Urban Development, Kaiser Permanente, the American Academy of Family Physicians, the Boston Thrive, and the Medicare Housing and Health surveys. Using these models, the CERG survey was designed to be completed in under 10 minutes and included questions about basic demographics, food, housing, income, transportation, education, and interactions with various bureaucratic processes. Participants were able to complete the survey in either English or Spanish. In addition, questions were provided with representative icons to clarify the aims. Most questions were designed for unambiguous simplicity: Yes/No responses such as “do you have a car” and multiple choice such as “Do you think you are at risk of becoming homeless in the next 6 months?” In addition, the survey concluded with two open ended questions for which respondents could clarify specific concerns that they were experiencing and unmet needs that they felt

would be impactful to improving their situation. The complete set of survey question with responses is included with the Appendix.

The survey was distributed online via Qualtrics software and at 11 different locations across Passaic County, including homeless shelters, soup kitchens, and food pantries. In addition, the survey was made available via the ImpactPassaic website. The in-person data collection was facilitated by our team members who provided paper copies, guidance on completing the survey, and materials (e.g., pens, writing surfaces). Team members also distributed a QR code to allow access to the online survey, for those who preferred that format. Both paper copies and the online survey portal allowed access in Spanish or English, per the preference of the participants.

During data collection, it was evident that these surveys were being solicited from a population that has undergone many previous assessments. We heard from individuals who described some reluctance to doing the survey for this needs assessment and typically the participants completed the survey after explicit recognition and active endorsement from resource administrators. Notably, most organizations run their own internal assessments, and the community members have been recruited for assessments from a wide range of community groups and in association with governmental organizations at many levels. As a result, those working with food and housing insecure populations expressed some wariness as to the intentions of surveyors, the potential impacts of completing such surveys for themselves and their community (i.e., was this a waste of time), and described very limited available time. While our survey design and outreach efforts were intended to enable the inclusion of as many participants as possible, the feedback we received from stakeholders – both administrators and clients – was to recognize the reluctance of community members to do more surveys. This feedback is valuable and should be used for the consideration of how best to approach similar assessments in the future.

A total of 105 individuals responded to the survey and of those responses, 98 people agreed to participation. Participants needed an average of 8 min to complete a survey, 61% completed the survey in the Spanish-language version. In terms of respondent demographics, the largest representative groups were ethnically Hispanic/Latin (69%) and female (74%). More demographic information is detailed in the figures and tables below.

Figure 3.11 Ethnic demographics of CERG survey participants

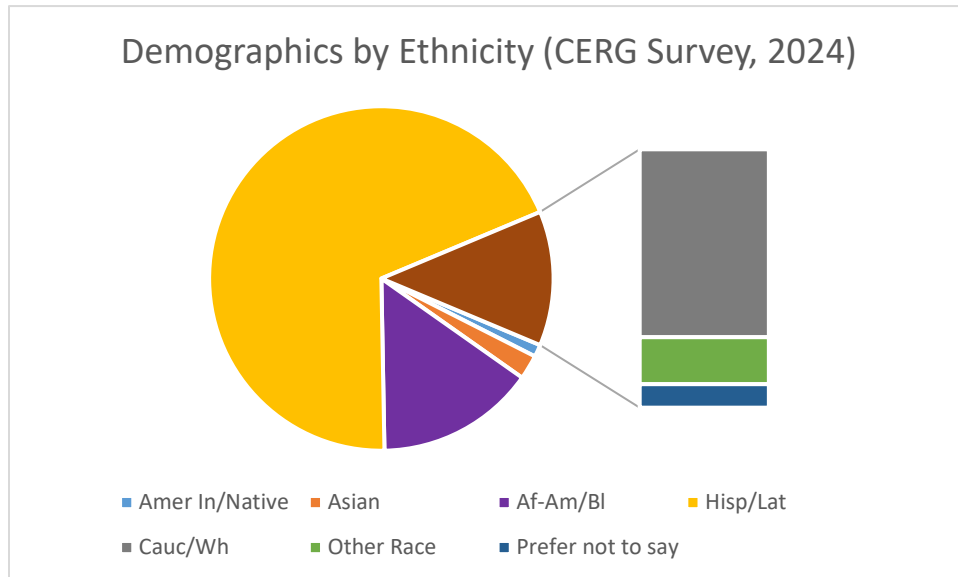


Figure 3.11 shows the proportionate representation of ethnic groups in the CERG survey. This survey included a larger representation of Latin/Hispanic respondents than is typically captured in the PIT count.

Outcomes from the CERG survey are described with the Key Findings of section 4. Full results from the survey are presented in the appendix.

3.2. In-Depth Interviews & Participant Observation

Using a purposive sampling approach, we conducted 13 in-depth interviews with key individuals working with 7 community-based organizations and city/town-based alliances in Passaic County. These interviews were semi-structured and ranged from 45 minutes to more than an hour. Individuals were a mix of higher management (CEOs, CFOs), middle management (project managers), and coordinators / supervisors of shelters and admission. The interviews included an ad-hoc group interview (3 individuals) who were part of a community initiative to address homelessness in a city.

The interview questions were designed to explore three areas:

- a) Broad organizational experiences of success, change and challenges from leadership: Questions in this area included reflections on the mission and vision of the organization, change over time in organizational approach and needs of community, expectations of service provider organizations from the county and government, and challenges faced along with alternate models or solutions that the leaders had come across in their experience.
- b) Meso-level organizational process mapping and structures for services: Questions in this area included reflections on the programs and services designed within the organization, staff training, challenges, and changes over time.
- c) Micro-level outcomes, barriers, and challenges to service providers: Questions in this area included reflections on the outcomes for PEH who enter service organizations as clients, the

challenges encountered by service providers in serving their needs, the barriers to providing services, variations by social groups, any kinds of challenges to equity and inclusion, and any alternatives or solutions attempted or aspired to by the organization.

3.3. Usability Studies

Usability focused on where and how people interface with support services. With respect to housing: the current policy requires that for housing resources a person must contact NJ211, clarify the issue, and enable their representatives to appropriately direct them. Consequently, the team analyzed access and resources supported through NJ211. The NJ211 service is part of a very large referral service that can be used for access to food, housing, health, transportation, and many other social supports. To investigate food and related resource distribution, the usability study included multiple websites that may be used to find referrals (e.g., ImpactPassaic, FindHelp, NJ211) and on-site assessments.

User access analyses for housing were conducted with the NJ211 website. Researchers tested the design hierarchy, the navigability, the logical flow, and resource options. Analyses focused on first usage and did not include longer engagements and anticipated follow-up activities with NJ211. Interviews with NJ211 users indicated that most resources would require follow-up. Stakeholders who regularly interact with NJ211 for housing resources have described that getting people involved with their systems regularly and over extended periods (often multiple years) is important for persons seeking to gain semi-permanent or permanent housing options. With recognition of this caveat regarding the need for frequent usage, the usability analysis was intended to clarify how people initiate resource access and contact with NJ211.

User access analysis for food were designed around the flexible policies for locating and making use of these resources. Per reports from various stakeholders, soup kitchens and food pantries tend to encourage that individuals/family units access the resource centers in their current county of residence. However, per policy of the New Jersey Food Bank, and by consensus of reporting for those involved in administrating food support organizations, an individual/family unit outside of the intended area will receive service and be able to access those resources. The sentiment echoed by all stakeholders was that if a person has a need for food and reaches out for support, that it is the duty of those organizations to provide the resources they have available without judgment.

Food resources *may* be located via NJ211, but stakeholders (both administrators and users) reported most typically finding those resources via word-of-mouth. Consequently, the usability study focused on a broad range of websites serving Passaic county, the locations of access points, and observations of distributions to their clientele. Websites that provided reference to food resources differentiated between emergency needs (i.e., immediate, on-hand provisions), soup kitchens (i.e., open access meals served to the public), and food pantries (i.e., open access food distribution centers made available to the public). These assessments compared the usability and access functions of NJ211, FindHelp in NJ, Impact Passaic, the FoodHelpLine/ LemonTree, and Passaic Resource Net.

4. Key Findings

4.1. Survey Findings

Overwhelming there are three resources identified as the highest priority by survey respondents:

- a) **Housing resources.** This was the most commonly identified need by 62% of respondents. The need for housing centers on the lack of affordable housing, the lack of resources to enable those seeking housing to successfully gain housing, and the lack of financial support to maintain safe housing with working utilities.
- b) **Food.** This was the second most commonly identified need by 48% of respondents. Notably many of the respondents participated through involvement with a food pantry or soup kitchen. We also found that 60% of respondents had run out of food and been unable feed themselves during the past year. The barriers to food were related to issues with transportation to distribution locations, logistical coordination issues between medical and care-giver responsibilities and the needs for food, and insufficient financial resources to get food.
- c) **Jobs.** This was the third most commonly identified need by 46% of respondents. A large portion of survey respondents reported some consistent income (45%), but 51% reported that 50 to 75% of their income went into housing costs – with little remaining for food, utilities, medical coverage, and other necessities. The issue with supporting employment is both about helping people to gain employment and for that employment to provide compensation that meets the financial needs for housing, food, and other basic requirements.

Figure 4.11 Education level

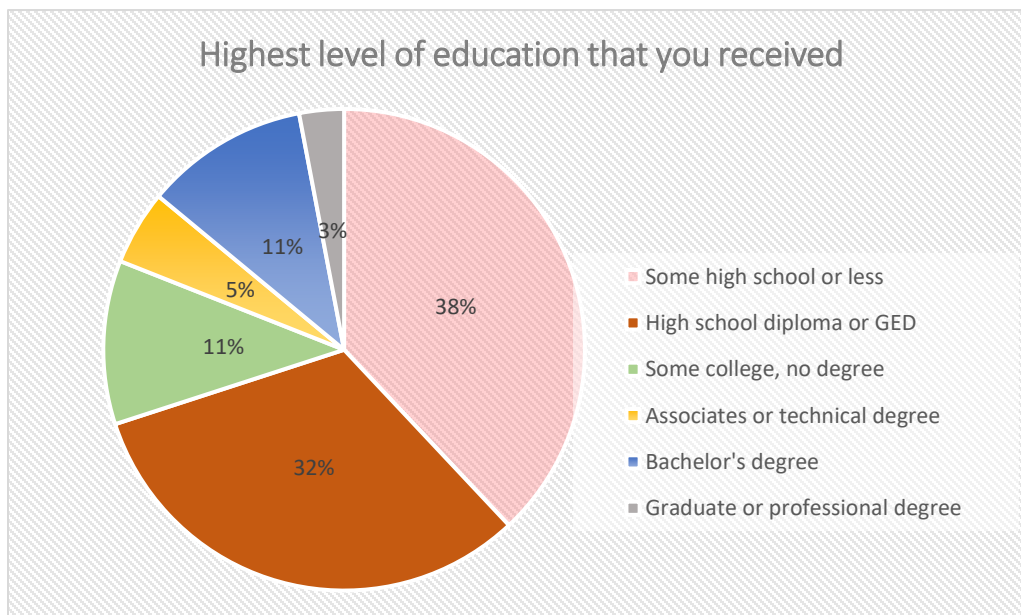


Figure 4.11 shows the level of education completed by survey respondents. The majority of the sample had some primary education and no more than high school completion or equivalent.

As shown in **Figure 4.11**, 70% of respondents in this survey had completed a high school education or less in terms of formal training. ***This finding represents a significant risk factor for gaining and maintaining a livable wage in New Jersey.*** As of 2021, nearly 70% of jobs advertised in the United States required some post-secondary education and this number is estimated to rise over the next decade according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The level of education also correlates with the lifetime earnings and stability of careers. Given the limited advanced education of survey respondents, some

opportunities for college courses and technical training may have particular value to reducing the risk for PEH and improving the potential for a sufficient, livable income.

The survey also asked people to describe their *risk of becoming homeless*. The majority (51%) described that they were either “likely” or “extremely likely” to be homeless in the next 6 months. Respondents living within temporary shelters or living with friends and relatives were at high risk of becoming unhoused without available options. Respondents also had limited transportation options, with only 17% reporting the use of a car. *Most respondents relied on public transportation*, which would complicate their ability to transport groceries from food pantries or apply for jobs outside of a very limited area of accessibility. Among those surveyed, 60% reported that they had run out of food without the ability to purchase or obtain more during the most recent 12-month period.

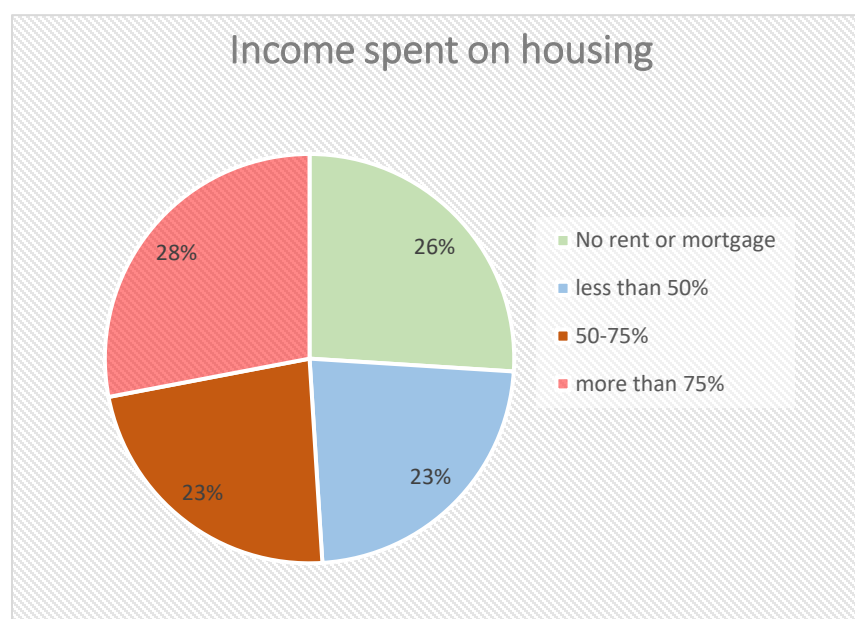


Figure 4.12 describes the amount of income respondents spent on housing, with the majority devoting more than 50% of income to this expense.

Figure 4.12 are the responses about the total amount of income spent on housing, including rents or mortgages. One quarter of participants currently resided in a temporary housing shelter and paid no rent or mortgage expenses, but with a pending need to secure future residence. Those who pay for their housing often devoted a significant portion of their income. The largest proportion of respondents (28%) described rent/mortgage of more than 75% of their income. In addition, the majority of respondents (53%) described difficulty paying for utilities, including heating and electricity. This finding is echoed in many ways throughout the needs assessment: people are struggling to pay for housing and the resources devoted to housing pose a risk for becoming unhoused and limit resources available to maintain a consistent budget for food and utilities.

Most respondents had a valid, government issued form of identification (81%). Valid identification is critical for access to many services, including housing resources like TRA and food benefits like SNAP. However, those without identification are in a much more precarious living situation. That 19% of

respondents without identification must contend with no access to government assistance for resources and limits the potential for gainful employment, fair housing, and related matters.

Figure 4.13 What would improve your housing situation?



Figure 4.13 is a word cloud representing the most commonly used words for survey respondents providing open feedback to the question: what is the one most important thing that would improve your housing situation? Larger fonts indicate greater commonality for use of a particular word.

Figure 4.13 presents a word cloud that simplifies the open-ended text responses that respondents provided to the question: What is one thing that would improve your housing situation? For simplicity, this word cloud is limited to words that had frequencies in the upper 50% of responses and all non-semantic words were removed (e.g., “the,” “to,” “and”). The most prominent concepts communicated in this open feedback were for rents that were more affordable; more accessible and wage sufficient jobs, and to improve the stability of the living situation with assistance.

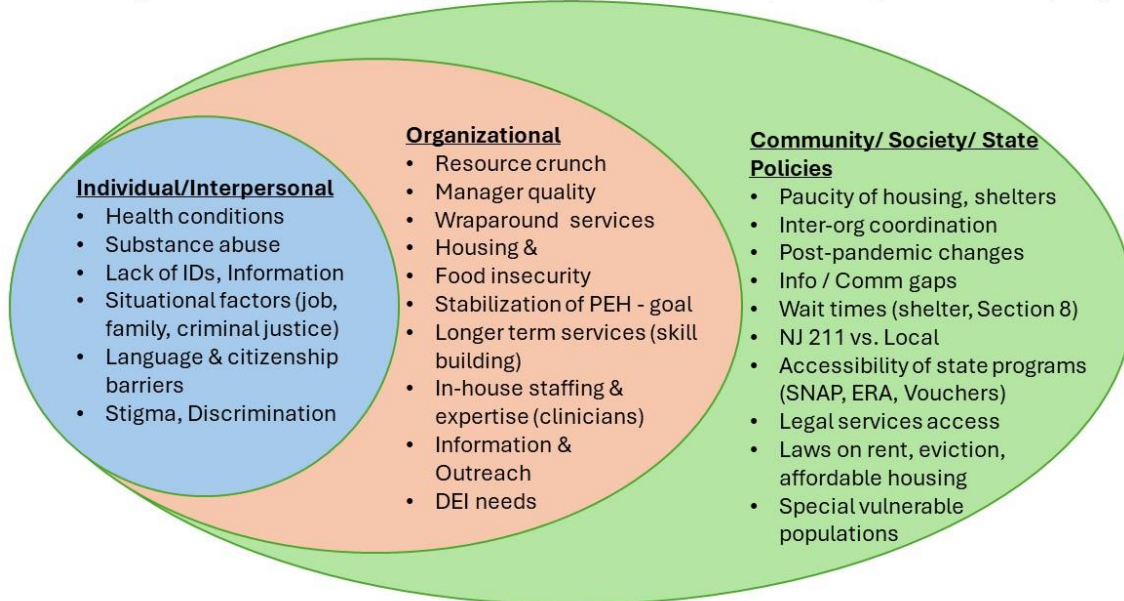
This survey overview provides several of the key findings. Respondents were clear that access to jobs (and more livable wage-earning jobs) and affordable housing were central concerns. However, the survey also was clear in demonstrating risk factors with respect to limited education, limited transportation, and a potential to expand these options. Please see the appendix for the full listing of survey questions and responses.

4.2. Interview Findings

Interview transcripts were coded manually to generate domains, identify salient quotes, and repeating themes. Coding was done using a mix of inductive and deductive methods. The domains and themes that emerged were in-line with the three levels of questions in the interviews (section 3.2). We used a

variation of the classic socioecology model (SEM) framework developed by various scholars and research organizations to map the different levels of social factors – individual/interactional, organizational, and community/society/state policies. These then also frame the key domains that situate the themes which emerge from interview analyses in section 4.3.

A Socio-Ecological Framework for Challenges & Responses for Persons Experiencing Homelessness (PEH)



Adapted from: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2015. The social-ecological model: a framework for prevention of violence. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED556109.pdf> (Accessed June 7, 2024)

During analysis of interviews some key themes emerged, each of which were coded to belong to a particular domain corresponding to the levels of the SEM framework above. We represent these themes along with salient quotes from interviewees that capture the theme.

4.2.1. Homelessness / Housing Insecurity

DOMAIN	THEMES	QUOTES / COMMENTS
Individual / Interpersonal	Health conditions (mobility, substance dependence, others)	“If someone has a mobility issue , then it is good for the placing agency to send them to a place that is capable of accommodating this need...but very few do in Passaic County...a social worker at hospital needs to be part of the resource network to place in housing”

		<p>"It's, you know, if you're hooked on substances, then more than likely you wind up in the Criminal Court system."</p>
Individual / Interpersonal	Lack of IDs	<p>Critical practice - Residency letter (from manager of shelter) for birth certificate, for social services such as SNAP, TRA, or for getting SSN card, or driver license.</p>
Individual / Interpersonal	Information gaps	<p>"That's why I mentioned before, you have to know what and where your resources are. You can't do anything if you don't have resources and know your resources."</p>
Individual / Interpersonal	Situational factors (jobs, family, criminal justice system)	<p>Examples include loss of job, conflict with family and hence losing housing, stigma attached to reentry, age as a factor for getting a job</p>
Individual / Interpersonal	Language & Citizenship barriers	<p>"Most of the women coming in here only speak Spanish."</p>
Individual / Interpersonal	Stigma	<p>"The culture of renting and things like that. So if you fall behind on your rent, you now have to have a court filing in order to receive some sort of assistance...And then let's say you do get assistance, you know, but you decide to move to another apartment and now. You have this judgement on your credit and landlords are like we don't want to rent to you because we see here on your history your rental history that you've been to landlord tenant court."</p> <p>"We had a nurse that was 50-52 but she's an active working nurse in Bergen County. She was ashamed to even mention it to her coworkers, but she would come to the warming center, and then she would go to work. And she was homeless. She's homeless and she's working full time, and she just couldn't make ends meet. She didn't make enough money."</p>

<p>Organizational</p>	<p>Resource crunch</p>	<p>“So, we have shelters that are operating the cost of the shelters is seven figures a year and we're getting less than \$100,000 a year.”</p>
<p>Organizational</p>	<p>Importance of Manager and initial rapport</p>	<p>“We first we specify what exactly their need is sometimes. Everybody's not in due to drugs and alcohol; maybe fire, flood, some type of disaster where they need of assistance. If it's drugs, we try to assist them with getting them into detox, possibly coming back if there's available. Maybe assist them also about getting into an inpatient program at...or a bed at the shelter and they can attend...so there's a lot of variables when it comes to...It's not just managing the house.”</p> <p>“Just how I introduced myself...has been the initial like barrier breaker for me for talking about unhoused guests. Once I'm able to build a bond at code blue offering them necessities and food or just comfort. Taking away the inhumanity treatment that they've been used to, it allows me to create a pathway where I can ask them for what I handed you. The un-housed intake form.”</p> <p>“But with the unhoused, it's always 211, then food stamps, then it's a process. It's not like I meet you and I'm done in 10 minutes. I'm about 3 hours deep. Just one person just to do 211 and then the food stamps.”</p> <p>Tasks done by manager could include setting up email account for PEH who needs to get on SNAP which then could lead to rental assistance (TRA)</p>
<p>Organizational</p>	<p>Multidimensionality of issues connected to PEH</p> <p>Wraparound Services needed for any service provider</p>	<p>“So went from soup kitchen to then having shelters and eventually halfway houses.”</p> <p>“And that's how you can see why [organization] does all the things that it does -- mental health services through our outpatient mental health program, outpatient substance use disorder programs, our medical clinic for medical services, our substance use disorder, inpatient services, halfway houses.”</p> <p>“So, if we get a person in off the street first and foremost. You still got to deal with the fact that they're</p>

		<p>unemployed. Maybe using substances possibly have mental health issues need to be able- To eat right? So, we have to do all of those things."</p>
<p>Organizational</p>	<p>Stabilization of PEH is goal, not just addressing immediate fact of homelessness</p>	<p>"Take someone's hand. You don't let it go until they can stand on their own two feet. Well, that means stabilizing a person. If you're stabilizing a person, it's no longer a matter of stabilizing because they're hungry or stabilizing because they were homeless. It's stabilizing also with mental health, substance use disorder, ability to be gainfully employed to be able to sustain themselves...To be able to get a place where they can live and pay rent or own a home... That's a lot. And when you think of that, you're looking at a whole person and saying so. What is it that we need to do to help you to be a positive, contributing member in society?"</p> <p>"We're not causing people to pack up their bags first thing in the morning. We actually have people that are in residence here for a prolonged duration of stay. Some people more recently, as long as 400 days."</p>
<p>Organizational</p>	<p>Longer term services (skill building, certification)</p>	<p>Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) seems to be a key site for longer term stability.</p> <p>Licensed culinary school, enrichment classes continuing education, need to continue with unemployment benefits while attending career school and with 4C Comm Coordinated Childcare.</p> <p>Make grants available to those who bring critical skills to the non-profit sector (incl language skills).</p>
<p>Organizational</p>	<p>In-house Staffing & Training (including clinicians)</p>	<p>"...make sure that the staff understands exactly what their position entails is not just sitting behind the desk answering phones. When a person comes to the door, it's our job to assist them the best way we can, and the best way to do that is to know your resources in the area. Or develop contacts."</p> <p>"You get a lot of burnouts. So, if you get 12, 18, 24 months of clinicians in house. Then they move on and they move into a private payer system or a for profit system. They're gone, so that high turnover, you know, developing new people, developing people that are early on in their careers, it's challenging for us and is something that is going to be a high hurdle for us going</p>

		forward and many organizations that are like ours and that means that for Community that we serve.”
Organizational	Information & Outreach	“If there's job opportunities if there's trainings, whatever it is, it's going up on the billboards . That way, when they come in to eat, they're able to see it while they're sitting there eating. Sometimes we'll even go so far as to target some of the messaging where we will put place settings and so the place mat is a printout with information , so that way they're able to take that as well.”
Organizational	DEI needs	“It [race, gender, ethnicity, religion] shouldn't [play a role], but it does play into this, and you know, unintended bias is one of those things. So, ensuring that people are trained in cultural competency and DEI initiatives is key.”
Community / Society / State Policies	Paucity of Shelters and need to collaborate	“So, I think the number is something like 600,000 units are lacking in the state of New Jersey.” “But one of our problems is sometimes you know we don't always have the space , but what we'll do is we will call other shelters. To see if they have all beds available and try to assist them you know...Well, you gotta think about this. The only other shelters in [city] are [names of two shelters in city] ... for the majority of the time they're full. So, then what we'll do is...we'll try to work something out as far as maybe sending them somewhere else or they may need help. But once again, like going to a detox. So, we'll hold them down. I have emergency cots ; we'll hold them down and let them sleep on the cot in the living room.”
Community / Society / State Policies	Inter-organization Coordination, Collaboration, Partnership	“Another challenge is that often one group doesn't know what another group is doing ... And we're trying to get better about that and be more transparent and strategic and collaborative .” “A bigger problem, so that's why I said tonight we have to invite everybody we have to we have to play ball with each other, right? We need we support each other because if we don't support each other, it's not going to work. So we don't want silos, right? ” “And so it's a matter of, you know, affirming what are we, the subject matter experts in and where can we partner with other subject matter experts to be able to

		treat people with wrap around services , either by referring them, connecting them or bringing them in.”
Community / Society / State Policies	<p>County as coordinator of services</p> <p>County as legitimator of services</p>	<p>“Bergen County has its own shelter with, so they built a new facility. With medical services wrap around services, Bergen County partner with other organizations and other agencies, so people come in, they go into their shelter, and they aggressively push people through the system...The county is relying on nonprofits to do it well. Look, the county doesn't have to have its own shelter, but it could certainly be the coordinator of services.”</p> <p>“What happened was the county didn't pay them on time or something happened with payment so they [landlords] wouldn't work with the, say, county. So now there goes the vouchers which like come on.”</p>
Community / Society / State Policies	Post-pandemic changes – Medicaid 1115	“Now we're seeing the Medicaid carving coming in with the 1115 waiver , which is going to be a big hit for us because it's going to be payments on the Medicaid rate. Which is going to be approximately 75 to 85% of what the fee for service rate is today. So, we're going to lose right up right off, right out the gate on this. And it also means that. There's a higher level of responsibility on our part in providing those services. That responsibility is going to be tied to our clinical team being able to defend their assessments with clients that are coming in from a healthcare perspective.”
Community / Society / State Policies	Wait times – realities, perceptions	“But to get Section 8, yeah. Here's your wait list. Forget. Yeah, there's a wait list. Probably 10 years long.... My aunt had to wait four years. That's sad. That's sad, and a senior has to wait that long to hopefully get into a program or sorry. It's just, it's just heartbreaking to see and we deal with this on the regular.”
Community / Society / State Policies	NJ211 vs. Local	“The reason [why 211 does not work is] because they're not in the state, they're not in the city, they're not representing those areas. It could be someone out in Nevada typing in a Google search for New Jersey trying to find solutions. And oh well, we see five shelters popped up. Let me see. Can I? We just found out that they can only contact [name of best known service provider] and then the rest [they] have to leave it alone...They don't even try contacting the house or our code blue. Its, its hit and miss with those...Yeah. So 211 is literally an artificial person that's not in the state

		<p>with no idea of the impact of the weather or the, the, the, the diversities or the. Insecurities. It just seems like this system has to be changed, but I don't know too well and I don't know how to change it.”</p> <p>“Well, I mean, I think that speaks to at least having maybe instead of a National Center having that transfer to a local control might make more sense.”</p>
<p>Community / Society / State Policies</p>	<p>Special populations (seniors, women with children, single fathers)</p>	<p>“Some sort of assistance and police to try to help seniors, but the increase in seniors that are homeless, and you know a lot of times not even aware of their rights. I was working with a senior a couple of weeks ago and she's basically like, oh, the landlord went up on my rent. I couldn't afford it, so I just moved out. I just left because I couldn't afford the increase. So now she's homeless and she has. She's on a fixed income.</p> <p>“Special population, which is single fathers, you know. Because there's no shelters for them, you know? So, if there is, if you can't find an agency that has funding for a hotel, they're just basically, like out of luck. Whereas if it's a single mom, there may be a family shelter somewhere that she can go up to...So if you're a single man that will set up a bigger chance, but a single a single father you. It's almost impossible, sorry.”</p>
<p>Community / Society / State Policies</p>	<p>Broader laws and legal services</p>	<p>“We're putting patches on a shark bite, putting little Band-aids here and there where we can when we. Bigger wounds, bigger hemorrhages, and if we could figure out a better way to mitigate or to figure out how to navigate, I guess the finances that we are receiving and or whatever finances that might be on the table, what grants we could figure out what other things that there are and come up with first the foundation. Housing, housing, giving yourself a foundation somewhere like feel safe to sleep somewhere safe.”</p>
<p>Community / Society / State Policies</p>	<p>Fair Share Housing Act, Zoning laws, Modular housing solutions</p>	<p>“Give...nonprofits right of first refusal to acquire properties that are owned by the city to develop them for affordable housing.”</p> <p>“pre-construction prior to arrival. You know almost a plug and play kind of set up and I think it's brilliant which would require the city to say...[yes].”</p> <p>“You have the jail that [is] not being used, I don't think anymore. I'm not saying use that like it is, but maybe</p>

		<p>you fixed up one or two floors like one for female, one for male. I don't, I don't know. But you have the resource there and then, you know, have the cities responsible for taking people there.”</p> <p>“My solution would be if we could come up like what you said the building where men and women separated. You have a common area where you can eat, an area where you could build social skills or social service programs, and then you earn your long-term facility...you have to keep up making sure you're doing job applications or contributing to the services and you earn your permanent stay. But for the first 3-6 months you earn a cot. And then for that cot you, you graduate. And that would be a long-term solution for homelessness...We could create. A solution for the unhoused and a solution for the families who are unhoused... And the program is taking care of the community.”</p>
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4.2.2. Food Insecurity

While the above findings are mostly about homelessness and housing insecurity, there are some others that are specifically about the needs of service providers working on **food insecurity**.

DOMAIN	THEME	Quote / Comment
Individual / Interpersonal	Trauma informed approach	“The trauma informed piece is really vital because we do much more than just hand out bags of food. Our team takes the time to understand the root causes of poverty, which we see as the adverse childhood experience ...what that does for us in our delivery model is that we see an individual with lived experience, not just a client that walks through our door or a person in need. So it really changes the way that we show up for ourselves.”
Individual / Interpersonal	Dignity and Respect	“we are a choice pantry. So our guests are able to make appointments and they shop for the foods that they want and they need and that are culturally appropriate to them. So they're not just coming in and getting a bag and they're not waiting on the line to get whatever we give out. It's really about dignity and respect and being mindful of them as a human. ”

<p>Individual / Interpersonal</p>	<p>Empathy and trauma informed</p>	<p>“So you see the individual, you understand them, you don't judge them for not bringing in their paperwork. We kind of say, OK, next time you come in, bring in your paperwork and that kindness. Right. Peace. It's really vital. But there are a lot of providers that do case management. I think the difference here is that. A lot of our guests see our team know our team and can feel. The empathy right. I don't know how to explain it, but they feel a little more connected to our team.”</p>
<p>Organizational</p>	<p>Staffing with locals and people who have experienced homelessness and food insecurity</p>	<p>“...they kind of know what it feels like to be the person on the other end, right? So they have may have themselves been homeless. They may have themselves depended on a pantry. So it changes the way that you see the other individual that lived experience. You can't teach that, right, like, it's different. And I think that's vital for anybody that does this work because you don't want to hire people that are coming in with like the Savior mentality, it's more of like, hey, I see you. I understand you. I've been where you are and I'm not better than you because I'm helping you. I think that shifted the whole way that we present ourselves.”</p>
<p>Organizational</p>	<p>Beyond being an emergency food provider</p>	<p>“So the proactive approach to food means that we move from just being an emergency food provider where we give the community whatever it is that we get to where we're actually purchasing and investing and buying. A complete meal for everybody that walks through our doors so our guests have proteins, carbs, meaning pasta, rice, canned goods, eggs and milk. Because we want to make sure that they are able to feed their families with not just calorie dense foods, but quality foods for their families.”</p>
<p>Organizational</p>	<p>Wraparound services</p>	<p>“So what wrap around services look like for us right now is if a household says that they need help with applying for any kind of social benefit, our team will work with them to upload and submit applications. So it's SNAP. We've just created a relationship with the local WIC office so that we can refer families and women. Over there, we do Medicaid applications as well. LIHEAP applications, which is</p>

		<p>the low income, heating and Electric assistance program and then any other services that they might need. Our team really tries to connect them to those services by actually helping them fill out the forms and IDs and. So we actually try to make sure that we are gathering all of the documents because there's usually the language barrier, the access to technology and our team will sit there with somebody and ask them all the questions and then help them create the applications and upload the documents so that they can start the process right. And then we also do educational workshops where we're bringing in partner agencies, whether it's legal services, the financial empowerment center like right now, the NJ Screener...talking about cancer prevention.”</p>
<p>Organizational</p>	<p>Warm handoffs</p>	<p>“So if I have a guest and I, I can call the other agency and say, hey, I'm sending you <name> because she's here and she told me that she needed help with childcare. And then I told <name>, hey, I've talked to this organization. Mary is going to help you over there. So it's different than just -- here's a list of resources. Good luck. Yeah, right”</p>
<p>Community/Society/ State Policies</p>	<p>Increase in numbers</p>	<p>“[we are serving food to] 25 or 40% higher [numbers] than the previous two years combined”</p>
<p>Community/Society/ State Policies</p>	<p>Food rescue</p>	<p>Resourcing food in innovative ways with expanded buy backs from grocery chains and farms</p>
<p>Community / Society / State Policies</p>	<p>Towards Unite Us</p>	<p>“We're also trying to integrate a new closed loop referral system called Unite US. Which is through HCPC. They're the ones that introduced it. So let's say somebody comes in for food and they need help with childcare. I can create a case for them and then refer them to an agency and then the agency gets an e-mail. <person name> from <org name> has referred Jenny for help and then I can see when the other agency takes them. And helps them. So that we really see that it's working... So the Unite US is a database that we're using to do referrals. So it's replacing the 211...Like we still use 211 as a model. But if I identify somebody that needs help, I can put in a referral to another agency.”</p>

<p>Community / Society / State Policies</p>	<p>Connection of food insecurity with housing insecurity and employment</p>	<p>“What I will say is that the majority of our guests are probably housed because they are providing us with an ID. Yeah, to show that they have that they live in the county. So it's really hard for me to, to give you an estimate on that. If anything, they may be on the brink...of facing housing insecurity because they're coming to us to get food. They probably need the money from the groceries to pay for their rent...I think the one question we did ask in our last survey, maybe 70% of our guests are employed. So they're working. Yeah.”</p>
<p>Community / Society / State Policies</p>	<p>Food security as a public health issue</p>	<p>“Food insecurity is not a ‘poor people problem’. It's a public health issue. It's very important for us to get that message across that there are people in our communities that worry either on a weekly basis. Or by the end of the month on how they're going to put food on their table. And that's a very hard concept for people to understand when we are living in one of the richest states in the United States. So...we got to talk about it and we got to know that it's a real issue. And then we have to talk about what the consequences of us not addressing that look like.”</p>
<p>Community / Society / State Policies</p>	<p>Not emergency food providers; but addressing societal issue</p>	<p>“Funding. Right. I think it's important to know that this is no longer an emergency. I think the first food, the first food pantry was in like 1967 and it was an emergency then...An emergency doesn't keep on for 40 years. So I think this notion of like emergency food providers. It's not real, it's it's. It's kind of now in our community embedded. People rely on us. We're not just feeding an emergency for these households. Expectations with the county for me is: Acknowledge that it exists. Right? It's not a poor people problem. It is a societal issue and it is our duty to be able to do better...So I've heard that some people don't believe that there are people who don't have access to food like that they can afford like that. It's the biggest thing that upsets me is when people think that I run a pantry that only feeds homeless people.”</p>
<p>Community / Society / State Policies</p>	<p>Need for a collaborative system</p>	<p>“Supporting this...creating systems where we can talk to each other, making sure we're doing it a little bit more uniform, right. So how are you doing food?”</p>

	<p>How am I doing food? What data are you collecting? How can we share data and then how can we collaborate? I think it's important. Ah. So to bring the I'm just trying to get this as clear as we can. So to bring already existing organizations in New Jersey working on food insecurity to be able to collaborate, share the data and feed of each other in some way."</p>
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4.3. Usability- Key Findings

Usability is focused on how people access resources and the associated functional efficiency. Much of the usability study evaluated resource websites that might be used for a person entering crisis and needing to determine food or housing resources. The usability study also included an evaluation of physical access to resources, such as where food is distributed and the ease with which it is made available.

4.3.1. Physical Access and Practices

Evaluation of the usability and functionality of the food pantries targeted several key issues. The first was to assess whether the food pantries and resource allocation centers are accessible in terms of public transportation, parking, and foot traffic. Larger resource centers are mapped in **Figure 2.31**, which highlights the top-10 most used zip codes requesting support via ImpactPassaic. Evident in that figure is the centrality of the larger food pantries in the city of Paterson along the main roads. These sites are highly accessible to foot traffic and public transportation. However, they have very limited parking and driving access. For locations outside of Paterson, there is excellent parking accessibility, albeit more limited access via public transportation and foot traffic

The second evaluation target was the welcome at the physical sites. We examined whether clients were welcomed to the site, felt comfortable, and were able to navigate safely through the site. These issues are addressed using several strategies. In terms of welcome, sites that relied more on appointments (relative to drop-by walk-ins) had the advantage of lower crowding, less pressured engagement with clients, and more allotted time per person. Sites with supported childcare and those using music (e.g., Oasis) had a very powerful welcoming presence, with staff exuding high levels of joy and the sounds of happy children at the entrance. It is also clear that this translates to an experience for clients that is calmer and welcoming. Research on music in shopping environments supports that it can improve mood, mask industrial sounds that correlate with higher stress, and set a pace of movement that is partially aligned to musical tempos.

Within the resource distribution center, several sites have adopted culturally sensitive practices that enable choice shopping, similar to the experience in a grocery store. Enabling self-choice increases a person's sense of efficacy and satisfaction. Importantly, this also enhances the experience of welcome and functionality for clients at those resource distribution centers. This practice supports clients with a diverse range of needs, from limited to high kitchen access, refrigeration/food storage access, and allergen-friendly options.

Resource distribution centers function primarily to support access to food, hygiene, and related essential products. However, several of these sites also enhance usability by offering supplementary services and consultation support. Clients may work with staff to better access benefits and to evaluate which government assistance programs are appropriate for them. Some sites provide transportation support and delivery services. Additionally, some sites offer ready-to-go food boxes as an alternative or in addition to choice selection experiences. Furthermore, these centers demonstrate a range of coordination for services with social workers, legal consultants, housing consultants, health care consultants, and nutrition/dietary consultants. Given the diverse range of needs for food-insecure individuals and PEH, and the quality of outreach achieved by these resource centers, these supplementary consulting services offer great value to food pantries and material resource distribution centers.

4.3.2. Website Evaluation

Usability studies with websites tend to emphasize the following issues:

1. Who is the targeted audience and are they effectively served?
2. Does the design enable clear and intuitive paths to targets?
3. What are potential pain points or frustrations a person might experience during use?

Per the methods described in section 3, the NJ211 website is the primary target for housing; by policy all users would access the website or phone service of that organization to gain access to shelters, housing vouchers, and related supports.

To access food and related resources through websites, users have a wide variety of options such as NJ211, ImpactPassaic (FindHelp), FoodHelpLine/LemonTree, and Passaic ResourceNet. See **Figure 4.3.21** with imagery screen capped from those four websites.

Figure 4.3.21 Provides the front page of Passaic serving housing and food support websites.

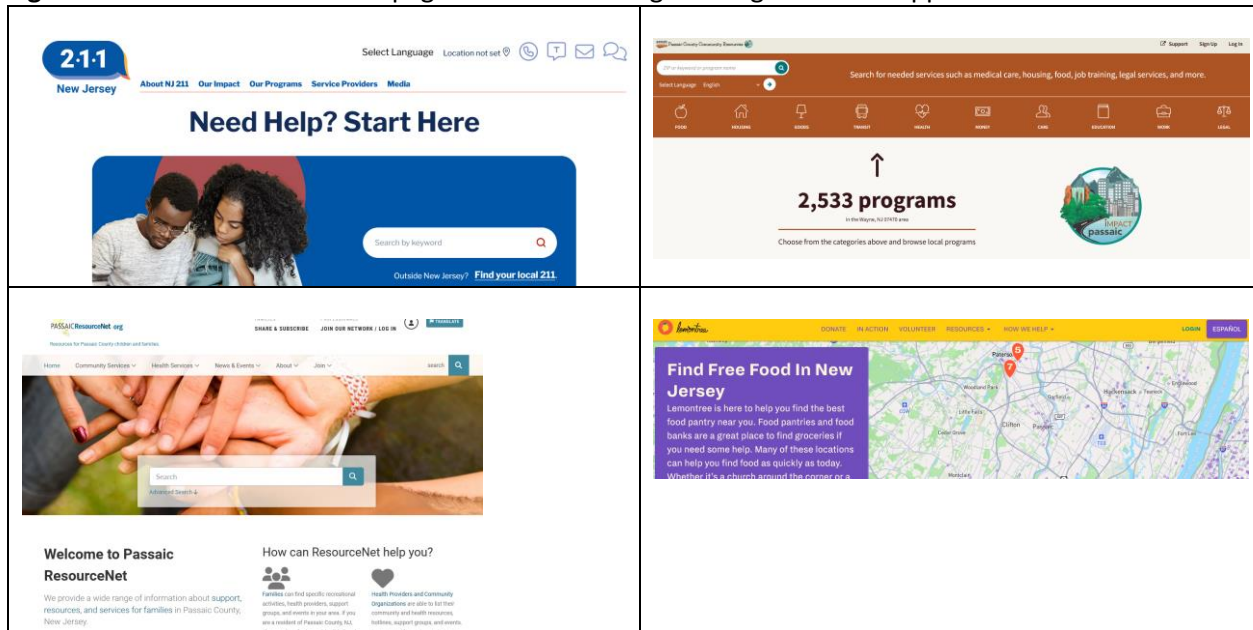


Figure 4.3.21 Shows a screencap from the front, landing page for NJ211 (top left), ImpactPassaic (top right), Passaic ResourceNet (bottom left) and Foodhelpline/LemonTree (bottom right). Each is attractive and welcoming with an orientation to somewhat different audiences.

Figure 4.3.21 shows the top third of the front page/landing page for four websites: NJ211, ImpactPassaic, Passaic ResourceNet and FoodHelpLine/LemonTree. These websites are all thoughtfully designed with an attractive use of colors and balanced header bands across the top to direct users. They all have the capacity for referral to a range of useful informational sources and for contact information to food distribution organizations. Specific usability analyses are reviewed below.

Language access. Each of these websites provides an option at the top of the page for language options in two or more languages. Note that option is displayed most prominently with the FoodHelpLine/LemonTree banner; the menu is presented in English except for the language display button in the top-right in *Español*. The button highlighted using a color contrast with a highlighting background. However, this option is limited to just two languages, English and Spanish. NJ211, ImpactPassaic and Passaic ResourceNet provide translation using a Google widget, visible near the top left or right of the page. This widget enables a range of translation options to serve speakers of a dozen or more linguistic backgrounds.

Targeted audience. The targeted audience is best defined by prioritized information and linked materials of the favored links at the top of a site. Usability evaluation of these target websites shows a variety of audiences (see **Figure 4.3.21**).

NJ211 is necessary for housing support and may also be used to access food resources. It is primarily targeted at users seeking information about the organization, its history, impact, and philosophy. Each of the first three links in the header and five of the six links across the top best serve those seeking to understand the organization. Consequently, *targeted users may engage with NJ211 to provide donations and/or build connections with their service organizations through future referrals*. The search functions for finding referrals to housing assistance, food pantries, and related supports can be accessed via the open-use search tool in the center of the page. However, the search tool is specific to organization titles and does not permit a general search such as "need a place to stay" or "help me enroll for food stamps." To more directly serve those in the community seeking support, the design would benefit from separating a donation/community partnership landing page from the user need page. Additionally, replacing the limited scope open search tool with a table of the most highly requested resources, contacts, and instructions on using the NJ211 resource referrals would be beneficial for service-seeking users.

ImpactPassaic provides a simple description of its primary function ("Search for needed services...") and uses easily identifiable icons with one-word descriptions, including "food" and "housing." This approach *targets an audience of users seeking to access services*. The icons and layout provide clear direction about the type of service and immediately enable users to differentiate between the kinds of services most relevant to the links they might select. The overall layout is effective at referring users to services, and each link provides clearly demarcated "next steps" or similar processes to move forward. While users are generally supported, the usability evaluation indicates there may be value to improving the proactivity. Contact phone numbers and website links are available to enable a user to follow through. It might be beneficial to add a pop-up screen or follow-up email to inquire whether a search need was fulfilled or requires further support would improve the CoC.

Passaic ResourceNet provides a balance of resource links for community services and for community partnerships and volunteer engagement. As such the *targeted audience would be both of these groups: individuals seeking services and community partners*. The community partners will find simple and direct links for joining the organization, opportunities for education and meeting involvement, and information about the history and philosophy of the organization. Individuals seeking services would need to seek their options through “community services,” “health services” or by use of an open search prompt centered in the page. The functionality of those links for service seekers is more limited than the options for potential partners and volunteers. Similar to NJ211, the open search is designed for specific titles. A user would need to know the name of an organization to locate it through the search. A search for “help me sign up for food stamps” or “how can I get free groceries” yields no results. There are several options in the community services that are functional and will provide a list of potential organizations with contact information. These outcomes could be enhanced by using a hierarchy to search result links that would clarify the size or relevance of an organization, and by clarifying some of the process (e.g., what does this organization provide, what will I need to qualify or enroll). In addition, some means to request support through Passaic ResourceNet or a supporting organization, follow-up options, and clarifications about the success rate of the organization would improve the value of the information.

FoodHelpLine/LemonTree is very specific to food resources. The header line of links focuses on service opportunities, donations, volunteerism, and organizational approaches (see **Figure 4.3.21**). The center of the site is a map showing locations of specific food distribution organizations, and the left side panel includes photos and information about the demarcated locations in the map. Consequently, *this website is designed for two audiences: volunteers/donators and those seeking food support services*. The header of the site is specific to the volunteers and provides clear indications of how to proceed with a donation or to register for involvement. The map and left side panel indicate service specific option. Each organization is provided with very clear contact information, hours of operation, and process-based requirements for use of the service. Interspersed with the listings of organizations, are a clear, well-delineated contact portal to enable a person to request assistance and sub-topics with additional guidance (e.g., “do they have vegetables?” “Are pantries open today?”). This site is effective in communicating process-oriented aspects of food pantries and integrating guidance features to enable successful connections between their users and these organizations.

Website Usability Conclusions. For **housing needs**, by policy users need to be directed to NJ211 and will require a follow-up phone conversation for appropriate referral. The website access for NJ211 does not make this an explicit requirement and the targeted approach of the website is more appropriately suited to an audience that seeks partnership (i.e., donors, organizations that may be referred for service). Improving that access and the robust support through the NJ211 website would improve the usability for housing needs. In addition, while other websites provide links to housing organizations and services, given the current policy making a more standard and explicit statement to direct users to the NJ211 phone service would be appropriate.

For **food needs**, each of the websites provided useful information and in two or more languages, for referrals to food organizations. ImpactPassaic and FoodHelpLine/LemonTree further clarified processes by specifying the types of support available, operation hours, and process-based details (e.g., ID requirements, sign-up procedures). The target of these websites was appropriate to a person seeking food resources and this was separated from partnership information for volunteers and potential referral organizations.

Both food and housing websites function as a means for referral. While referral is important, there are limited means for proactive follow-up. Of the websites we evaluated, only FoodHelpLine/LemonTree sent a text message follow-up and solicited to offer additional support the following day (see **Figure 4.3.22**). Increasing the proactivity of referrals services to bolster the CoC would improve their success.

Figure 4.3.22 Text message follow-up from FoodHelpLine/LemonTree



In addition, access to regular communication is a necessity for engaging with all of these services and is typically completed using a phone. This is important because people in financial crisis may not have regular access to a phone, or may have a phone without functional connectivity to a telecommunications network. For this reason, it would be important to provide clear directions with a referral website organizations on how to proceed if a person is not currently in possession of a functional, network connected phone.

5. Recommendations

To address the needs identified within this assessment there are several recommendations. **These recommendations pertain to both food and housing issues.** While the needs are very broad, they stem from three basic categories of issues—each linked to access to resources. The three categories, from the macro to the micro levels, are:

1. Community / Society / Sector level insufficient resources.
2. Organizational level insufficient resources.
3. Individual level bureaucratic barriers and insufficient resources.

We note that these three categories correspond to the three levels of actors (individuals, organizations, community/society/state) who form the SEM framework that shaped out data collection approach in previous sections. Each of these three categories in turn offers multiple recommendations that address the manifold of issues within the category. We elaborate briefly on each category below and then present our recommendations in a tabular form.

Community / Society / Sector level insufficient resources: This level is the most macro level category and captures the structural issues that shape homelessness and food insecurity. It includes population-wide issues, social institutional issues, state and governmental issues, and the legal, legislative, and planning / policy issues. Each of these issues arises in the context of popular demands but no available options for fulfilling those demands. The two most commonly cited concerns by stakeholders concerned

the insufficient supply of housing options and job opportunities. The amount of affordable housing in Passaic County is very limited and most in progress development of housing resources will not address this need. There is limited funding for housing vouchers and even those who have received vouchers have struggled for realistic, affordable options to make use of those vouchers. With respect to jobs, there are limited employment opportunities for the persons who are food and housing insecure, and most of the available jobs have earning opportunities that are insufficient to enable social mobility out of poverty. We note that each of these issues with resources is closely linked to the operations of governmental bureaucracy, state legislative, legal, and planning/policy systems, and social institutions, structures and practices such as racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination, stigma, exclusion, exploitation, and marginalization.

Organizational Level Insufficient Resources: This is the key operational level where systemic problems manifest. It is the meso-level of service and advocacy organizations, typically operating within communities and neighborhoods. The barriers at this level include a lack of operational funds for the composite of primary and wraparound services undertaken by these organizations. Underutilized resources, such as in-house job training and educational programs, mental health services, and food security services, also pose challenges. It is difficult to engage and maintain PEH in a multi-week training program while they are under tremendous food and housing strain. Although the training programs have been successful for those who can persist and complete them, attrition rates are very high. Regarding food, food pantries and soup kitchens are strained and struggle for resources. However, food waste remains an estimated 30-40% in the United States (USDA, 2023). There are opportunities to improve buy-back partnerships with grocery stores, create partnerships with restaurants, and improve the distribution of food resources more directly to those in need of support.

Individual Level Bureaucratic Barriers and Insufficient Resources: This is the most micro-level category and is deeply connected to the experiential aspects of homelessness and food insecurity. The most common issue among PEH is the bureaucratic barriers they face when entering systems that recognize their state of being unhoused or housing and food insecure, but pose immense hurdles for them to navigate efficiently and in a timely manner to access governmental programs designed for them. These barriers often arise during registration as a PEH, obtaining an ID, or registering for a service for the first time. Individuals may struggle to understand the process and require clear, persistent support to successfully complete it. These types of barriers are addressed with great success when individuals in need can connect with appropriate support staff. Each of these bureaucratic barriers is compounded by the experience of insufficient personal resources—limitations in their availability and accessibility.

In the subsections that follow, we identify **priority recommendations** for each category with specific suggestions on how to address this recommendation.

5.1. Community / Society / Sector level insufficient resources

<p>PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION 1: Address structural issues preventing affordable housing and sustainable job opportunities</p> <p>Rationale: Identified in the survey, the interviews, and in national research is a central financial barrier: affordable housing and living wages. Food insecure and PEH community members who have an income are spending more than 50% of their wages on housing. Those seeking to transition into housing must do so with very little or no jobs available with livable incomes relative to the costs of the housing.</p>	
<p>✓ Support existing Fair Housing advocates in the county and state</p>	<p><i>Elaboration:</i> Support enforcement of already existing laws on exclusionary zoning, fair share affordable housing for municipalities, fair chance laws against discrimination, designating land within Passaic County for new housing developments that includes at least 25% affordable units, changing zoning laws, right of first refusal to acquire properties to provide transition to affordable permanent housing solutions</p>
<p>✓ Support transitory, modular housing</p>	<p><i>Elaboration:</i> Support the enabling of modular housing (built with shipping containers or similar low-cost materials similar to initiatives in Newark, NJ).</p>
<p>✓ Seek innovative proposals to fund the conversion of unused civic spaces to low cost affordable, living complexes.</p>	<p><i>Elaboration:</i> Examples include conversion of empty or inefficiently used buildings such as malls and prisons.</p>
<p>✓ Increase opportunities for technical credentials and degrees that meet NJ growth needs.</p>	<p><i>Elaboration:</i> Create partnerships with technical institutes, community colleges, and universities for skill enhancement and knowledge creation for energy engineering (wind, solar), senior care, health care, food processing and services – per US and NJ Labor Dept. growth areas projected through 2030.</p>

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION 2: Create a Multi-Agency Collaborative Information Network to coordinate services, and share information and resources for food and housing insecurity support systems

<p>Rationale: Identified by the stakeholders of organizations involved in food, housing, and related resources was a need for better sharing of information. There is a need to improvement the level of cross-organizational understanding, sharing of ideas, and a capacity to work more closely with each other towards addressing the critical issues.</p>	
<p>✓ Create a city / town-based task force comprised of residents (especially those with experience of homelessness) to empower already existing alliances to work on coordinating resource allocation</p>	<p><i>Elaboration:</i> Existing examples include Paterson Alliance, Clifton Task Force that can enable basic mapping and coordination of service providers, their areas of expertise and experience, and particular synergistic possibilities. Given the need for wraparound services for PEH, a coordinated response will enable scarce expertise and resources to be effectively deployed and utilized.</p>
<p>✓ Explore moving away from NJ211 to another model that is more in tune with local networks (e.g., Unite Us)</p>	<p><i>Elaboration:</i> Coordinate the access of real-time intake assessments from systems such as NJ211 (or alternatives), HMIS and hospital networks to offer more efficient, transparent and accessible data for monitoring cases of chronic homelessness and frequent hospitalizations leading to homelessness and food insecurity.</p>
<p>✓ Identify needs by zip codes within a city</p>	<p><i>Elaboration:</i> Clinic, community policing, and networking of local service providers helps prioritize and assess the degree and quality of needs of localized population including “who is community?”</p>
<p>✓ Enable coordination of nodal organizations from where many PEH come to shelters</p>	<p>Examples include the coordination of social workers at hospitals and reentry services with service providers working with food insecure and PEH</p>

5.2. Organizational level insufficient resources

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION 3: Enable the coordination and streamlining of resource allocation & collaboration among community-based service providers within the county

Rationale: Identified in archival research, by stakeholders, and through usability evaluations, the issues that create food and housing insecurity are multidimensional. There is a demand for wraparound services from community-based organizations. Wraparound services are ideal because they reduce the bureaucratic burden on an individual to register for processes with multiple organizations, organizations are better able to tailor specific services to an individual's needs, and they support a system of trust and care. However, wraparound services are expensive and require an organization to be sufficient in multiple areas of support with funding and staff to maintain those services.

✓ **Make use of community centers, including libraries,** to regularly host service providers, social workers and legal consultants to enable walk-in access and broad assistance through an already commonly used resource.

Many PEH make regular use of libraries because of the access to clean, safe spaces with open use restrooms. This puts strain on library staff who often need to coordinate with law enforcement, mental health services, and clinicians to address the wide-ranging issues experienced by PEH. Many libraries already invite days for social workers and other community workers to hold office hours on site to address some of the community's needs. Libraries could be better supported by coordinating regular hours of access for PEH (e.g., hours after midday meal services at soup kitchens and before shelters open to allow residents to return).

✓ **Improve referral system** with shared use of administrative processes

Such an improvement will enable individuals registered in one system to make use of more than one organization with some ease.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION 4: Address staffing issues for community-based organizations serving food and housing insecure individuals

Rationale: Identified through archival research, usability evaluation and interviews, it is clear that community-based organizations are tasked to engage with clients who are unique with their own life histories, and contending with sets of nested issues. Those visiting a food pantry or shelter may have undergone trauma and have needs ranging from food and safety, to mental health and legal issues. Appropriate staffing to allow appropriate attendance to clients is critical.

✓ Increase the number of available clinicians in Passaic County	Due to the high turnover rate and wraparound in-house services, a key issue related to resource and retention of trained in-house staff is that of clinicians attending to substance abuse and mental health.
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5.3. Individuals level bureaucratic barriers and insufficient resources

<p>PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION 5: Address Information deficit & communication needs for service seekers and community organizations</p> <p>Rationale: Identified through interviews with stakeholders are the communication issues. Community-based organizations operate on many scales of service and provide an array of resources. While many administrative stakeholders have a long history that enables their understanding and navigation of those resources, many others will struggle to understand the available and appropriate options for their needs.</p>	
<p>✓ Create an easily accessible and available program map of all governmental programs available to anyone who is a PEH.</p>	<p>This list must be physically available at all community-based organizations and made virtually available for mobile phones. It could be kept updated and live through the PCHS office website so that latest updates could be available for organizations. Key programs include but is not restricted to Housing choice voucher program, Tenant-based Rental Assistance program, Supplemental Security Income program, Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program. For this map to be useful, the map needs to indicate which program is administered by which governmental division / department office at the county and/or city/town level, with its location, contact numbers, and any aids to navigate the system and in what sequence to access programs.</p>
<p>✓ Create a county and city/town-specific asset map of service organizations serving PEH.</p>	<p>This map needs to show what service organization is providing what service, contact numbers, location and hours. As with the program map above, this too needs to be physically and virtually available and accessible to any PEH.</p>
<p>✓ Enable legal services for rent eviction or rent insecure persons</p>	<p>While understanding the legal system related to housing and food insecurity could be a barrier to any PEH, it is especially necessary to new immigrants & undocumented women with concern about their status and needing healthcare for their children.</p>
<p>✓ Enable language-appropriate interactions when needed</p>	<p>A preliminary assessment of needs and resource database of who may already be doing the services in the community maybe a first step for seeking Spanish, Arabic and Bengali-speaking case managers, not simply translators for any governmental office and community-based organization serving PEH.</p>

<p>✓ Subsidize transportation for PEH</p>	<p>An example could be a transportation subsidy such as a bus pass for PEH to be able to get to shelters and governmental offices. Many PEH spend a lot of time and scarce resources on transportation.</p>
<p>✓ Prioritize enabling telecommunication access</p>	<p>To access services and maintain support, people need to have functional access for communications. Many PEH and other financially insecure people do not have regular access to a phone with telecommunication access to a network system. Improving clarification around the procedures and access points for telecommunications provides direct benefit to the requisite referral systems and procedures.</p>

6. Appendix

6.1 APPENDIX 1: Interview Protocol and Questionnaire

PROTOCOLS

1. Introduce yourself and acknowledge the Consent form. Ask if any further questions.
2. Make the interviewee comfortable. DO SMALL TALK where needed.
3. Prepare the recording device and assure the interviewee that this is only for transcription and will not be shared with anyone else
4. Listen More, Talk Less, Follow Up on what Participant Says

PROMPTS

1. Could you expand on that?
2. What do you mean by that?
3. Tell me a little more about...
4. Describe a typical meeting of your group...

Thank you for your time today and for agreeing to participate in this interview. We will be talking for 30 to 45 minutes about your experiences with housing and food insecurity and related issues. The interview will be recorded with an audio device. This research will contribute to a needs assessment for PCHS. Please know that your answers will only be used for research purposes and that you will not be identified in any reports and that all of your responses are confidential. Do you have any questions before we begin?

FOR HIGHER ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL (BIG PICTURE)

1. What is the **VISION / MISSION** of your organization for approaching the problems of homelessness in your area?
2. What are the **biggest successes** OR **“WHAT HAS WORKED”** that your organization has achieved over the last few years? What made those possible?
3. What are the **biggest challenges** OR **“WHAT ARE BARRIERS”** that your organization faces in addressing your mission? How are you addressing them?
4. **As a LEADER** of a key community-based organization, what are your **EXPECTATIONS of the Passaic County and New Jersey government** offices that your organization interacts with regularly on the homeless issue?
5. **Your 3 top asks** for addressing the needs of the homeless and the service providers such as your organization?

6. Are there **MODELS** that you have seen in other regions or organizations that you believe would benefit Passaic County to evaluate for adoption?

FOR OPERATIONS / CASE MANAGERS

SECTION 1 – PROCESS & ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE MAPPING

1. Please **describe the services** that your organization provides.
 - 1.1. What are the **programs and services** that you provide for the homeless?
 - 1.2. Which **populations and localities** do you serve?
2. Can you **take us through the PROCESS** of how one gets to access a service in your organization? What happens when someone calls or comes in?
3. How do you **reach the homeless**? Do they come to your organization? Is there a **referral**? Do you refer them to other organizations?
 - 3.1. In what ways do you **advertise** your services? If you advertise in brick-and-mortar units, please specify. Do you use social media to advertise? If so, which ones?
4. What are the **rules** for getting into the shelter at your organization? Who cannot get in? Why?
5. In what ways has your program(s) **grown or changed** over time/ in the last 5 years?
6. What **training** does your staff receive, if any, and how often? Please describe.

SECTION II – OUTCOMES, COMMUNITY NEEDS AND BARRIERS TO SERVICES

1. What do you view as the **ideal outcome** for an individual served by your org?
2. Are your programs most **effective with particular demographics** or for individuals with particular qualities?
3. Do your **clients** describe any **concerns or frustrations** with the county or state services for supporting them? What concerns do you regularly hear?
4. How has homelessness (its prevalence, the population, the drivers) **changed over time** (within the last 5-7 years)? And how have you **responded to that change**?
5. In what ways do you think the services you provide can **better meet needs**?
6. What might be seen as a **barrier to the services** you provide? In what ways are the following issues barriers to the services you provide:
 - a. resources (staffing, funding)

- b. too many different service needs for one organization
 - c. addressing individuals with multiple, diverse needs
 - d. referral system
 - e. wait lists at shelters
 - f. eligibility requirements for shelters
 - g. vouchers and their acceptance
 - h. lack of ID
 - i. addiction / substance abuse
 - j. need for job skills
 - k. lack of awareness of service
 - l. lack of transportation
 - m. race, class, gender, language, ability
7. What **supports** do you believe can be more effective?
 8. Are you aware of any **models** from **other regions or organizations** that you believe should be evaluated and considered for adoption here?
 9. Is there **anything else** you would like to add?

SECTION III – BIG PICTURE INSIGHTS AND EVALUATION OF SERVICES

1. We are interested in **your insights about homelessness**. What in your view causes the homelessness in the community? What factors or social determinants of homelessness are attempted to be addressed by the service?
2. Please describe how you meet **quality standards**. Is there a list or rubric you use to assess quality standards?
3. How do you know that you are **providing effective** services? How do you **evaluate**?
 - 3.1. What constructs do you use?
 - 3.2. How often do you evaluate?
 - 3.3. When was the last internal evaluation?

3.4. Have you seen changes that followed from evaluation?

FOR CLIENTS / PERSONS EXPERIENCING HOUSING INSECURITY

1. Please describe your **current housing situation**:
 - 1.1. How many people do you live with?
 - 1.2. What caused this current situation?
 - 1.3. How long have you had this living situation?
 - 1.4. Where were you prior to this?
2. Have you **used any services** for improving your housing? If so, which ones?
 - 2.1. What services have you found most effective? Why?
 - 2.2. What services have not worked for you? Why?
3. Have you **interacted with** any of these **organizations**? How was the experience?
 - 3.1. NJ211?
 - 3.2. Eva's Village, Catholic Charities, and/or St. Pauls?
 - 3.3. Oasis, PATH at St. Joseph's Hospital, and/or CPSNJ?
4. Have you experienced any of the following **barriers** to the services?
 - 4.1. resources (staffing, funding)
 - 4.2. addressing individuals with multiple, diverse needs
 - 4.3. referral system
 - 4.4. wait lists at shelters
 - 4.5. eligibility requirements for shelters
 - 4.6. vouchers and their acceptance
 - 4.7. lack of ID
 - 4.8. addiction / substance abuse
 - 4.9. need for job skills

- 4.10. lack of awareness of service
 - 4.11. lack of transportation
 - 4.12. race, class, gender, language, ability
5. What do you **believe is most needed** to improve services for housing?
 6. What do you **believe is most frustrating** in seeking services for housing?
 7. Are you aware **of service models** in other regions that could be used in Passaic County?
 8. Is there **anything else** you would like to add?







6.2. APPENDIX 2: Survey (English version)

CERG Housing Survey

English Version










Demographics:

Are you a resident of Passaic County?	Which of the following would you say best represents your ethnic/racial identity? (Choose up to three)	What is your gender identity?	What is your age?	What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?	What is your primary language?
Yes	American Indian	Man	Please fill in: _____	High school diploma or GED	Please fill in: _____
	Asian	Woman		Some college, no degree	
No	Black / African American	Non-binary		Associates or Technical degree	
	Hispanic, Latine Ethnic Identity	Prefer not to say		Bachelor's degree	
Prefer not to say	White / Caucasian			Graduate degree	
	Other:			Prefer not to say	

Please answer Yes or No:				
	Do you have a steady place to sleep at night?	Yes	No	
	Do you currently reside in a shelter?	Yes	No	
	Do you own or rent a home?	Yes	No	
	Do you think you are at risk of becoming homeless?	Yes	No	
	Do you currently reside with friends or relatives?	Yes	No	
	Do you currently feel safe where you reside?	Yes	No	
	Do you currently own a car	Yes	No	
	Do you have trouble getting transportation?	Yes	No	
	Within the past 12 months, were you able to always afford the food that you needed?	Yes	No	
	In the past 12 months, did you ever run out of food before you were able to purchase or obtain more?	Yes	No	
	Do you have any form of consistent income?	Yes	No	
	Do you have enough income to pay for your current housing? (rent, mortgage, etc.)	Yes	No	
	Do you have trouble paying your heating or electricity bill?	Yes	No	
	Are you currently residing separately from your family?	Yes	No	
	Do you have children or adolescents who are dependent on you?	Yes	No	
	If so, how many: _____			
	Do you have trouble taking care of a child, family member or friend?	Yes	No	
	Do you have a valid, government-issued form of ID?	Yes	No	

What is one thing that could improve your housing situation?

If you currently have housing, what is one thing that could improve your feeling of safety?

Which resources are you most in need of? (Circle up to 3)								
Housing / Shelter	Food	Paying for Medicine	Transportation	Utilities	Childcare	Care for Elderly	Job Search	Education
								

I do not want to answer these questions

Data collected with the CERG - Housing Questionnaire

105 Responses, 98 consenting participants. Responses in Spanish are translated to English in this summary.

Consent If you do not wish to complete this questionnaire or do not meet the inclusion criteria, please select "no" to end the questionnaire immediately. If you would still like to participate, please select "yes" to begin the questionnaire. 104 ⓘ

Consent Verification - Consent If you do not wish to complete this questionnaire or do not meet the inclusion criteria, please select "no" to end the questionnaire immediately. If you would still like to participate, please select "yes" to begin the questionnaire.

	Percentage	Count
No	6%	6
Yes	94%	98

Do you currently reside in Passaic County? 88 ⓘ

A1a - Do you currently reside in Passaic County?

	Percentage	Count
Yes	94%	83
No	1%	1
Prefer not to say	5%	4

What is your current zip code?

- 07522
- 07502
- 07503
- 07505
- 07501
- 07505
- 07501
- 07522
- 07514
- 07524
- 07501
- 07502
- 07501
- 07501
- 07501
- 07501
- Paterson
- 07581
- 07501
- 07501
- 07524
- 07501
- 07501
- 07510
- 07501
- 07505
- 07581
- 07522
- 07501
- 07601
- na
- 07505
- 07513
- 07505
- 07501
- 07513
- 07501

07505
 07501
 07505
 07501
 07501
 07501
 07501
 07501
 07513
 07503
 07501
 07501
 07522
 07505
 07501

Which of the following would you say best represents your ethnic/racial identity? [select up to 3] 83 ⓘ

A2 - Which of the following would you say best represents your ethnic/racial identity? [select up to 3] - Selected Choice	Percentage	Count
American Indian	1%	1
Asian	2%	2
Black / African American	16%	13
Hispanic, Latine Ethnic Identity	72%	60
White / Caucasian	10%	8
Other Race	2%	2
Prefer not to say	1%	1

Which of the following would you say best represents your ethnic/racial identity? [select up to 3]: Other Race ⓘ

German

What is your gender identity? 88 ⓘ

A3 - What is your gender identity?	Percentage	Count
Man	22%	19
Woman	74%	65
Non-binary	5%	4
Prefer not to say	0%	0

What is your age?

40
 50
 29
 66
 54

33
57
87
54
33
76
27
73
70
27
53
65
40
52
66
39
42
52
65
59
63
54
62
40
46
40
30
22
58
69
42
42
40
41
46
70
85
63
48
37
51
74
46
60
64
64
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60
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32
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68
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29
58
57
40
61

Spanish
Spanish
Spanish
Spanish
Spanish
Spanish
Spanish
Spanish
Spanish
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Spanish
Spanish
Spanish

Do you have a steady place to sleep at night? 95 ⓘ

B1 - Do you have a steady place to sleep at night?	Percentage	Count
Yes	87%	83
No	13%	12

Do you currently reside in a shelter? 89 ⓘ

B2a - Do you currently reside in a shelter?	Percentage	Count
Yes	26%	23
No	74%	66

If yes, in which town: ⓘ

Paterson

Paterson - Eva Village Shelter

Paterson

Paterson

Paterson

Paterson

Is this shelter located in your preferred town? 48 ⓘ

B3a - Is this shelter located in your preferred town?	Percentage	Count
Yes	38%	18
No	63%	30

If no, which town would you prefer: ⓘ

Roxbury NJ

Linden

Paterson

Woodbury NJ

Paterson

None

Do you: 88 ⓘ

B4 - Do you:	Percentage	Count
Own	1%	1
Rent	70%	62
Neither	28%	25

Do you think you are at risk of becoming homeless within the next 6 months? 78 ⓘ

B5 - Do you think you are at risk of becoming homeless within the next 6 months?	Percentage	Count
Extremely Unlikely	24%	19
Unlikely	24%	19
Likely	22%	17
Extremely Likely	29%	23

Do you currently reside with friends or relatives? 91 ⓘ

B6 - Do you currently reside with friends or relatives?	Percentage	Count
Yes	53%	48
No	47%	43

Do you currently feel safe where you reside? 89 ⓘ

B7 - Do you currently feel safe where you reside?	Percentage	Count
Yes	70%	62
No	30%	27

Do you currently own a car? 95 ⓘ

B8 - Do you currently own a car?	Percentage	Count
Yes	17%	16
No	83%	79

Do you have trouble getting transportation? 87 ⓘ

B9 - Do you have trouble getting transportation?	Percentage	Count
Yes	45%	39
No	55%	48

Within the past 12 months, were you able to always afford the food that you needed? 92 ⓘ

B10 - Within the past 12 months, were you able to always afford the food that you needed?	Percentage	Count
Yes	51%	47
No	49%	45

In the past 12 months, did you ever run out of food before you were able to purchase or obtain more? 94 ⓘ

B11 - In the past 12 months, did you ever run out of food before you were able to purchase or obtain more?	Percentage	Count
Yes	60%	56
No	40%	38

Do you have any form of consistent income? 87 ⓘ

B12 - Do you have any form of consistent income?	Percentage	Count
Yes	45%	39
No	55%	48

Approximately what percent of your income is spent on rent or mortgage? 82 ⓘ

B13 - Approximately what percent of your income is spent on rent or mortgage?	Percentage	Count
Less than 50%	23%	19
Between 50-75%	23%	19
More than 75%	28%	23
No rent or mortgage	26%	21

Do you have trouble paying your heating or electricity bill? 86 ⓘ

B14 - Do you have trouble paying your heating or electricity bill?	Percentage	Count
Yes	53%	46
No	47%	40

Do you have children or adolescents who are dependent on you? 94 ⓘ

B15a - Do you have children or adolescents who are dependent on you?	Percentage	Count
Yes	36%	34
No	64%	60

If Yes, how many?

- 1
- 1
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 3
- 1
- 2
- 1
- 1
- 2
- 2
- 5
- 1
- 2
- 1
- 1
- 1
- 1
- 6
- 6
- 1

Do you have trouble taking care of a child, family member or friend? 92 ⓘ

B16 - Do you have trouble taking care of a child, family member or friend?	Percentage	Count
Yes	15%	14
No	85%	78

Do you have a valid, government-issued form of ID? 93 ⓘ

B17 - Do you have a valid, government-issued form of ID?	Percentage	Count
Yes	81%	75
No	19%	18

What is one thing that could improve your housing situation?

Deficil con Renta, Comida, Retro poco dinero, 10 people
 trajo pasr paqar ranla
 A job
 Getting Section 8
 Housing Stipend
 Wue boyen los costos de las viviendas
 Getting Section 8 Assistance
 La Renta pagar menos
 el trabajo
 Insurance
 Sustento de vivienda
 El espacio, comodidad.
 Job opportunities + income
 Evicted access to GA and food stamps, TRA acceptance quicker for Apartm
 curfew hours for people w/jobs
 staying clean, consistent housing
 lower rent
 money
 none
 Apartment
 General housing
 n/a
 Easier to find somewhere. I'm on the eviction list -- causes problem.
 Hozing
 housing
 More space, bigger rooms + closet space
 A job would
 My unemployment benefits. I have been waiting 3 months and have not received a payment. This is why I am homeless.
 Nothing really --- they run my building very well. The mgr, office workers super + other maintenance are good.
 Am happy where I'm at
 Funds
 "End fluxuation
 Affordable housing and end demographic conforms treat every citizen the same and stop gov help to immigrants"
 Need the rent be lower
 ID and housing assistance canâ€™t afford rent on SSI
 When we not able to work I help with 50%of the rent
 Job
 The landlord need to fix the house
 I would like help with my housing we need to move by march 31, the new landlord want the apartment empty.
 That rent is more affordable
 Need a stable job to rent the next months and help with my immigration status.
 The rent is very expensive
 Get a good job
 I need my rent more down
 Job
 Heather
 Get a job
 I need my rent. More down
 Job
 Heating
 Job
 Job
 Job
 Need help with rent only one month left
 A job
 Help with rent only a month left

"Income based housing
Affordable Housing "
Job
Low income housing
Low income housing
A home
Dirty house
Afford rent a have a job
A home
Job
Having a Job to pay were I live.
en la rentas mucho se paga
Un apoyÃ³ estoy sin trabajo

If you currently have housing, what is one thing that could improve your feeling of safety?

no suficienta ayenda
Food
Seguridad on la ciudad
Ahorrarra
muy caro
No tengo proprin
Mejorar la situacion laboral y la edicacion.
security
"way of safety, can allow you to go out & look for job
Teach you how to live"
na
neighborhood
none
n/a
Consistent affordable housing availability
scurity guards
n/a No one bothers you
a camera or security in front of facility
More income would
It is fine, but sometimes people come in knocking on doors, but rarely
none
More funding and personnel to advocate for the needy
No
The more affordable rent
Security
Lower rent more job for people
Slow rent. More job. For people
No housing homeless
Low income housing
A home
Cleaning
Live me and my child only
A home
Getting a Job
Having a job
q hayga mucho viejilacia o camara

Which resources are you most in need of? (up to 3) 82 ⓘ

D1 - Which resources are you most in need of? (up to 3)	Percentage	Count
Housing / Shelter	65%	53
Food	48%	39
Paying for Medicine	16%	13
Transportation	32%	26
Utilities	11%	9
Childcare	5%	4
Care for the Elderly	10%	8