

Waldo County

Community Needs Assessment 2020

Prepared for Waldo Community Action Partners

Waldo Community Action Partners, 2020

By 45 North Research, LLC, September 2017

Contents

About WCAP	3
History.....	3
Structure.....	3
Mission	3
About this Report.....	0
Data	1
Descriptive Statistics.....	1
Community Survey.....	1
County Profile.....	1
Area Description	1
Age.....	2
Population.....	3
Race	4
Income.....	4
Poverty.....	4
Livable Wage.....	10
Employment.....	11
Unemployment.....	12
Businesses	13
Wages	16
Education.....	17
Pre-K through 12	17
Educational Proficiency	19
High School Graduation	20
Alternative Education.....	20
Career and Technical Education.....	21
Post-Secondary Education	21
Educational Attainment.....	21
Youth.....	23
Poverty and Food Insecurity.....	24
Health Insurance	25
Pregnancy and Infants.....	26
Child Welfare.....	26
Health.....	27
Self-sufficiency	31
Food Insecurity	31
Transportation	31
Utilities.....	34
Housing.....	37
Affordability	38
Property Taxes	43
Health	44
Health Ranking	48

Opioids.....	49
Community Survey	50
Summary	52
Works Cited.....	55

About WCAP

History

Waldo Community Action Partners (WCAP) was founded in 1965 as a community action agency. It is designated as such by the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 to combat poverty in geographically designated areas. It is recognized as an eligible entity as defined in the CSBG Act and can receive funding from the State under the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG).

Structure

WCAP, as is required for all community action agencies, has a tripartite board comprised of one-third each:

- Low-income representatives elected by Waldo County's low-income people
- Local public officials or their designees
- Representatives of business, industry, labor, religious, social welfare, and other private groups

WCAP belongs to statewide and national networks of similar agencies, the majority of which received their initial designation, federal recognition, and funding under the amended Economic Opportunity Act of 1964.

Mission

The mission of WCAP is "Building strong families and communities by empowering people to achieve economic independence and self-reliance." In order to achieve this, WCAP offers opportunities to impact Waldo County residents in the areas of health, comfort, and financial and personal development.

WCAP provides leadership and advocacy in the community to collaborate and develop programs and workgroups that address community problems and obstacles that prevent families from thriving. Elimination and alleviation of poverty is the agency's ultimate goal.

WCAP has strong commitments to transportation services, housing repair services, family services such as Head Start/child nutrition, energy services, and community services carried out in partnership with other community groups.

About this Report

This report provides an up-to-date picture of economic and social conditions in Waldo County as of November 2020. It will inform WCAP's ongoing efforts to help the county's residents improve their quality of life. The data presented in these pages provides a comprehensive look at the economic and social challenges facing the community. These findings will help WCAP identify existing gaps in services for low-income residents as well as opportunities to help them improve their economic, physical, and emotional well-being. Like previous assessments, it will also provide valuable information for other service providers in Waldo County.

This report fulfills WCAP's contractual obligation to regularly assess the factors that contribute to poverty in its region, as required of all recipients of CSBG funds. WCAP performs this assessment in full every three years and updates some parts annually.

An advisory committee consisting of WCAP staff, board, and community members guided the content of this report, which was written by 45 North Research, LLC, an independent economic research firm. 45 North Research, LLC would like to acknowledge the advisory committee for their valuable contributions. The 2020 update included additional staff, board and community members and was written internally. What is presented is a collaborative update and review of the original Assessment.

The entire country was impacted by COVID 19 beginning in March 2020. On March 15th Governor Mills declared a Civil State of Emergency, recommended 1) ending classroom instruction in all public schools as soon as reasonably practical; 2) postponing all non-urgent medical procedures, elective surgeries, and appointments at hospitals and health care providers across the state until further notice; 3) restricting visitors and all non-essential health care personnel to long-term care facilities except for certain compassionate care situations such as end of life until further notice; 4) postponing all events with 50 or more people all gatherings of more than 10 that include individuals who are at higher risk for severe illness, such as seniors, until further notice. This report contains an assessment on the COVID 19 impact from March to June. However, the restrictions on gatherings continued throughout the year and limited WCAP's ability to host focus groups and community meetings to collect information on the economic and social challenges facing the community. However, we created a community needs assessment in 2020 using Survey Monkey to collect feedback from the community. We engaged local partners working with the target demographic but due to COVID 19 all social services providers reported reduced client face to face contact which we believe impacted the reach of the survey. While we collected a larger number of responses than in past years, we recognize that our client demographic may not have been reached as effectively via an electronic survey, as other methods of engagement. Many of our clients lack access to the internet or do not have access to a computer. Taking a survey on a phone proved to be challenging. While we made paper copies of the survey available to the public at the several food pantries and the Belfast Soup Kitchen, none were returned. The survey did capture a wide range of ages, incomes and each town in Waldo County responded. Programmatically we know some of the challenges facing Waldo County, yet the survey didn't reflect what we know to be true. The

survey, while providing valuable information, was not statically valid, reaching 549 people from a population of approximately 40,000.

2020 Waldo County Needs Assessment Steering Committee Members

Donna M. Kelley, LCSW
President and CEO of WCAP

Dorothy Havey
Development Director, WCAP

Jesse Lucas
New Hope for Women/WCAP Intern

WCAP Leadership Team

WCAP Board of Directors Officers
Kim Mitchell, Chair
Jason Moody, Vice Chair
Wesley Neff, Secretary
Joanne Pease, Treasurer

WCAP Board Sustainability Committee Members

Members of Emergency Food and Shelter Local Board

Caroline King, American Red Cross
Dale Rowley, Waldo County Emergency Management Director
Elaine Bielenberg,, Council of Churches
Mary Leaming, Waldo County Homeless Council
Robert Adler, Jewish Federation
Shirar Patterson, United Way of Eastern Maine

The work accomplished in 2020 was built upon the efforts of the 2017 Waldo County Needs Assessment Steering Committee Members

Scott Denman, UU Church Endowment Committee. Chair
Shannon Grimes. Maine Farmland Trust
Dr. Caer Hallundbaek, Pen Bay & Waldo County General Hospital
Michael Hallundbaek, Director of Transportation WCAP
Raelee Heath. Crossroads to Calvary Church, Salvation Army
Elizabeth Joy, Broadreach Family & Community Services
Patricia Libby, Director University of Maine Hutchinson Center
Tabitha Lowe Community Projects Director WCAP
Sarah Martin, Bank of America WCAP Board Member
Sarah Mattox, Restorative Justice Project of the Midcoast
Sheila Muldoon, Goodwill Workforce Solutions
Michael Robertson, Operations Director, The Game Loft
Keith Small, Executive Director WCAP
Ellie Weaver, WCAP Board Member

Data

Descriptive Statistics

This assessment contains the most up-to-date, publicly available data on Waldo County from local, state, and national sources as of August 2020. The currency of data differs across sources, and not all sources are updated annually. Some statistics are available for 2018, 2017, some for 2016, some for the 2013-2017 average, and so on. Selecting one year for all variables would mean eliminating the most up-to-date statistics for others. Rather than exclude valuable data, this report presents the most recent statistics for all variables and clearly notes the year for each.

One data source merits special attention. The U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) provides nearly all the demographic data about Waldo County's residents in this report. It reflects estimates of the average value of certain characteristics for the five-year period spanning 2013 to 2017. Five-year averages provide the most reliable information on places with relatively small populations, like Waldo County.

Community Survey

To supplement information from publicly available sources, WCAP and its partners conducted a community needs survey from September 2020 to November 2020 that drew 549 responses. Survey participants included WCAP clients, service providers, parents and students, and a broad range of other diverse community members.

Collectively, their responses provide valuable personal insight into the conditions hinted at by the data. Each section of the report highlights participants' most important comments on poverty, employment, health, housing, and other conditions. The final section presents the survey results in full.

County Profile

[FACT: 1 in 4 Waldo County residents is age 60 or older.]

Area Description

Waldo County encompasses 26 municipalities in the heart of Midcoast Maine. Just over half (53%) of its population lives in the nine coastal towns bordering Penobscot Bay; the other half is spread across the seventeen communities that extend inland about 20 miles. Inland Waldo County is characterized by rolling forests, farmland, and small, rural towns.

The coastal city of Belfast is the county's largest community and its economic hub, home to most of the region's employers, retailers, and service providers. Belfast has enjoyed robust growth in recent years; its downtown and waterfront are thriving. The town of Unity is the county's largest inland community and home to Unity College, a unique institution focused on sustainability science.

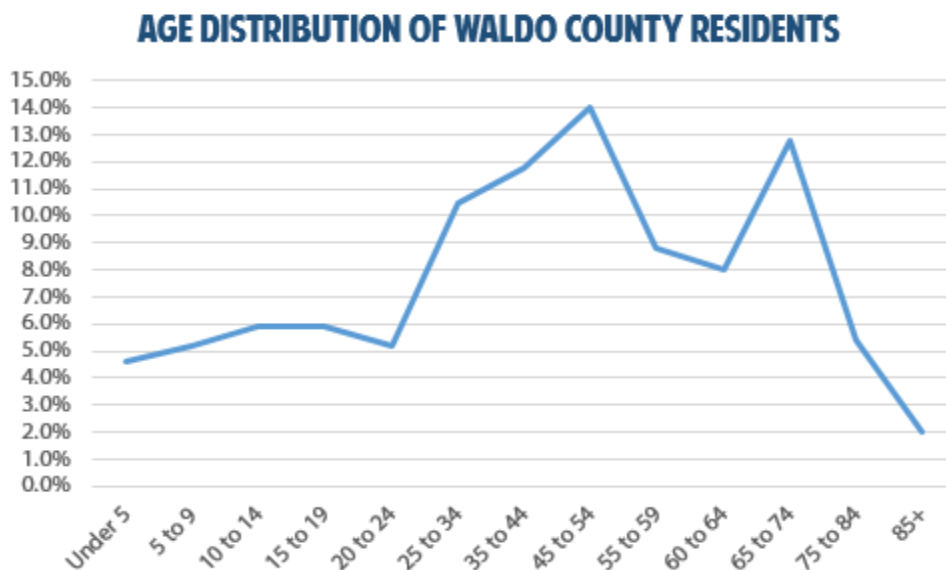
Waldo County is known for its small-town feel, abundance of outdoor recreation opportunities, vibrant local food scene, picturesque coastal towns, and active arts community. These attributes are helping it attract a growing number of summer visitors and year-round residents, especially retirees.

Age

Maine has one of the oldest populations in the country and Waldo County is slightly older than the rest of Maine. In 2013-2017, its median age was 45.7 years compared to 44.3 years for the state and 37.8 years for the U.S.¹ In the county, 20.3% of residents (more than 1 in 4) is age 60 or older, compared to 18.8% of Maine residents. The following chart shows the age distribution of Waldo County residents. The bump at center-right is the Baby Boomers, who make up a disproportionate share of the population and are approaching retirement age.

The contributions of older residents to community activities is exemplified by Belfast's Senior College, which provides continuing education to adults age 50 and older. According to a 2015 report by the Maine Senior College Network, Belfast's Senior College is third largest in the state, only smaller than Brunswick and Portland, which serve much larger populations.

For Waldo County employers, the age of local residents could pose a challenge as more and more Baby Boomers retire. While that may create welcomed opportunities for younger workers, it may also limit the growth of local businesses.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey

¹ The median age is the age at which half an area's residents are older and half are younger. That means if everyone in Waldo County lined up from youngest to oldest, the person in the middle would be 45.7 years old. For the state of Maine, the person in the middle would be 44.3 years.

Population

With more than 1 in 4 residents age 60 or older, the age of Waldo County's residents means slow population growth. In fact, deaths now outnumber births. Without the arrival of new residents from outside the region, the population would be shrinking.

When calculating population growth (or decline), the U.S. Census Bureau estimates the change in each county's population from natural increase (births outnumbering deaths) and from immigration (new residents moving into the region). Since 2010, Waldo County has not gained residents from natural increase; deaths have outnumbered births (2,946 compared to 3,209, respectively). However, the arrival of new residents has offset those losses. Since 2010, Waldo County has enjoyed a net gain of 841 residents from elsewhere in Maine and the U.S., and 359 residents from other countries.

COMPONENTS OF POPULATION GROWTH in WALDO COUNTY, 2010-2018

TOTAL POPULATION CHANGE	Vital Events			Net Migration		
	Natural Increase	Births	Deaths	Total	International	Domestic
+905	-263	+2,946	-3,209	+1,200	+359	+841

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Waldo County is attracting new residents at a higher rate than Maine overall. Despite the age of established residents, the inflow of new residents means the county's population is growing faster than the state's. From 2010 to 2013-2017, Waldo County's population grew 1%, while Maine's slightly increased, but not significant enough to change the percentage (Both regions, however, grew far slower than the rest of the country; the U.S. population grew 4% during that time). The following tables shows how growth was distributed across the county's communities.

POPULATION CHANGE BY TOWN, 2010-2017

	Population 2010	Population 2013-2017	Population change	Percent change
BELFAST	6,668	6,680	12	0%
BELMONT	942	930	-12	1%
BROOKS	1,078	970	-108	-10%
BURNHAM	1,164	1,206	42	4%
FRANKFORT	1,124	983	141	-12%
FREEDOM	719	717	-2	0%
ISLESBORO	566	759	193	34%
JACKSON	548	690	142	26%
KNOX	806	827	21	3%
LIBERTY	913	878	-35	-4%
LINCOLNVILLE	2,164	1,965	-199	-9%

MONROE	890	964	74	8%
MONTVILLE	1,032	827	-205	-19%
MORRILL	884	1,004	120	14%
NORTHPORT	1,520	1,863	343	23%
PALERMO	1,535	1,483	52	-3%
PROSPECT	709	750	41	6%
SEARSMONT	1,392	1,496	104	7%
SEARSPORT	2,615	2,647	32	1%
STOCKTON SPRINGS	1,591	1,458	-133	-8%
SWANVILLE	1,388	11,275	-113	-8%
THORNDIKE	890	807	-83	-9%
TROY	1,030	987	-43	-4%
UNITY	2,099	2,356	257	12%
WALDO	762	887	125	16%
WINTERPORT	3,757	3,871	114	3%
WALDO COUNTY	38,786	39,280	494	1%
MAINE	1,328,361	1,330,158	1,797	0%
UNITED STATES	308,745,538	321,004,407	12,258,869	4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

Race

Along with having one of the nation's oldest populations, Maine is one of the least racially and ethnically diverse states. Waldo County reflects that lack of diversity. Whereas one-quarter (42%) of U.S. residents are non-White, minorities represent just a sliver (3%) of Waldo County's population. That is even lower than the statewide percentage of non-White residents (4%). About 1% of the county's population is Hispanic or Latino, compared to 18% nationally. However, that small population has grown in recent years, significantly outpacing the growth of other residents. Between 2000 and 2010, the number of Hispanic residents in Waldo County grew 62% compared to just 7% growth of non-Hispanic residents.

Due to the lack of representation and racial diversity in Waldo County, data on poverty rates among different races and ethnicities is not readily available.

Income

[FACT: More than 1 in 4 Waldo County children under age 5 is living in poverty.]

Poverty

While Waldo County is not known for being one of Maine's poorest counties, it is noticeably less wealthy than its neighboring coastal counties, and poverty disproportionately affects the region's children. While poverty rates vary significantly by town and household, barriers to financial stability are generally more pronounced for single mothers, resulting in a higher rate of poverty among the county's children. Other findings show that even individuals who live above the poverty line may be struggling to earn a livable wage. Factors like lack of transportation,

childcare, education, or workforce skills make it difficult for individuals to secure and find jobs that can pay for their household's basic expenses. Poverty rates overall are trending upward in the county, although they appear to have stabilized in the past few years.

In 2013-2017, the median income in Waldo County was \$50,162, more than 5% below the state median of \$53,024. The only counties with lower income levels were the more isolated, rural counties along Maine's northern and eastern borders (Oxford, Franklin, Somerset, Piscataquis, Aroostook, and Washington).

Other measures of poverty show a similar pattern. The following table shows the percentage of residents living in households with incomes below the poverty line. At 14.3 %, Waldo County is Maine's 7th poorest county by this measure. Except for Washington County, all other coastal counties rank among Maine's least-poor (Lincoln, Hancock, Knox, Sagadahoc, Cumberland, and York rank 11th through 16th)

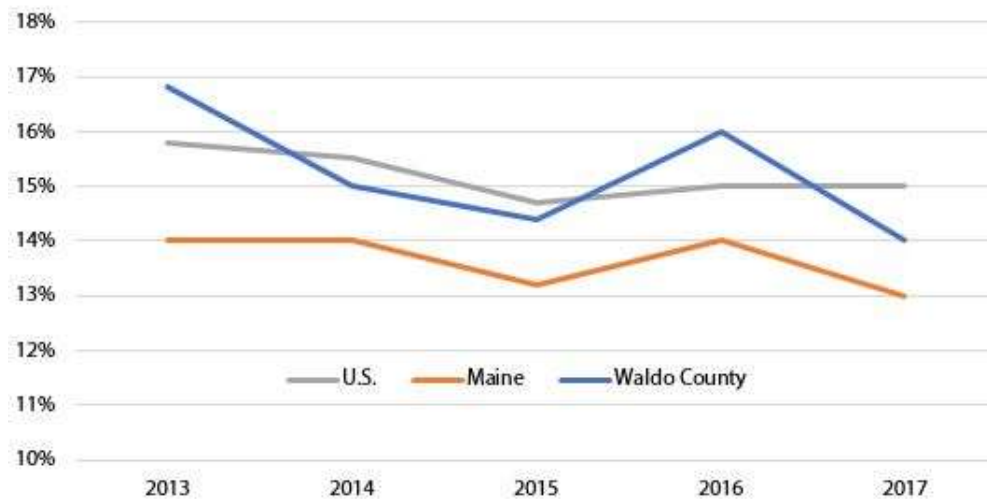
Poverty rate by maine county, 2013-2017

Rank (highest to lowest)		Estimated population living in poverty	Estimated percentage of population living in poverty
1	PISCATAQUIS	3,113	18.7%
2	WASHINGTON	5,599	18.2%
3	SOMERSET	8,928	17.8%
4	AROOSTOOK	11,673	17.5%
5	PENOBSCOT	23,119	15.9%
6	OXFORD	8,588	15.2%
7	WALDO	5,495	14.3%
8	ANDROSCOGGIN	14,910	14.3%
9	KENNEBEC	16,623	14.1%
10	FRANKLIN	3,580	12.4%
11	LINCOLN	3,933	11.8%
12	HANCOCK	6,137	11.6
13	KNOX	4,469	11.6%
14	SAGADAHOC	3,952	11.3%
15	CUMBERLAND	29,984	10.7%
16	YORK	16,801	8.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

A historical perspective shows poverty rates trending downward in Waldo County (as they are in the rest of Maine and the U.S.), with a small decline in the last few years. The chart below shows how poverty rates steadily rose from 2013 to 2014 and then receded. Note that the sharp fluctuations in Waldo County's poverty rate is likely due to the statistical challenges of estimating poverty in small areas, not from actual swings in the poverty rate.

POVERTY RATE IN UNITED STATES, MAINE, AND WALDO COUNTY



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates

Within Waldo County, levels of poverty and wealth vary greatly by community and household type. The table below shows the distribution of household income by town. Median incomes range from over \$55,000 in the coastal communities of Belfast, Lincolnville, Islesboro, Northport, Winterport and Prospect (which is inland) to less than \$35,000 in the inland town of Brooks.

Household Income by Town 2013-2017

	Less than \$10,000	\$10,000 to \$14,999	\$15,000 to \$24,999	\$25,000 to \$34,999	\$35,000 to \$49,999	\$50,000 to \$74,999	\$75,000 to \$99,999	\$100,000 to \$149,999	\$150,000 to \$199,999	\$200,000 or more	Median Income
BELFAST	7%	6%	13%	9%	11%	18%	18%	11%	4%	4%	\$59,260
BELMONT	5%	6%	11%	18%	15%	15%	12%	15%	3%	1%	\$43,750
BROOKS	8%	4%	27%	18%	12%	24%	3%	3%	2%	0%	\$33,343
BURNHAM	10%	9%	17%	12%	17%	12%	11%	8%	3%	1%	\$36,250
FRANKFORT	6%	6%	19%	7%	18%	23%	13%	6%	2%	1%	\$43,438
FREEDOM	9%	6%	11%	7%	15%	32%	9%	9%	1%	2%	\$50,833
ISLESBORO	6%	3%	11%	8%	12%	17%	17%	9%	3%	14%	\$59,635
JACKSON	10%	6%	10%	17%	10%	31%	10%	6%	0%	0%	\$43,281
KNOX	5%	4%	12%	11%	24%	28%	5%	11%	0%	1%	\$47,500
LIBERTY	12%	7%	9%	17%	12%	20%	11%	12%	2%	0%	\$37,262
LINCOLNVILLE	4%	2%	11%	10%	18%	18%	13%	16%	4%	4%	\$55,588
MONROE	5%	11%	17%	10%	16%	11%	12%	13%	4%	2%	\$42,500

MONTVILLE	4%	3%	8%	18%	15%	25%	16%	11%	0%	0%	\$52,727
MORRILL	4%	4%	12%	9%	18%	27%	11%	11%	2%	2%	\$53,594
NORTHPORT	6%	4%	7%	9%	15%	24%	12%	13%	6%	5%	\$62,596
PALERMO	5%	2%	12%	15%	18%	14%	19%	10%	4%	3%	\$48,882
PROSPECT	2%	5%	9%	5%	19%	23%	19%	17%	2%	0%	\$60,313
SEARSMONT	10%	5%	13%	5%	20%	18%	11%	16%	2%	1%	\$48,350
SEARSPORT	10%	10%	16%	14%	10%	22%	5%	13%	1%	0%	\$35,909
STOCKTON SPRINGS	9%	4%	11%	14%	11%	23%	14%	9%	3%	4%	\$51,711
SWANVILLE	5%	8%	16%	13%	13%	16%	21%	4%	3%	3%	\$45,192
THORNDIKE	5%	7%	11%	17%	15%	19%	11%	10%	3%	2%	\$43,750
TROY	4%	8%	13%	19%	22%	15%	13%	6%	2%	0%	\$37,344
UNITY	9%	7%	19%	10%	11%	16%	13%	9%	2%	3%	\$40,096
WALDO	5%	9%	14%	13%	21%	14%	17%	7%	1%	1%	\$44,076
WINTERPORT	5%	4%	7%	6%	11%	25%	19%	18%	3%	2%	\$68,751
WALDO COUNTY	7%	6%	13%	11%	14%	20%	14%	11%	3%	2%	\$50,162
MAINE	6%	6%	11%	11%	14%	19%	13%	13%	4%	4%	\$53,024
UNITED STATES	7%	5%	10%	10%	13%	18%	12%	14%	6%	6%	\$57,652

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

For comparison, the following table shows the 2019 federal poverty thresholds by household size. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) calculates these income levels each year. Families and households with incomes below the threshold are said to be living in poverty.

2020 Federal Poverty Thresholds	
NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN HOUSEHOLD	Poverty Threshold
1	\$12,060
2	\$16,240
3	\$20,420
4	\$24,600
5	\$28,780
6	\$32,960
7	\$37,140
8	\$41,320
9+	Add \$4,180 for each additional person

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Comparing Waldo County households' incomes to the corresponding poverty thresholds generates an estimate of the portion of households living in poverty. The table below shows those estimates by town. The rates vary significantly, from over 25% (1 in 4 residents) in Jackson, to less than 10% in Islesboro, Lincolnville, Palermo, and Winterport.

(See chart on next page)

Poverty Status in the last 12 months

	Estimated total below poverty	Estimated percentage below poverty
BELFAST	983	15%
BELMONT	93	10%
BROOKS	199	21%
BURNHAM	221	18%
FRANKFORT	125	13%
FREEDOM	143	20%
ISLESBORO	45	6%
JACKSON	223	32%
KNOX	137	17%
LIBERTY	156	18%
LINCOLNVILLE	131	7%
MONROE	237	25%
MONTVILLE	59	7%
MORRILL	115	12%
NORTHPORT	129	7%
PALERMO	152	10%
PROSPECT	58	8%
SEARSMONT	264	18%
SEARSPORT	360	14%
STOCKTON SPRINGS	160	11%
SWANVILLE	246	19%
THORNDIKE	79	10%
TROY	178	18%
UNITY	458	26%
WALDO	138	16%
WINTERPORT	406	11%
WALDO COUNTY	5,495	14%
MAINE	166,904	13%
UNITED STATES	45,650,345	15%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

In addition to geographic variations, different types of families have starkly different poverty rates. The table below shows the percentage of people living in poverty by household type. This household-level detail reveals the prevalence of poverty among households led by single mothers, especially those with young children. That is true nationally, and even more so in Waldo County. In 2013-2017, 2 out of 3 Waldo County households headed by single mothers of young children were poor (68%). The reasons for that are varied; common challenges include lack of childcare, transportation, education and workforce skills.

PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE LIVING IN POVERTY BY HOUSEHOLD TYPE

	All individuals	Families	Families with children	Married couples with children	Female householder, no husband, with children	Female householder, no husband, with children under 5
WALDO COUNTY	14%	10%	17%	9%	38%	68%
MAINE	13%	8%	15%	6%	37%	48%
UNITED STATES	15%	11%	17%	8%	39%	44%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

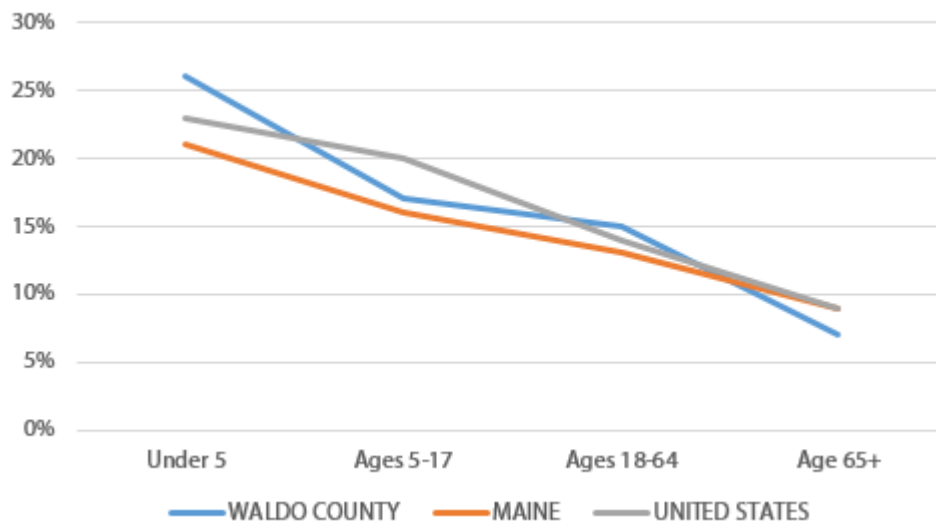
These statistics help to explain a noteworthy trend in Waldo County, and indeed throughout Maine and the U.S. Children under age five now experience poverty more than any other segment of the population. Meanwhile, the elderly are the least-poor segment of the population. In Waldo County, more than 1 in 4 young children (26%) are living in poverty. That figure is much higher than the overall poverty rate (14%) and triple the rate for residents age 65 and older (7%). In other words, children under five are three times more likely to be living in poverty than their grandparents over age 64.

percentage of people living in poverty by age group

	All Ages	Under 5	Ages 5-17	Ages 18-64	Age 65+
WALDO COUNTY	14%	26%	17%	15%	7%
MAINE	13%	21%	16%	13%	9%
UNITED STATES	15%	23%	20%	14%	9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey

POVERTY BY AGE GROUP



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey

Community survey responses reveal the pervasiveness of poverty and its corrosive effect across generations. Not only does poverty affect people’s ability to meet basic needs, it can impact the aspirations and outlook of younger family members. 13% of respondents answered not having enough money to pay household bills during a typical month. Respondents cite “poverty throughout generations of families” as the second most critical problem in Waldo County, with lack of affordable housing being the first, and ahead of such common challenges as opioid use, food insecurity, transportation, and job training. Many respondents cited poverty as being one of the biggest problems facing youth in Waldo County. According to a report from the Brookings Institute, nearly half (42%) of children from households with low-incomes grow up to have a low-income as adults, while just 9% of children from wealthy households end up in a household with low-income as adults (with "low-income" meaning the bottom 20% of incomes)."

Livable Wage

It is important to note that poverty estimates based on federal thresholds may underestimate the portion of households struggling to meet basic needs. Federal poverty thresholds are based on historical household food costs and omit important expenses incurred by today’s families, such as childcare and health care.

To address this shortcoming, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) publishes a “living wage budget” for every U.S. County, including Waldo. This budget estimates how much a family needs to pay for the local cost of living. For instance, in Waldo County, a single adult with one child would need \$48,600 per year to cover basic expenses (equivalent to \$23.37 per hour if working full-time). An adult with two children would need \$58,286 (\$28.02 per hour).

Waldo County 2020 Living Wage Budget					
	1 Adult	1 Adult 1 Child	1 Adult 2 Children	2 Adults (1 Earner) 2 Children	2 Adults (2 Earners) 2 Children
FOOD	\$3,495	\$5,163	\$7,760	\$10,303	\$10,303
CHILD CARE	\$0	\$7,231	\$11,352	\$0	\$11,352
MEDICAL	\$2,474	\$7,363	\$7,075	\$7,195	\$7,195
HOUSING	\$8,736	\$10,680	\$10,680	\$10,680	\$10,680
TRANSPORTATION	\$3,899	\$7,602	\$9,644	\$10,506	\$10,506
OTHER	\$2,890	\$4,818	\$5,003	\$6,293	\$6,293
REQUIRED ANNUAL INCOME AFTER TAXES	\$21,495	\$42,857	\$51,513	\$44,977	\$56,329
ANNUAL TAXES	\$4,092	\$8,856	\$10,751	\$9,320	\$11,806
REQUIRED ANNUAL INCOME BEFORE TAXES	\$25,587	\$51,712	\$62,264	\$54,297	\$68,135
LIVING WAGE (EQUIVALENT HOURLY WAGE PER EARNER)	\$12.30	\$24.86	\$26.1	\$24.26	\$16.38

Source: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Living Wage Calculator, 2018 update

These income levels far exceed the earnings of most entry-level workers in Waldo County. According to the Maine Department of Labor (MDOL), in 2018 the average annual pay for full-time entry-level positions was \$24,806 (\$12.92 per hour) in Waldo County. (See Employment section for more detail.) That wage would be adequate only for a single adult with no children. These figures indicate that while 14% of Waldo County residents live in households that fall below the federal poverty threshold, many additional residents may be struggling to earn a livable wage. One survey respondent said, "I also think with the majority of jobs not paying well it's hard for people to maintain let alone get ahead."

The low pay of entry-level jobs helps to explain a choice reported by some individuals with a low income: work and lose the public assistance that helps pay for their family's basic needs, or don't work and receive that assistance. The community survey found that 20% of respondents felt they could benefit from weatherization services for their home but did not have access to said services. Many people are over the limit of being able to receive WCAP services but are not able to pay for weatherization on their own. A survey respondent writes about the biggest problem facing adults in Waldo County, "Lack of services for people in the middle – have some income but can't afford fancy places."

Employment

[FACT: In 2017, employment in Waldo County hit its highest level since 1999. However, the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic led to extreme job losses]

According to MDOL, there were approximately 1,000 private employers in Waldo County in 2017, collectively providing valuable employment opportunities to the area's residents. By overall measures, the county's economy is growing. However, not all residents are benefitting from that growth.

In 2016, Waldo County returned to employment levels not seen since the height of credit-card firm MBNA's operations in the late 1990s. When Bank of America purchased the company in 2005, it caused an undisclosed number of layoffs at MBNA's call centers, including one in Belfast. When combined with the national recession of 2007-2009, that suppressed Waldo County's employment level for several years.

Today, new employers are thriving in MBNA's former buildings. Athenahealth and OnProcess Technology have become two of the county's largest employers, providing hundreds of quality jobs. Across town, the founders of Front Street Shipyard have revitalized a neglected portion of Belfast's waterfront and created hundreds of well-paying trade jobs. These businesses and many others, both large and small, have helped Belfast recover its lost jobs and move onto a new growth trajectory.

WALDO COUNTY EMPLOYMENT 2001-2017



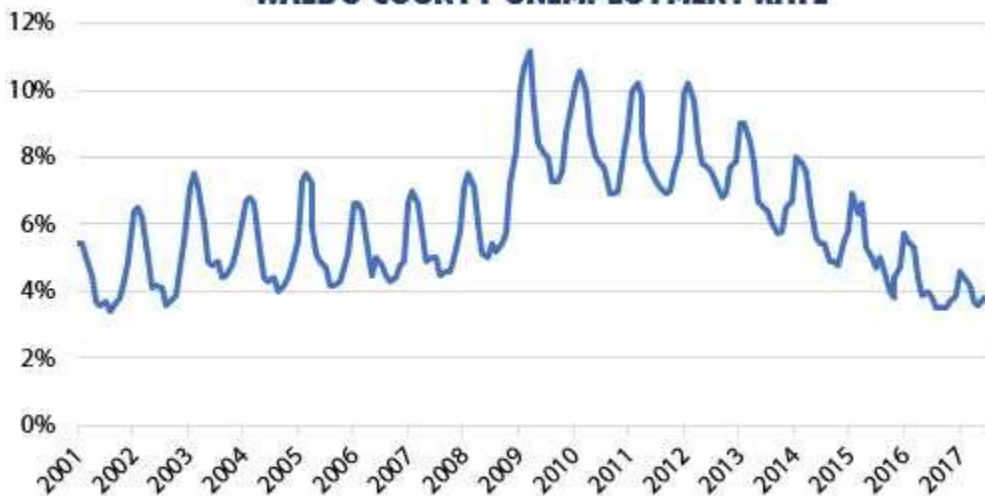
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

Despite the success of new employers, many area residents are still struggling to find jobs for which they are qualified that pay a livable wage. Often residents take jobs that are seasonal in nature or have fewer hours than ideal to ensure some employment. Individuals who lack strong literacy, professional credentials, or relevant work experience are challenged to find jobs that give them self-sufficiency and financial security. Logistical hurdles such as transportation and childcare are other common barriers to employment.

Unemployment

As employment levels have climbed, unemployment has fallen steadily. In Waldo County, unemployment peaked at an annual average of 8.9% in 2009. Last year (2018) it was 3.8%. That was slightly above the state rate of 3.3% but slightly the national rate of 3.9%. However, beneath those annual averages are the seasonal fluctuations that typify Maine's economy. The chart below shows unemployment in Waldo County rising each winter and falling each summer when seasonal businesses expand their workforces. In 2016, unemployment ranged from a high of 5.7% in January to a low of 3.5% in August, September, and October.

WALDO COUNTY UNEMPLOYMENT RATE



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics

Below are unemployment figures for April 2019. The table below shows that 3.6% of Waldo County's workforce was unemployed at that time, which was higher than the state rate of 3.3% and the same as the national rate of 3.6%. While 3.6% is a low rate of unemployment, it still means that about 749 Waldo County residents who wanted to work did not have a job.

Employment and Unemployment – April 2019				
	Total labor force	Employed ²	Unemployed	Unemployment rate
WALDO COUNTY	21,250	20,501	749	3.6%
MAINE	698,745	675,221	23,524	3.3%
UNITED STATES	162,097,000	156,710,000	5,387,000	3.6%

Source: Maine Department of Labor, Center of Workforce Research and information

Maine's unemployment rate hit record high of nearly 11 percent in April 2020. The state lost more than 98,000 jobs as the economic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic hit the state with full force. Of the community survey respondents, 14% stated they were unemployed directly because of COVID-19.

Waldo County was not immune to this impact. Waldo County saw an 8.4% unemployment rate in August of 2020 up 5.4% from the previous August. The County experienced an unemployment rate of 9.8% in April of 2020 6.3% higher than the previous year. As of October, that rate is has settled to 4.5% still over 2% higher than the same time in 2019. The table below shows the mix of industries in Waldo County in 2016. In that year, more than half (61%) of the county's jobs were in just four sectors: manufacturing, retail trade, finance and insurance, and health care and social assistance.

Waldo County Establishments with paid employees by sector		
	Number of Establishments	Paid Employees
AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY, FISHING AND HUNTING	10	24
MINING, QUARRYING, AND OIL AND GAS EXTRACTION	1	20-99
UTILITIES	2	0-19
CONSTRUCTION	141	456
MANUFACTURING	57	1,123
WHOLESALE TRADE	27	311
RETAIL TRADE	171	1,480
TRANSPORTATION AND WAREHOUSING	32	167

² This employment number for Waldo County is significantly higher than the employment numbers shown elsewhere in this section. That is because this measure includes self-employed individuals and people living in Waldo County but working elsewhere. The other, narrower measures include only people employed by a business in Waldo County.

INFORMATION	19	500-999
FINANCE AND INSURANCE	34	854
REAL ESTATE AND RENTAL AND LEASING	31	71
PROFESSIONAL, SCIENTIFIC, AND TECH. SERVICES	59	199
MANAGEMENT OF COMPANIES AND ENTERPRISES	7	57
ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPPORT AND WASTE MANAGEMENT AND REMEDIATION SERVICES	54	369
EDUCATIONAL SERVICES	17	454
HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE	119	1,833
ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT, AND RECREATION	24	107
ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD SERVICES	90	822
OTHER SERVICES (EXCEPT PUBLIC ADMIN.)	99	377
TOTAL FOR ALL SECTORS	994	9,639

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016 County Business Patterns

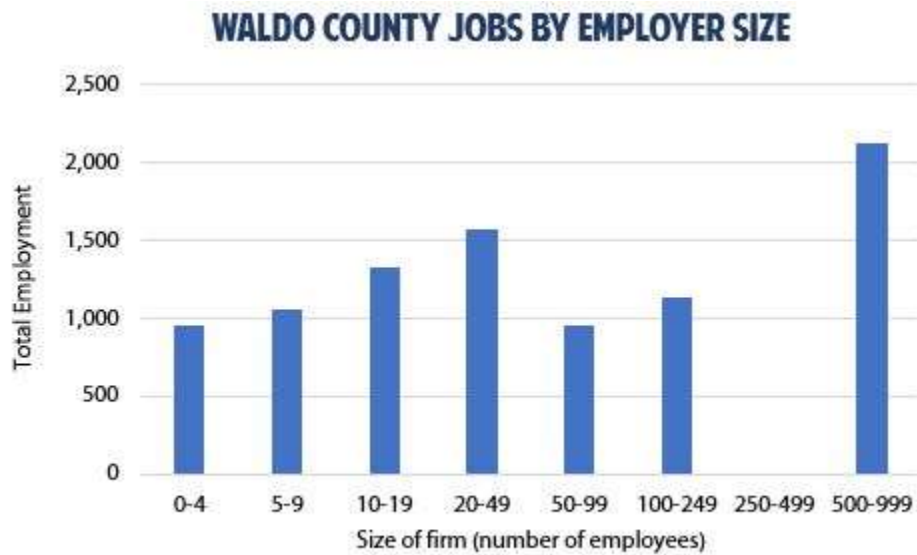
This distribution reflects the prominence of the county's largest employers, listed below. The rank is based on average employment during the second quarter of 2018 (October through December). Athenahealth, Waldo County General Hospital, and Bank of America all employ more than 500 people (exact numbers are not available due to disclosure rules).

Waldo County'			
		Employment Range	Location
1	ATHENAHEALTH	500-1000	Belfast
2	WALDO COUNTY GENERAL HOSPITAL	500-1000	Belfast
3	BANK OF AMERICA	500-1000	Belfast
4	UNITY COLLEGE	1 to 500	Unity
5	MATHEWS BROTHERS CO	1 to 500	Belfast
6	MARINE HARVEST USA LLC	1 to 500	Belfast
7	HANNAFORD	1 to 500	Belfast
8	WALDO COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERS	1 to 500	Belfast
9	PRIDE MANUFACTURING	1 to 500	Belfast
10	SWEETSER	1 to 500	Burnham

Source: Maine Department of Labor, based on average employment 1ST quarter 2020

The county's large employers provide jobs, wages, and benefits to thousands of residents, and are critical to the region's economy. Smaller businesses play an important role as well. The chart below provides a snapshot of employment by firm size in March 2016. At that time, firms with zero to four workers collectively employed nearly 1,000 people while firms with 500 or more workers employed over 2,000. Recently, our 4th largest Employer, Unit College noted they will be

moving fully to a remote learning environment. The total impacts locally and to Waldo County have not yet been actualized but is a concern that local jobs will be impacted.



Source: Maine Department of Labor, March 2016

The locations of Waldo County’s largest employers highlight the importance of Belfast as a job center. According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s Longitudinal Employer-Households Dynamics (LEHD) tool, in 2014 Belfast was the site of 35% of jobs in Waldo County—more than 1 in 3.

While some residents can find jobs locally, many residents travel outside the region for work. One survey participant writes, “If you don't work for one of the big employers in the area it's very hard to move up or forward to find something better that is not out of town.” According to LEHD, in 2014 there were 14,044 employed individuals in Waldo County. Fewer than half (42%) worked in Waldo County. The rest worked for businesses outside the county. The table below shows the locations of their employers, which include cities as far away as Portland. About two-thirds (64%) of these workers were earning less than \$3,333 per month (\$39,996 per year). Depending on their household size, this means they may be traveling long distances for a job that still does not provide a livable wage (as calculated by MIT).

Locations of Non-Waldo County Employers, 2014			
		Number of Workers	Share of Waldo Workers
1	BANGOR	1,277	9.1%
2	AUGUSTA	647	4.6%
3	ROCKLAND	371	2.6%
4	WATERVILLE	356	2.5%
5	CAMDEN	273	1.9%
6	BREWER	239	1.7%
7	PORTLAND	201	1.4%
8	ELLSWORTH	157	1.1%
9	HAMPDEN	157	1.1%
10	ORONO	152	1.1%

The 2020 assessment steering committee reviewed the most recent data from 2017 and did not find any significant data to update this chart with.

Wages

Rising employment is good news for Waldo County residents, but overall growth doesn't necessarily reflect the quality of jobs or indicate whether they provide stable, year-round employment. The following table shows the average hourly wages of Waldo County residents in various occupations by their level of experience, as calculated by MDOL.

The starting pay for many occupations is low compared to the amount needed to pay basic living expenses in Waldo County. As calculated by MIT, the livable hourly wage for residents in 2018 was \$11.49 for a childless adult, \$23.37 for an adult with one child, \$28.02 for an adult with two children, and \$15.40 for two working adults with two children. Entry-level positions for many occupations do not provide those levels of compensation. These numbers highlight the challenges facing many workers, particularly those with children, who lack adequate workforce skills.

As of 2020, Maine's minimum hourly wage is \$12.00, with plans to have it raised to \$12.15 in January 2021.

WALDO COUNTY HOURLY WAGES BY OCCUPATION AND LEVEL OF EXPERIENCE, 2018*

	Estimated Employment	Entry-Level Average Wage	Overall Average Wage	Experienced Average Wage
MANAGEMENT	510	\$30.97	\$46.68	\$50.97
BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS	390	\$22.51	\$29.72	\$37.43
COMPUTER AND MATHEMATICAL	NA	\$26.63	\$34.04	\$39.94
ARCHITECTURE AND ENGINEERING	40	\$26.96	\$38.76	\$49.56
LIFE, PHYSICAL, AND SOCIAL SCIENCES	NA	\$22.53	\$25.63	\$29.09
COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES	100	\$20.51	\$24.50	\$28.10
LEGAL	20	\$21.70	\$31.43	\$38.34
EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND LIBRARY	1,030	\$16.48	\$21.09	\$26.33
ARTS, DESIGN, ENTERTAINMENT, SPORTS, AND MEDIA	70	\$13.09	\$18.70	\$23.41
HEALTHCARE PRACTITIONERS AND TECHNICAL	610	\$22.54	\$39.85	\$43.25
HEALTHCARE SUPPORT	250	\$13.05	\$15.40	\$16.57
PROTECTIVE SERVICES	150	\$13.16	\$19.98	\$24.89
FOOD PREPARATION AND SERVING-RELATED	520	\$10.00	\$11.65	\$11.90

BUILDING AND GROUNDS CLEANING AND MAINTENANCE	580	\$12.68	\$16.25	\$18.11
PERSONAL CARE AND SERVICES	490	\$10.07	\$12.26	\$13.16
SALES AND RELATED	1020	\$10.11	\$15.63	\$17.90
OFFICE AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT	1590	\$13.22	\$17.37	\$20.14
FARMING, FISHING, AND FORESTRY	20	\$13.30	\$15.61	\$18.10
CONSTRUCTION AND EXTRACTION	470	\$15.52	\$19.40	\$23.52
INSTALLATION, MAINTENANCE, AND REPAIR	410	\$16.57	\$19.70	\$22.43
PRODUCTION	710	\$12.37	\$16.91	\$20.85
TRANSPORTATION AND MATERIAL MOVING	810	\$13.77	\$18.50	\$21.47
ALL OCCUPATIONS	10,210	\$12.92	\$21.33	\$25.37

Source: Maine Department of Labor (Mdol)

Na = Not Available

* Mdol Looks at Wage Distribution to Estimate the Average Wages of Entry-Level and Experienced Workers. It Defines the Entry-Level Wage as The Average Wage of The Lowest Paid One-Third of Workers; The Experienced Wage Is the Average Pay of The Upper Two-Thirds of Workers.

Education

[FACT: According to 2014-2018 data from the U.S. Census Bureau, only 29.6% of Waldo County residents have a bachelor's degree or higher.]

The educational needs of Waldo County residents are like other areas in Maine, but nonetheless critical. At each level of the education system, data shows important opportunities for growth in terms of achievement, programming, participation, or overall attainment. Roughly half of four-year-olds in Waldo County are not enrolled in public pre-kindergarten; a large percentage of students are not proficient in math or English; 15% of high school youth don't graduate on time; and more than two-thirds of adults don't have a college degree. Although these measures are stable and solidly average compared to elsewhere in Maine, all of them encumber the ability of Waldo County's population to achieve its full potential.

Pre-K through 12

On October 1, 2018, 5,192 students were enrolled in Waldo County public schools in pre-kindergarten through grade 12. That represents a little less than 90% of the estimated population aged five to eighteen. Enrollment in K-12 has fallen over time, as the percentage of school-age children has dropped.

During the COVID-19 Pandemic, access to reliable and useful technology became a top priority, especially at the end of the 2019-2020 school year as schools shifted to remote learning. While older students were accustomed to using technology, many of the younger students, specifically in Kindergarten through 2nd grade, did not have access to this technology.

Waldo County Public School Enrollment BY Student Town OF Residence

	Pre-K	K-5	6-8	9-12	Total
BELFAST	18	361	216	268	863
BELMONT	13	67	30	39	149
BROOKS	8	56	27	33	124
BURNHAM	8	72	41	50	171
FRANKFORT	12	78	44	57	191
FREEDOM	4	40	25	32	101
ISLESBORO	0	25	17	19	61
JACKSON	9	28	16	26	79
KNOX	5	47	35	30	117
LIBERTY	5	46	25	35	111
LINCOLNVILLE	2	148	69	90	90
MONROE	9	45	20	26	100
MONTVILLE	12	60	35	35	142
MORRILL	8	68	30	40	143
NORTHPORT	1	85	46	48	180
PALERMO	7	97	37	71	202
PROSPECT	7	38	24	31	100
SEARSMONT	12	78	44	59	193
SEARSPORT	15	148	80	108	351
STOCKTON	1	78	40	39	158
SPRINGS					
SWANVILLE	4	90	32	62	188
THORNDIKE	5	43	26	35	109
TROY	4	64	32	37	137
UNITY	13	102	49	53	216
WALDO	1	36	19	22	78
WINTERPORT	23	241	143	211	618
WALDO COUNTY	206	2,241	1,102	1,520	5,192

Source: Maine Department of Education, As of October 1, 2018

In 2018-19, the percentage of Waldo-County four-year-olds in pre-kindergarten was 52.5%, compared to the statewide average of 46.7% (Kids Count, 2018). While the Waldo County public pre-kindergarten enrollment rate exceeds the statewide average rate, it still leaves roughly half of four-year-olds without public pre-kindergarten education. (See the Self-Sufficiency section for a list of public pre-kindergarten options.)

Head Start and Early Head Start

In 2018-2019, 138 Waldo County children were served by Head Start and 63 were served by Early Head Start, but more were eligible, particularly in Early Head Start where a consistent waitlist has been maintained. An estimate for the number of children eligible for Head Start and

Early Head Start can be derived by multiplying the number of births in each Waldo County town by the town's poverty rate for children age 5 and under (See Chart below). Approximately 361 children age 5 and under are eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start. Please note this number is likely higher due to the potential for error given the Census statistic for five towns.

While a comprehensive analysis detailing the specific barriers to parents of eligible Head Start children is not available, the availability childcare may be one such barrier. Information on childcare can be gleaned from the 2017 Waldo County Community Needs Survey issued by WCAP as part of this assessment process. (See the Child Development and Childcare Options section.)

These responses are consistent with anecdotal reports that many workers with low incomes work at jobs that require night and weekend shifts, and that don't allow for flexible time to care for dependents.

Estimated Income Eligible Children for Head Start/Early Head Start in Waldo County											
WALDO COUNTY	Birth Rates, ME CDC Vital Statistics						Estimated Eligible children				
	2014 Births	2015 Births	2016 Births	2017 Births	2018 Births	Poverty Rate	4 YO	3 YO	2 YO	1 YO	<1Y O
BELFAST	60	58	37	48	52	27.50%	17	16	10	13	14
BELMONT	9	9	8	10	8	25.00%	2	2	2	3	2
BROOKS	13	12	7	10	11	11.10%	1	1	1	1	1
BURNHAM	10	11	10	2	11	20.30%	2	2	2	0	2
FRANKFORT	12	13	9	15	14	6.80%	1	1	1	1	1
FREEDOM	7	2	6	8	6	21.10%	1	0	1	2	1
ISLESBORO	3	2	3	6	3	NA*	NA*	NA*	NA*	NA*	NA*
JACKSON	8	7	4	4	5	79.70%	6	6	3	3	4
KNOX	10	9	14	8	7	27.60%	3	2	4	2	2
LIBERTY	7	7	6	5	8	27.90%	2	2	2	1	2
LINCOLNVILLE	19	21	14	15	22	NA*	NA*	NA*	NA*	NA*	NA*
MONROE	4	12	11	12	6	32.40%	1	4	4	4	2
MONTVILLE	10	8	9	7	6	5.80%	1	0	1	0	0
MORRILL	12	5	14	9	10	7.10%	1	0	1	1	1
NORTHPORT	10	11	11	8	17	21.10%	2	2	2	2	4
PALERMO	8	13	9	17	13	NA*	NA*	NA*	NA*	NA*	NA*
PROSPECT	6	9	7	4	7	NA*	NA*	NA*	NA*	NA*	NA*
SEARSMONT	13	12	12	15	13	9.60%	1	1	1	1	1
SEARSPORT	27	23	28	26	23	NA*	NA*	NA*	NA*	NA*	NA*
STOCKTON SPRINGS	9	14	12	11	12	13.30%	1	2	2	1	2
SWANVILLE	14	18	22	14	16	59.00%	8	11	13	8	9
THORNDIKE	7	5	12	11	4	31.60%	2	2	4	3	1
TROY	7	14	10	10	12	24.00%	2	3	2	2	3
UNITY	17	23	18	14	33	37.20%	6	9	7	5	12
WALDO	7	5	9	8	7	22.40%	2	1	2	2	2

WINTERPORT	31	32	28	39	34	25.30%	8	8	7	10	9
TOTAL	340	355	330	336	360	25.51%	71	76	71	67	76

Source: Maine DHHS Vital Statistics 2011-2018; and US Census 2013-2017 ACS 5-Year Estimated Poverty Rate for children under 5 YO .

*Please note : due to the rural nature of our communities, there is a high margin of error in data gathering. The Census reported a 0% poverty rate for children 0-5 in Searsport, Maine. Due to our past research and our experience this does not appear accurate. The Census reports a margin of error of +/- 53 (Islesboro), 39 (Lincolnville) 35 (Palermo), 53 (Prospect), and 42 (Searsport) for this particular statistic. We have therefore chosen not to report this data.

Educational Proficiency

Educational proficiency varies widely across Waldo County. During the 2017-18 school year, the percentage of students that met or exceeded proficiency standards in English ranged from 29% in Islesboro to 64% in Lincolnville, compared to the statewide average of 50%. In math, the percentage of students meeting, or exceeding proficiency ranged from 18% in RSU 3 (Western Waldo County) to 50% in Lincolnville, compared to the statewide average of 37%. The percentage of students meeting or exceeding proficiency in science ranged from 55% in RSU 3 to 84% in Lincolnville (scores are not reported for one districts), compared to the statewide average of 59%.

Educational Proficiency by District: Percent of Students who Meet or Exceed State Standards

	English	Math	Science
ISLESBORO	66.7%	55.6%	--
LINCOLNVILLE	74%	48.6%	81.8%
NORTHPORT	65.1%	40.7%	73.1%
RSU 3 (UNITY AREA)³	44.5%	20.6%	49.5%
RSU 20 (SEARSPORT AREA)⁴	40.6%	25.8%	48.6%
RSU 71 (BELFAST AREA)⁵	48%	24.3%	61.6%
MAINE	55.9%	35.6%	60%

Source: Maine Department Of Education, 2018-2019

High School Graduation

In 2019, Waldo County had an 85.4% high school graduation rate, slightly lower than the state average of 87.4%, and a decline from 86.5% in 2018. In 2016, Waldo County's dropout rate was 1.7%, somewhat lower than the statewide average of 2.4%.

Alternative Education

The Belfast Community Outreach Program in Education (BCOPE) provides alternative education to up to 40 at-risk high school students in RSU 71. BCOPE accepts students who are unable to learn in a traditional classroom setting and who commit to attending BCOPE. Students from RSU 20 may also apply to BCOPE with their superintendent's approval.

³ RSU 3 includes Brooks, Freedom, Jackson, Knox, Liberty, Monroe, Montville, Thorndike, Troy, Unity and Waldo.

⁴ RSU 20 includes Searsport and Stockton Springs.

⁵ RSU 71 includes Belfast, Belmont, Morrill, Searsmont, and Swanville.

Belfast Adult Education provides high school diploma completion, HiSet (GED), college transition programs, career exploration, and Work Ready certification to adults age 16 and older from RSU 71 and RSU 20. RSU 3 has an adult education office at Mt. View High School in Thorndike. Its services include career counseling and education, as well as continuing education.

Career and Technical Education

Waldo County Technical Center (WCTC) is the Career and Technical Education center for Waldo County high school students. WCTC offers 16 programs aligned with industry needs, such as health science, building construction, automotive technology, culinary arts, and graphic design. Many programs lead to professional certifications and college credits. WCTC students come from all economic backgrounds and ability levels; the center routinely has students ranked among the top ten of their graduating classes.

Despite WCTC's success, survey respondents report a need for even more career and technical education, especially for adults. "...[T]hose needing a technical degree or certification are not able to find it here. A community college (or partnership bringing those programs closer) would be a huge boon for [Waldo County]!"

Post-Secondary Education

The University of Maine Hutchinson Center in Belfast offers college advising and career counseling services. The center offers access to University of Maine undergraduate- and graduate-level courses and degrees through online, videoconference, and live classes. In addition, early-college programs are offered to high school students for college credit through the Maine Aspirations Program in Belfast. Unity College offers sustainability-based associate's and bachelor's degrees with an environmental focus. Other higher education institutes are located within an hour's travel in Rockland, Orono, Bangor, and Augusta.

Educational Attainment

The need for a post-secondary credential in today's job market is well documented. A 2014 report from the Pew Research Center indicates that the economic disparity between college graduates and those with a high-school diploma or less is growing and is more pronounced than in previous generations. In the current job market, a high school diploma alone is no longer enough to guarantee financial security.

In 2014-2018, nearly two-thirds (61%) of Waldo County adults age 25 and older lacked a college degree, although 21% had some college experience. Ninety-three percent of Waldo County adults have a high school diploma (a slightly higher percentage than statewide 92%) and 30% have a bachelor's degree or higher (compared to 30% statewide). This trend is somewhat lower among Head Start and Early Head Start families where 44% of families enrolled in 2017-2018 had a High School diploma; 11% had a bachelor's degree.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF WALDO COUNTY ADULTS

LESS THAN 9TH GRADE	2%
SOME HIGH SCHOOL	5%
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE	33%
SOME COLLEGE	21%
ASSOCIATE DEGREE	9%
BACHELOR'S DEGREE	19%
GRADUATE OR PROFESSIONAL DEGREE	11%

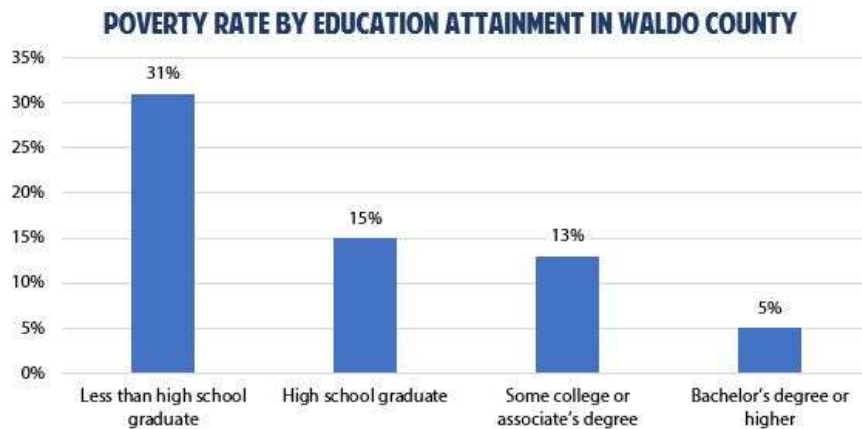
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

Although these rates are similar to Maine's statewide average, the 2,200 Waldo County residents who lack a high school diploma are twice as likely to live in poverty compared to those with a diploma, and their median income is less than half of college graduates' median income.

Poverty Rates by Educational Attainment in Waldo County

LESS THAN HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE	31%
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE	15%
SOME COLLEGE OR ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE	13%
BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER	5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

Overall, Waldo County residents without post-secondary credentials experience less favorable economic outcomes than their peers who graduate from post-secondary institutions.

Still, Waldo County residents are pursuing additional education credentials; among Head Start and Early Head Start parents, 3 individuals (2%) obtained a Bachelor's Degree or an Associate's Degree during the 2017-2018 school year and 17 parents or guardians (9%) completed a job

training program, professional certificate, or license during the year. The typical schedules of the families enrolled in these advanced degree programs can be rigorous but are often flexible.

Youth

[FACT: During the 2018-19 school year, 58% of Waldo County students were eligible for subsidized school meals.]

For children to navigate youth and adolescence successfully, and transition to adulthood with the requisite knowledge and resilience, access to adequate food, education, and physical and mental health care are critical, the home environment is a primary predictor of a child's success later in life. There is considerable variation in the health and well-being of youth in Waldo County. While some statistics show that Waldo County is performing better than surrounding areas, other statistics highlight concerning "hot spots."

Some problems are severe but only affect a small number of youths: for example, approximately 1.3% of youth have elevated lead in their blood. Other issues are alarmingly widespread: 62% of youth are eligible for subsidized school lunch, 1 in 5 live in poverty, and 1 in 4 are food insecure.

Perhaps the most compelling finding of the 2020 Waldo County Community Needs Survey issued by WCAP was the detrimental effect of drugs on Waldo County's youth. Respondents identify drugs as the biggest problem facing young residents. Drugs and alcohol have always posed temptations and challenges to young people, especially teenagers, but the current drug epidemic is affecting even younger children through their parents and other caregivers. Children can find themselves in unsafe conditions, lacking food and other basic needs. Moreover, many children lack the positive supports and role models that are critical to helping them reach their full potential.

Exacerbating the problem of at-home drug use is a reported lack of activities for children during out-of-school hours, which survey participants identify as the next biggest problem facing Waldo County's youth (along with education and job training). For younger children, a lack of safe, affordable, positive activities means lost opportunities for the enrichment they may not be receiving at home, and more time in unsafe or unhealthful environments. For teenagers, a lack of activities can lead to dangerous disengagement. "Nothing for them to do but get in trouble." This is only magnified by the impacts of COVID 19 and remote learning environment. It is noted that there is also additional concern for the mental health of our youth resulting from the long term impacts of COVID 19.

Poverty and Food Insecurity

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that 19% of children in Waldo County are living in poverty, slightly above than the state average (17%). That estimate is consistent with other data sources showing Waldo County's youth facing higher poverty rates than their peers in other counties.

By town, estimated child poverty rates range from 3% in Searsport to 50% in Jackson. The percentages are even higher for the county's youngest residents. For children under age 5, the poverty rate is 26% countywide, and ranges from 0% in Islesboro, Lincolnville, Montville, Palermo, and Searsport to 80% in Jackson.

ESTIMATED POVERTY RATE BY TOWN AND AGE			
	Percent Below Poverty Level	Percent Below Poverty Level, Under 18	Percent Below Poverty Level, Under 5
BELFAST	15%	20%	28%
BELMONT	10%	11%	25%
BROOKS	21%	30%	11%
BURNHAM	18%	27%	20%
FRANKFORT	13%	15%	7%
FREEDOM	20%	30%	21%
ISLESBORO	6%	4%	0%
JACKSON	32%	50%	80%
KNOX	17%	30%	28%
LIBERTY	18%	26%	28%
LINCOLNVILLE	7%	0%	0%
MONROE	25%	39%	33%
MONTVILLE	7%	6%	0%
MORRILL	12%	9%	7%
NORTHPORT	7%	7%	21%
PALERMO	10%	11%	0%
PROSPECT	8%	19%	0%
SEARSMONT	18%	22%	10%
SEARSPORT	14%	3%	0%
STOCKTON SPRINGS	11%	16%	13%
SWANVILLE	19%	31%	59%
THORNDIKE	10%	18%	32%
TROY	18%	27%	24%

UNITY	26%	36%	37%
WALDO	16%	18%	22%
WINTERPORT	11%	10%	25%
WALDO COUNTY	14%	19%	26%
MAINE	13%	17%	20%
UNITED STATES	15%	20%	23%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

During the 2018-19 school year, 58% of Waldo County students were eligible for subsidized school meals, compared to 46% statewide. In the same year, 50.8% of children in Waldo County participated in Maine Care (Kids Count, 2018), higher than the statewide average of 45.1%.

In April 2019, 623 children in Waldo County age five and under were supported by either the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (TANF) or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, historically called “food stamps”). The majority (578 children) were supported by only SNAP, while 44 children received assistance from both programs, and 1 child was supported by TANF alone. One year prior, in July 2018, 649 children were receiving TANF or SNAP support.

Due to COVID-19, nutrition for school-aged children previously accessing free/reduced breakfast, lunch, and snacks was impacted as many were removed from that food source due to school closures.

- 31 of 226 polled Early Childhood enrolled families indicated they were having trouble accessing food.
- 30 of 226 polled Early Childhood enrolled families indicated they were accessing food from local food pantries.
- 100 of Early Childhood enrolled families indicated they were accessing food from local school districts.
- Between 3/24 and 5/19 WCAP has completed:
 - 4 bulk food distributions through the CACFP/SFSP to Early Childhood enrolled families.
 - 4 public food drives utilizing food from the Good Shephard Food Bank

Health Insurance

In 2018, 6.0% of Waldo County children had no health insurance, compared to 5.7% of Maine children. Low-income children in Waldo County fared slightly higher; 7.7% had no health insurance, compared to 7.9% of low-income children in Maine (Kids Count, 2018). One survey participant noted that even residents with insurance sometimes face cost barriers by answering “High health insurance/drug costs” as the biggest problem facing Waldo County.

Pregnancy and Infants

Waldo County's rates for low birth-weight infants and pre-term births are close to the state average, at 7.1% and 7.7%, respectively, compared to 7.1% and 8.1% statewide (Kids Count, 2017). Infant mortality is slightly higher than average, at 7.0 per 1,000 compared to 6.3 (Kids Count, 2017). According to the 2012-2016 Maine Shared Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA), the percentage of mothers receiving early and adequate care for live births is also lower in Waldo County at 71.5% compared to the statewide average of 80.6%. Waldo County's teen pregnancy rate was higher than the state average: 18.9 per 1,000 births to mothers age 15-19, compared to 14.5 statewide (CHNA, 2012-2016).

Child Welfare

In 2018, there were about 62 Waldo County youth in state custody (a rate of 8.2 per 1000 children) (Kids Count, 2018). Statewide, there were 1,791 youth in state custody (a rate of 7.1 per 1000 children). For children who were placed into State custody, "kinship care" was the most common placement type statewide; 39% lived with a relative, 31% lived with a foster family, and 16% were placed in therapeutic care. During the 2017-2018 program year, nine youth-in-care were served by WCAP's Head Start and Early Head Start programs; a consistent number over the past three years.

These numbers only reflect children who are officially part of the foster care system; they do not include the many youth who are being raised by grandparents outside of the system. Anecdotally, these situations are becoming more prevalent, particularly as a consequence of the opioid epidemic. Waldo County's Head Start leaders report that many of these guardians are asking for assistance and training in raising their grandchildren. In Waldo County in 2017, 199 cases were assigned to DHHS Child Protective Services, of which evidence of abuse or neglect was found in 40, down slightly from 61 in 2016.

It has been noted anecdotally that the impact of COVID 19 may be compounding Domestic Violence issue and needs resulting increased risk for our youth. State and Local Domestic Providers report victims are staying in risky relationships and or returning to these environments in greater numbers.

Homeless Youth

The Maine Department of Education reports 2,192 homeless youth statewide (defined according to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act) in the 2015-2016 school year (Maine Department of Education, 2016). This is about 200 more homeless youth than in 2014-2015. Roughly 700 homeless children statewide had disabilities, 500 were "unaccompanied youth" and 200 were categorized as "limited English proficiency students." According to OUT Maine, up to 40% of Maine homeless youth are LGBTQ+. The majority were classified as homeless because they were "doubled up" (defined as living with family, friends, or other non-relatives) and about 10% were in shelters or awaiting foster care. Many homeless youth likely live in Maine's largest cities, Portland, Lewiston, or Bangor. Data on homeless youth for Waldo County is not readily

available, but it can be estimated by analyzing reports of 2015-2016 data from local school districts. These reports indicate 11 homeless youth were identified in RSU 3 (Brooks, Freedom, Jackson, Knox, Liberty, Monroe, Montville, Thorndike, Troy, Unity, and Waldo) and 20 were identified in RSU 53 (Burnham). In early 2017, communications with McKinney-Vento liaisons at Waldo County school districts identified two homeless youth in Winterport.

In 2017-2018, sixteen homeless children age 0 to 5 were served by WCAP’s Head Start and Early Head Start; this is an increase from the 2016-2017 program year.

In the Waldo County Homeless Coalition’s 2020 assessment, 10 of the 63 known homeless individuals were under the age of 17.

Youth with Disabilities

In 2015-2016, Maine Kids Count reports that 17% of youth age 3 to 21 in grades K-12 were receiving special education services, or about 30,000 youth statewide (Maine Kids Count, 2015-2016). Roughly two-thirds were boys. Learning disabilities, health issues, and speech and language impairments were the most common reasons for receiving services. Half of youth receiving services spent more than 80% of time in a regular classroom.

While comparable data is not available for Waldo County, an estimate can be derived. If we assume the same rate of youth with disabilities statewide applies to Waldo County, approximately 870 public school students in Waldo County have a disability. Approximately 25% of children in Waldo County are age 0 to 5. If we further assume that 25% of youth with disabilities are age 0 to 5, an estimated 220 children 5 and under have a disability in Waldo County.

In 2017-2018, 37 children in WCAP’s Head Start (25%) program had Individualized Education Plans and 10 children in Early Head Start (16%) had Individualized Family Service Plans.

For the children in Head Start, the most common disability was speech impairment. WCAP works with the State of Maine Child Development Services (CDS) as the primary provider of special education services for children under 5, including Two Rivers (based out of Brewer), Peds (based out of Waterville), and Midcoast (based out of Rockland). According to WCAP’s Early Childhood Director, the number of children enrolled in Head Start with diagnosed disabilities has remained relatively steady over the past five years. However, many children do not receive official diagnoses, and anecdotally, CDS partners note increases in referrals for children age 0 to 5.

WCAP Head Start Children with Disability, Age 3-5					
Number of Children Served by Head Start by Year with Disability					
Diagnosed Special Need	2013/14	2014-/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017-18
Speech/Language Impairment	47	29	23	26	22
Emotional Disturbance	1	0	0	2	0
Health Impairment	4	4	5	6	10
Hearing Impairment	0	0	0	0	0

Orthopedic Impairment	0	0	0	0	0
Autism	3	0	3	1	0
Multiple Conditions*	0	3	1	0	1
Developmental Delay	4	2	2	4	4
Totals	59	38	35	39	37
<i>*Including deafness and/or blindness</i>					
<i>Source: WCAP Head Start PIR, 2013-2018</i>					

It is worth noting that the disability rates amongst Head Start and Early Head Start children in Waldo County is consistently high over multiple years. The WCAP disability rates are higher than Maine and National levels for all four years for both Head Start and Early Head Start. The Head Start disability rates are double that of national rates in all four years. The Early Head Start disability rates are approximately double that of the national rates in two of the four years. In all four years the Head Start and Early Head Start disability numbers are above the numbers in the rest of the state of Maine.

Disability Numbers at WCAP vs. Maine vs. National						
	WCAP HS	WCAP EHS	Maine HS	Maine EHS	National HS	National EHS
2017-2018	25.17%	16.13%	19.89%	11.46%	12.78%	12.81%
2016-2017	25.32%	24.59%	19.23%	12.20%	12.59%	12.48%
2015-2016	24.31%	27.54%	23.4%	11.49%	12.47%	11.98%
2014-2015	29.37%	15.79%	22.84%	11.43%	12.18%	12.78%
<i>Source: Office of Head Start- Program Information Report (PIR) Disability Report – National Level (2014-2018)</i>						
<i>Office of Head Start- Program Information Report (PIR) Disability Report – State Level (2014-2018)</i>						
<i>Office of Head Start- Program Information Report (PIR) Disability Report – Program Level (2014-2018)</i>						

Please note, these rates do not include children who receive medical model services or who have written 504 plans. Children who don't receive official diagnoses from the State may be eligible for services if their primary care physician provides a referral. In 2017-2018, 13 children enrolled in WCAP Head Start or Early Head Start were receiving services through this approach. An additional four children (three Head Start, one Early Head Start) were receiving services through a 504 Plan.

Health

Fifty-eight percent of 19- to 35-month-olds in Waldo County are up to date for a series of seven immunizations, a figure much lower than the state overall rate of 76%. (mainehealthindex.org, October 2015). From 2009 to 2013, 1.3% of Waldo County children had confirmed elevated blood lead levels (among those screened), which is lower than the state average of 2.5%; the

rate for unconfirmed elevated blood lead levels was 5.0% in Waldo and 4.2% in Maine (CHNA, 2009-2013).

The 2017 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey (MIYHS), a collaboration between the Maine Department of Education and Maine DHHS, provides information about the health of students in K-12. The survey was administered in October 2017. Findings for Waldo County high school students include:

Physical and Mental Health

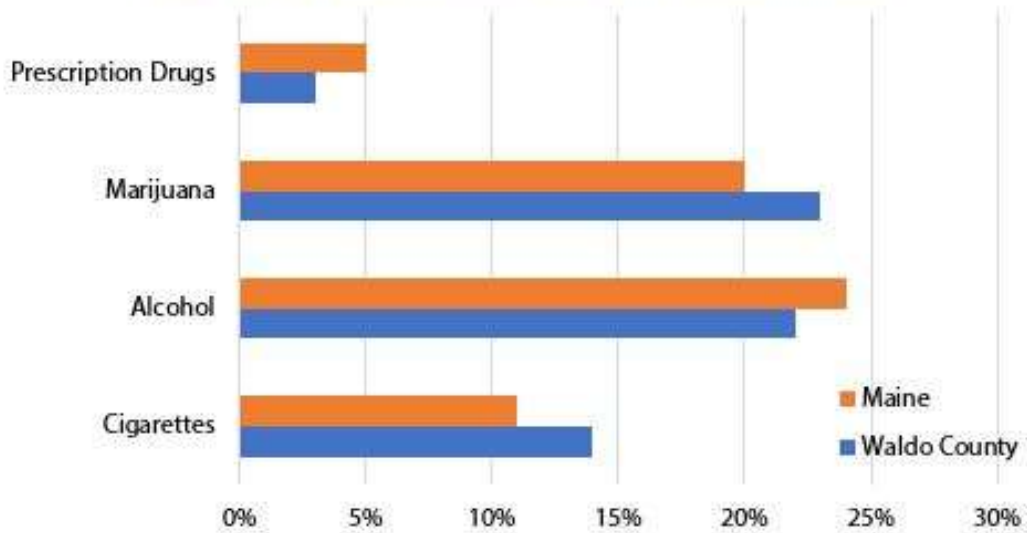
- 23% of Waldo County high school students reported being active for 60 minutes or more each day, similar to the state average of 20%.
- 28% had consumed at least two servings of fruit per day for the last week (compared to 30% statewide), and 10% had at least three servings of vegetables over the same time (11% statewide).
- Less high school students in Waldo County felt safe at school in 2017 (84%) than in 2015 (86%). Also, more students reported being bullied in 2017 (27%) than in 2015 (26%). These percentages are similar to statewide averages.
- 32% reported feeling “sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row.” Of these, 22% got help from an adult. 19% of students reported “seriously considering attempting suicide.” These percentages are similar to statewide averages.
- In 2015, 74% reported always wearing a seatbelt when driving a car, up from 69% in 2013, but several percentage points lower the state average of 80%.

Substance Abuse

- Substance use by Waldo County high school students is generally comparable to other regions of the state.
- 14% had smoked cigarettes daily for the last 30 days. More than half said it was “sort of easy” or “very easy” to get cigarettes.
- 22% had used alcohol at least once in the last 30 days and 38% had consumed five or more drinks in a row.
- 5% reported using prescription drugs in the last 30 days without a doctor’s prescription. The percentage of students who reported being offered, sold, or given an illegal drug on school property in the previous 12 months was 21% in Waldo County and 20% in Maine.
- 22% had used marijuana in the last 30 days.

Percentage of students using substances				
	Cigarette	Alcohol	Marijuana	Prescription Drugs
WALDO COUNTY	14%	22%	23%	5%
MAINE	11%	24%	19%	6%
SOURCE: 2017 MAINE INTEGRATED YOUTH HEALTH SURVEY				

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS USING SUBSTANCES



Source: 2017 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey

	Maine	Waldo County
PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH		
Children without health insurance, 2017	4.9%	6.2%
Low-income children without health insurance, 2016	6.4%	6.8%
Children (age 0-18) participating in Maine Care, 2018	45.1%	50.8%
Maine families home visiting: families served, 2018	2,142	59
Low birth-weight infants, 2017	7.1%	7.1%
Pre-term births, 2017	8.1%	7.7%
Infant mortality per 1,000 births, 2013-2017	6.3	7.0
Child deaths per 10,000 children (age 0-14), 2013-2017	1.5	1.4
Teen deaths per 10,000 teens (age 15-19), 2013-2017	4.5	4.3
Children in DHHS custody per 1,000 children, Dec 2017	7.1	8.2
SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STATUS		
Children under 18 in poverty, 2017	14.2%	18.8%
Children living with food insecurity, 2017	18.5%	19.8%
Children receiving TANF, Dec 2018	2.9%	2.4%
Children receiving SNAP, Dec 2018	22.3%	25.0%
School children eligible for subsidized school meals, 2018-19	46.2%	57.7%
Hourly living wage, 2017	\$28.41	\$27.32
Median household income, 2017	\$55,980	\$54,547
Unemployment, 2018	3.4%	3.5%
EDUCATION		
Four-year-olds in public preschool, 2017-2018	46.7%	52.5%
Children under 6 with all available parents in workforce, 2017	70.4%	67.8%
K-12 school enrollment, 2015-2016	176,310	5,071

Self-sufficiency

[FACT: Nearly 1 in 8 Waldo County residents are food insecure.]

Food Insecurity

In 2017, food insecurity in Waldo County affected nearly 1 in 7 residents, with the cost of food and proximity to food stores in the region both causing challenges for individuals and households. In 2018, that rate changed to 1 in 8.

According to Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap project, in 2018 13% of Waldo county were experiencing food insecurity and 20% of the children in Waldo County were had food insecurity. At an average meal cost of \$4.06, the estimated annual food budget shortage is \$3.5 million. Among the food-insecure population, 66% were below 185% of the poverty line, and thus eligible for SNAP, the federal nutrition safety net. The table below shows the portion of the county's population receiving SNAP benefits, which has fallen since significantly 2011.

The Waldo County Homeless Coalition identifies lack of access to sustainable food sources as the biggest non-housing concern of those experiencing homelessness in Waldo County in their 2020 assessment.

Percentage of SNAP Recipients in Waldo County			
	Population	SNAP Recipients	Percentage of SNAP Recipients
2011	38,808	8,804	23%
2012	38,914	8,785	23%
2013	38,948	8,345	21%
2014	39,000	7,327	19%
2015	39,129	6,665	17%
2016	39,364	6,356	16%
2017	39,280	5,938	15%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey; Maine Department Of Health And Human Services

Transportation

Transportation is critical to residents of rural states like Maine. Having access to a car or reliable public transportation determines residents' ability to get and keep a job, buy groceries, access healthcare, and fully participate in school and community life. Transportation is cited as a common challenge in the community needs survey with about 51% citing lack of transportation

being a major or critical issue Waldo County is facing. One respondent cited "lack of easy affordable transportation to work for those living outside city limits."

Waldo County's rural environment means resident may live far from their workplace, and the lack of public transportation means most residents are reliant on a personal vehicle. In 2013-2017, the average travel time to work was 26.4 minutes for Waldo County commuters, and 38.4% of them spend more than 30 minutes traveling to work each way.

TRANSPORTATION TO WORK BY EARNINGS				
	Total Workforce	Drive to Work Alone	Car Pool	Public Transportation
ALL WORKERS	18,037	13,692	1906	75
\$0 TO \$9,999	15.6%	11.5%	25.8%	32%
\$10,000 TO \$14,999	6.2%	6%	6.4%	0%
\$15,000 TO \$24,999	16.8%	16.3%	18.8%	0%
\$25,000 TO \$34,999	16.7%	17%	17.3%	9.3%
\$35,000 TO \$49,999	18.1%	20.3%	17.6%	10.6%
\$50,000 TO \$64,999	13.2%	15.1%	7.2%	37%
\$65,000 TO \$74,999	4.5%	5%	2.3%	0%
\$75,000 OR MORE	8.5%	8.5%	4.3%	10.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

TRANSPORTATION TO WORK BY AGE IN WALDO COUNTY				
	Total Workforce	Drive to Work Alone	Car Pool	Public Transportation
TOTAL COUNT	18,037	13,692	1,906	75
16 TO 19 YEARS	3.5%	2.7%	6.9%	29.3%
20 TO 24 YEARS	7.1%	5.8%	11.5%	0%
25 TO 44 YEARS	37.1%	37.5%	38.9%	46.6%
45 TO 54 YEARS	23.2%	24.7%	20.3%	12%
55 TO 59 YEARS	12.3%	12.6%	13.4%	4%
60 TO 64 YEARS	9.5%	10%	5.1%	5.3%
65 YEARS AND OVER	6.9%	6.4%	3.6%	2.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

For commuters, the price of gas has a significant financial impact. For example, at a typical gas price of \$2.30/gallon seen in the Belfast area in August 2017 (MaineGasPrices.com), a 50-mile

daily commute over 52 weeks will cost a driver roughly \$1,000 annually for a vehicle that averages 30 miles per gallon (mpg) and about \$1,500 for a vehicle averaging 20 mpg.

Some people reduce commuting costs by carpooling. Countywide, about 9.0% of workers carpool. The table below shows the estimated percentage of carpoolers by town, which ranges from 2.9% in Islesboro to 16.4% in Troy. The table also shows the percentage of workers without a vehicle, which is 3.5% countywide. In Unity, the rate of car-less workers is triple that or more.

WORKERS' MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION		
	Percentage of workers without a vehicle	Percentage of workers who carpool
BELFAST	4.5%	11.3%
BELMONT	0%	13.6%
BROOKS	2.7%	14.4%
BURNHAM	0.6%	8.4%
FRANKFORT	1.4%	6.8%
FREEDOM	2.2%	3.7%
ISLESBORO	3.9%	2.9%
JACKSON	0%	13.3%
KNOX	0.7%	13.9%
LIBERTY	3.5%	13.1%
LINCOLNVILLE	0.4%	6.6%
MONROE	0%	4.9%
MONTVILLE	0%	10.1%
MORRILL	3.4%	7.8%
NORTHPORT	1.3%	14.7%
PALERMO	0%	14.6%
PROSPECT	0%	5.8%
SEARSMONT	0%	9.8%
SEARSPORT	7.5%	15.4%
STOCKTON SPRINGS	2.0%	8.2%
SWANVILLE	0%	12.4%
THORNDIKE	1.8%	8.8%
TROY	0.6%	16.4%
UNITY	13.8%	11.3%
WALDO	3.5%	11.4%
WINTERPORT	0%	9.2%
WALDO COUNTY	2.5%	6.1%
MAINE	2.2%	9.8%
UNITED STATES	4.3%	9.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

There is a severe lack of public transportation in Maine. According to the latest Maine Economic Development Strategy, Maine spends 86 cents per person annually for public transportation, which is 37th in the country. The report cites that "...Maine's overall transportation funding system is broken and does not bring in adequate revenues to fund highway improvements or any other major function of the Maine Department of Transportation."

WCAP's 2019 Annual Report shows that transit systems served 3,872 individuals and a total of 3,876,295 miles driven, 3,555,773 of which were funded by Maine Care. The WCAP DASH program made 9,971 trips in 2019. The Annual Report highlights a story of a mother pursuing her college degree using the WCAP DASH to get to class: "...just knowing that the DASH would always be dependable – it just was like the stars aligned."

Child Development and Child Care Options

Affordable childcare is critical to residents of Waldo County, particularly earners with low incomes. Twenty-four of survey respondents who lack access to good childcare say it is not available for the hours they need, 19% of those who need childcare need it on weekends and evenings, and 46% of those without access to good care say it is too costly. In early 2017, WCAP's Early Childhood Director conducted a scan of other childcare options in the area. These findings were presented in the Community Needs Assessment 2016 Addendum and are summarized below with updates in 2019.

Child Care Providers

- In March 2019, there were 30 family childcare homes and 25 childcare centers in Waldo County. The number of family childcare homes has decreased since 2014, perhaps due to changing regulations.
 - Of these licensed providers there is a reported capacity of 1,065; a decrease since March 2017. However, this capacity fluctuates and is unevenly distributed across age groups. Additionally, some of the available capacity represents older children, up to age 12.
- Of the licensed providers in June of 2019, 18 work with WCAP as the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) sponsor. These programs have a capacity of approximately 260 children. An estimated 110 of these children are between the ages of 0 to 3.
- The largest local provider is Belfast Area Children's Center (BACC), which can serve a maximum of 49 children at one time: 9 infants, 12 toddlers, 13 2.5-to 3.5-year-olds, 18 preschoolers.
- There is a lack of providers for infants in Waldo County and a lack of providers outside of Belfast. A Belfast Montessori school has slots for children beginning at age 2. WCAP serves 24 Early Head Start children ages 6 weeks to 3 years in center-based services. A local center in Waldo has spaces for nine infants and 25 children through age 3.
- All the local center-based options cost between \$160 and \$200 per week.
 - Childcare subsidies are available through the State.
 - The families that utilize many private pay programs do not tend to be the same families who are eligible for Early Head Start services, based on income. BACC also indicates they carry a consistently large waitlist for services (Madden, 2017).

- In May of 2019 a childcare provider serving children in an Early Childhood Inclusive Program (ECIP) and serving as a public preschool contractor for the RSU 71 school district, declared bankruptcy and closed.

With Maine’s new administration being established in 2018, the “Maine Children’s Cabinet” has been reactivated. The goal of this taskforce is to “...design a long-term plan for Maine to move to an early care and education system for children from birth through age 4 that is high-quality, accessible, and affordable.”

Home visiting

- Maine Families, operated by the University of Maine Cooperative Extension in Waldo County, provides home-based services to local families and is the only other provider of this service besides WCAP. WCAP Early Childhood Program maintains an annually updated agreement with Maine Families to ensure services are not duplicated. Maine Families is open to anyone who is pregnant or has a new baby in his or her home. The program can enroll families until their baby is 3 months of age. Parents who are under the age of 21 are eligible to enroll with Maine Families until their baby is 6 months old. In an adoption or kinship placement, families may be eligible to enroll until the child is 12 months old. Because of the different eligibility criteria each program refers families to the other as appropriate.

Public Pre-Kindergarten

The following list details the public pre-kindergarten options available to each district during the 2018-2019 school year:

- **RSU 3**
 - WCAP provided five classrooms in Monroe, Brooks, Liberty, and two classrooms in Unity.
- **RSU 12**
 - RSU 12 provided four pre-K classrooms in Chelsea, Somerville, Whitefield, and Windsor.
 - There was no pre-K in Palermo; many Palermo children opt to go to WCAP’s Unity program.
- **RSU 20**
 - WCAP provided two classrooms at the Searsport Elementary School in Searsport.
- **RSU 22**
 - WCAP provided two classrooms at the Leroy Smith School in Winterport.
 - Other Pre-K options are available in the RSU 22 school district; however, these are outside of Waldo County.
- **MSAD 53**
 - MSAD 53 operates a Pre-K program in Pittsfield open to Burnham families. Burnham families also choose to attend the WCAP Unity program.
- **RSU 71**
 - RSU 71 collaborated with Broadreach to provide four full-day classrooms in Swanville, Belfast, and Morrill.
 - Broadreach announced its closure in May of 2019 and the RSU 71 district

intends to maintain pre-k classrooms in the 19-20 year.

- **Islesboro**
 - Islesboro has a preschool classroom that serves children ages 2 to 5 with a \$25 annual fee.
- **Northport**
 - Northport does not offer a pre-K program; families are referred to RSU 71 and able to attend with Superintendent’s agreements.
- **Lincolnvile**
 - Lincolnvile does not offer a pre-K program; families are referred to Hope in Knox County.

Utilities

Maine’s cold winters place a strain on many household budgets. Nearly 60% of Waldo County households use oil for heating, lower than the statewide average of 62%. The towns in Waldo County range in their dependence on heating oil, from 38% to 75% of households, with the highest percentages in Searsport (70%) and Knox (75%). The current average price of heating oil is \$2.84 in the Waldo County region, the same as the statewide average of \$2.84 (Maine Governor’s Energy Office, May 2019). Compared to wood, achieving the equivalent heating power with oil costs about 30% more (based on \$275 per cord of wood).

ESTIMATED WALDO COUNTY HOUSEHOLDS BY HEATING TYPE

	Utility gas	Bottled, tank, or LP gas	Electricity	Fuel oil, kerosene, etc.	Coal or Coke	Wood	Solar energy	Other fuel	No fuel used
NUMBER	57	1,920	855	9,883	3	3,954	44	198	40
PERCENTAGE	0.3%	11.3%	5.0%	58.2%	0%	23.3%	0.2%	1.1%	0.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

COMPARISON OF HEATING FUEL PRICES

	Price per million BTU
CORD WOOD (\$275/CORD)	\$12.50
NATURAL GAS (\$1.06-\$2.05/THERM)	\$10.60-\$20.48
HEATING OIL (\$2.84/GALLON)	\$20.62
WOOD PELLETS (\$268/TON)	\$16.24
KEROSENE (\$3.46/GALLON)	\$25.63
PROPANE (\$2.73/GALLON)	\$29.89
ELECTRICITY (BASEBOARD) (15.8-18.5 CENTS/KWH)	\$46.31-\$54.22

Source: Maine Governor’s Office Of Energy Independence And Security, May 2019

Estimated Waldo County Households by Heating Type

	Households	Utility gas	Bottled, tank, or LP gas	Electricity	Fuel oil, kerosene	Wood	Solar energy	Other fuel	No fuel used
BELFAST	2,893	29	332	250	1,991	263	13	15	0
BELMONT	418	0	63	17	283	52	0	3	0
BROOKS	429	0	31	41	223	129	0	5	0
BURNHAM	535	0	39	9	324	154	0	9	0
FRANKFORT	439	0	71	4	263	85	5	9	2
FREEDOM	290	0	38	2	124	126	0	0	0
ISLESBORO	351	0	22	30	221	76	0	2	0
JACKSON	269	0	36	15	101	117	0	0	0
KNOX	338	2	6	0	192	128	0	10	0
LIBERTY	390	0	65	4	162	159	0	0	0
LINCOLNVILLE	904	0	168	59	481	196	0	0	0
MONROE	434	0	48	10	180	183	9	4	0
MONTVILLE	338	0	49	7	136	143	0	3	0
MORRILL	412	0	32	18	240	112	0	10	0
NORTHPORT	800	0	121	26	464	179	3	0	7
PALERMO	649	0	65	12	338	221	0	13	0
PROSPECT	346	0	21	14	237	68	2	4	0
SEARSMONT	589	0	102	10	315	162	0	0	0
SEARSPORT	1,338	0	67	166	946	141	0	0	18
STOCKTON SPRINGS	688	3	74	22	398	185	0	3	0
SWANVILLE	572	5	63	8	325	151	0	13	7
THORNDIKE	332	0	44	16	129	143	0	0	0
TROY	416	4	23	3	240	140	0	6	0
UNITY	761	0	116	36	379	197	0	30	3
WALDO	371	0	73	10	176	103	0	6	3
WINTERPORT	1,652	14	151	66	1,015	341	12	53	0
WALDO COUNTY	16,954	57	1,920	855	9,883	3,954	44	198	40
MAINE	554,061	38,464	52,708	32,239	345,805	69,657	629	11,409	1,537

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

Housing

[FACT: In 2019, the percentage of Waldo County renters unable to afford the average 2-bedroom rent was fourth highest in Maine.]

Demand for housing, both to purchase and to rent, has increased significantly over the past several years across the country and in Maine. After the Great Recession, many middle-income households that previously would have become homeowners became or remained renters. In the past decade, the U.S. has experienced the largest increase in renters of any ten-year period in history, driving vacancy rates to historic lows, shifting the rental mix toward higher-priced units, and putting upward pressure on rents. Waldo County has felt these effects acutely. While home prices are generally lower than statewide averages, finding an affordable rental unit is challenging for many renters.

In 2020, the Waldo County Homeless Coalition completed a homeless community assessment survey. Through this survey, the coalition identified 63 known homeless individuals in Waldo County. The assessment found that homelessness affects people of all genders and ages and that many people are finding shelter without basic utilities, even during the harsh Maine winters.

Affordability

In 2019, the median home price in Waldo County was \$186,500, well below the statewide median price of \$225,000. According to the Maine Housing’s Affordability Index, the Waldo County housing market is generally “affordable,” meaning a household earning the median income can purchase a median-priced home without spending more than 28% of its income on the annual combined cost of mortgage payments, taxes, and insurance.

According to the 2020 Maine Housing report, “...median sales price (MSP) for homes sold in September 2020 rose 19.56 percent to \$273,500, compared to September 2019.” Due to the high demand for housing in Maine, the increase of pricing on homes has played a significant role in the affordable housing crisis.

The table below shows MH’s index for Waldo County from 2012-2018. An index greater than 1.00 means the region is generally affordable, while an index less than 1.00 means the region is generally unaffordable. Waldo County’s index has fluctuated around 1.00 for several years. (For comparison, the indices of neighboring Kennebec, Knox, and Penobscot counties were 1.11, 0.77, and 1.08, respectively, in 2018.) It is important to emphasize the two factors that determine this index: housing costs and income. A low affordability index may mean costs are “too” high or incomes are “too” low. The index alone cannot determine which is the case.

WALDO COUNTY HOMEOWNERSHIP AFFORDABILITY INDEX

YEAR	Index	Median home price	Median income	Income needed to afford median home price	Home price affordable to median income
2012	1.06	\$136,750	\$41,345	\$38,905	\$145,327

2013	0.89	\$150,000	\$39,133	\$44,008	\$133,384
2014	1.09	\$132,000	\$41,619	\$38,314	\$143,385
2015	1.06	\$140,000	\$42,661	\$40,124	\$148,854
2016	1.04	\$151,000	\$45,559	\$43,808	\$157,037
2017	0.92	\$170,000	\$46,378	\$50,488	\$156,161
2018	0.86	\$180,000	\$48,225	\$56,223	\$154,394
2019	0.92	\$186,500	\$51,775	\$56,139	\$172,002

Source: Maine Housing Authority

Still, by this measure over half (53.4%) of Waldo County households are unable to afford the median-priced home. The table below shows how this varies across the region, from 71% of Belfast households priced out of the market to 29% of Winterport households.

With the impacts associated with COVID 19 Maine and Waldo County has seen and increase in single family home sales. In the month of October 2020 alone as reported by the Maine Association of Realtors Waldo County saw 226 homes sold up from 158 the previous year and increase of 43.04%. The median price for the same period increased from \$196,000 to 258,750, an increase of 32.02%. It is reported that Maine's lower incidence of COVID and an increase movement to telecommuting is contributing to out of state buyers adding to the demand for limited affordable housing options. Maine Association of Realtors notes that historically 25% of Maine home sales are a result of out of state buyers but during October that number was 36%.

Households Unable to Afford Median Home, 2019

	Percent	Number	Total	Median home price	Income needed to afford median home (28% income threshold)	
					Annual	Hourly
BELFAST	64.6%	2,069	3,202	\$231,750	\$73,467	\$35.32
BURNHAM	63.2%	343	543	\$181,000	\$56,239	\$27.04
ISLESBORO	58.3%	157	270	\$265,000	\$77,509	\$37.26
LIBERTY	52.8%	221	419	\$155,000	\$46,597	\$22.40
LINCOLNVILLE	64.1%	704	1,099	\$277,550	\$81,774	\$39.31
MONROE	67.5%	260	386	\$209,000	\$63,292	\$30.43
MORRILL	36%	125	346	\$145,500	\$46,462	\$22.34
NORTHPORT	67.1%	517	771	\$285,000	\$81,964	\$39.41
PALERMO	43.8%	300	685	\$171,000	\$48,627	\$23.38
PROSPECT						
SEARSMONT	42.2%	253	599	\$155,000	\$48,047	\$23.10
SEARSPORT	59.8%	724	1,210	\$175,000	\$56,918	\$27.36
STOCKTON SPRINGS	56.2%	427	760	\$200,350	\$62,139	\$29.87
SWANVILLE	50.4%	317	630	\$147,500	\$44,803	\$21.54
THORNDIKE	57%	205	360	\$157,000	\$49,940	\$24.01
WINTERPORT	34.8%	536	1,541	\$180,000	\$51,555	\$24.79
WALDO COUNTY	53.4%	9,280	17,365	\$186,500	\$56,139	\$26.99
MAINE	62.2%	354,985	570,917	\$225,000	\$66,044	\$31.75

Source: Maine Housing Authority

Waldo County households that rent are more likely to be burdened by housing costs than those that own a home. In 2020, the average rent for a 2-bedroom apartment in Waldo County was \$1,069, about the same as the state average of \$1,062 (see below). The county's MH Renter Affordability Index was 0.85, indicating that the Waldo County rental market is generally "unaffordable" That means a renter household earning the median income cannot afford the average 2-bedroom apartment without spending more than 30% of their income on rent.

Waldo County Rental Affordability Index

Index	Average 2-bedroom rent	Renter median income	Income needed to afford average 2BR rent	2-BR rent affordable to median income
-------	------------------------	----------------------	--	---------------------------------------

2012	0.76	\$836	\$25,385	\$33,457	\$635
2013	0.72	\$851	\$24,512	\$34,053	\$613
2014	0.63	\$932	\$23,593	\$37,294	\$590
2015	0.73	\$831	\$24,272	\$33,232	\$607
2016	0.72	884	\$25,348	\$35,354	\$634
2017		\$			
2020	0.70	\$1,069	\$30,008	\$42,777	\$750
WALDO COUNTY	0.85	\$781	\$26,450	\$31,230	\$661
BELFAST	0.80	\$780	\$24,938	\$31,209	\$623
MAINE	0.88	\$880	\$30,804	\$35,181	\$770

Source: Maine Housing Authority

In 2020, Waldo County's rental affordability index was the fourth worst in the state, behind only to Hancock, York, and Cumberland counties (0.58, 0.61, and 0.68, respectively). The percentage of renters in Waldo County unable to afford the average 2-bedroom rent (64.7%) without spending more than 30% of their income on rent and utilities was fourth highest in Maine. One survey respondent writes, "If I had to leave my home, I would not be able to afford rent/mortgage in this area."

Renter Households Unable to Afford AVERAGE 2-Bedroom Rent, 2020

	Percent	Number	Total	Average 2-bedroom rent	Income needed to afford average 2-bedroom rent (30% income threshold)	
					Annual	Hourly
WALDO COUNTY	64.7%	2,400	3,712	\$1,069	\$42,777	\$20.57
BELFAST	69.1%	855	1,237	\$1,219	\$48,777	\$23.45
MAINE	57.2%	93,292	162,967	\$1,062	\$42,489	\$20.43

Source: Maine Housing Authority

In 2020, the median housing cost of Waldo County renters was about 100.6% of the state median (\$1,069 compared to \$1,062), while in 2017, the median cost of Waldo County homeowners with a mortgage was 88% of the state median (\$1,193 compared to \$1,357). The table below also shows that 30% of renters pay less than \$600 per month, while only 6% of mortgage holders pay less than that amount.

Monthly housing costs for mortgage holders and renters

	Mortgage holders			Renters		
	U.S.	Maine	Waldo County	U.S.	Maine	Waldo County
MEDIAN COST	\$1,515	\$1,357	\$1,193	\$982	\$808	\$791
LESS THAN \$200	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	1.2%	2.3%	4.3%
\$200-299	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	2.9%	6.2%	6.3%
\$300-399	0.4%	0.5%	1.2%	2.7%	5.2%	7.6%
\$400-499	0.9%	1.4%	1.6%	3.6%	5.0%	3.0%
\$500-599	1.8%	2.4%	3.4%	5.7%	7.4%	8.8%
\$600-699	2.9%	3.6%	5.3%	7.8%	10.1%	8.9%
\$700-799	4.0%	4.7%	6.9%	9.0%	12.6%	9.0%
\$800-899	4.9%	6.0%	6.0%	9.4%	11.4%	14.6%
\$900-999	5.5%	6.4%	7.8%	8.9%	9.4%	7.3%
\$1,000-1,500	28.4%	33.7%	39.4%	28.6%	23.3%	23.4%
\$1,500-1,999	20.4%	22.3%	15.7%	11.7%	4.5%	3.1%
\$2,000+	30.2%	18.2%	12.1%	8.6%	2.1%	0.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

The percentage of renters paying more than 30% of income toward housing is higher at lower income levels. In Waldo County, 29% of renters earning less than \$20,000 pay more than 30% of their income in rent; 9% of homeowners at that income level pay more than 30% or more for housing. As income rises above \$35,000/year, the percentage of households paying greater than 30% falls sharply.

PERCENTAGE OF INCOME SPENT ON HOUSING COSTS

HOUSEHOLD INCOME	Mortgage holders			Renters		
	U.S.	Maine	Waldo County	U.S.	Maine	Waldo County
LESS THAN \$20,000:	5%	6%	8%	28%	36%	37%
LESS THAN 20 PERCENT	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%
20 TO 29 PERCENT	0%	0%	1%	2%	5%	8%
30 PERCENT OR MORE	5%	6%	7%	21%	25%	23%
\$20,000 TO \$34,999:	8%	9%	13%	20%	22%	16%
LESS THAN 20 PERCENT	0%	0%	1%	1%	2%	2%
20 TO 29 PERCENT	1%	1%	3%	3%	5%	2%
30 PERCENT OR MORE	7%	8%	9%	14%	14%	10%
\$35,000 TO \$49,999:	10%	12%	12%	15%	15%	17%

LESS THAN 20 PERCENT	1%	1%	2%	2%	3%	5%
20 TO 29 PERCENT	3%	4%	4%	6%	7%	4%
30 PERCENT OR MORE	6%	7%	6%	7%	5%	5%
\$50,000 TO \$74,999:	18%	22%	23%	17%	16%	17%
LESS THAN 20 PERCENT	5%	6%	7%	6%	7%	8%
20 TO 29 PERCENT	7%	9%	10%	6%	6%	7%
30 PERCENT OR MORE	6%	6%	5%	4%	2%	1%
\$75,000 OR MORE:	58%	51%	44%	20%	12%	13%
LESS THAN 20 PERCENT	37%	35%	32%	14%	9%	9%
20 TO 29 PERCENT	15%	13%	9%	5%	2%	3%
30 PERCENT OR MORE	6%	3%	3%	1%	0%	0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

One potential factor contributing to the lack of affordable rental units in Waldo County is the low percentage of multi-family rental units. In 2011-2015, just 10% of housing units in Waldo County were multi-family, significantly less than the percentage in Maine and the U.S. (19% and 26%, respectively).

Age of Waldo County homes			
	Housing Units	Median Year Built	Median Age In 2019
WALDO COUNTY	22,167	1982	37
MAINE	735,711	1975	44
UNITED STATES	135,393,564	1977	42

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

44.5% of the community survey respondents identified affordable housing as a critical need in Waldo County.

Property Taxes

While Waldo County's property tax rates are slightly higher than elsewhere in Maine, lower home values mean property tax bills are generally lower. According to Maine Revenue Services 2016, Waldo County's full-value property tax rate (a rate adjusted for differences in how each municipality assesses) was 16.29 per \$1,000 of property value. The rest of Maine was 15.03. By this measure, Waldo had the 6th highest property tax rate of Maine's 16 counties. Within the county, full-value rates ranged from 20.66 in Searsport to 12.64 in Northport.

Despite high rates, lower property values in some parts of Waldo County mean residents have smaller bills than they would elsewhere. For example, 35% of Waldo County homeowners paid less than \$1,500 in taxes in 2013-2017, compared to 26% of Maine homeowners. Median taxes paid in Waldo County was \$1,996 compared to \$2,435 statewide.

Real Estate Taxes PAID			
	U.S.	ME	Waldo
LESS THAN \$800	16%	9%	11%
\$800 TO \$1,499	18%	17%	24%
\$1,500 TO \$1,999	10%	13%	15%
\$2,000 TO \$2,999	15%	25%	25%
\$3,000 OR MORE	37%	35%	25%
NO REAL ESTATE TAXES PAID	4%	1%	1%
MEDIAN REAL ESTATE TAXES PAID	\$2,279	\$2,435	\$1,996

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

Despite these findings, property taxes and property insurance are a large household expense and many survey respondents identify them as a concern for local residents, especially the elderly. One respondent says about the biggest problem facing Waldo County: "My housing takes over 50% of my income."

Health

[FACT: According to survey respondents, opioid use is one of the biggest problems facing Waldo County; 75% say it is a major or critical issue.]

The Maine Shared Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) provides a comprehensive picture of the health of Waldo County residents. Although some of the data is already outdated (e.g., statistics on opioid use), it provides a way to consistently compare the health of Waldo County residents to other people in Maine. Overall, the results show that Waldo County residents are about as healthy as residents across the state, with a somewhat higher percentage of uninsured residents, a higher rate of overweight residents, and more troublesome drug use. Key findings from the 2016 report for Waldo County include:

- 15.9% of adults reported their health as fair or poor, about the same as the statewide rate (2011-2013).
- 11.9% of residents reported no health care coverage, compared to 9.5% of Maine residents (2012-2016).
- 87.1% of adults have a personal doctor or other health care provider (2011-13).
- 6.7% cited cost as the barrier to healthcare (2011-2013).
- The top three leading causes of death for Waldo County residents were cancer, heart disease, and lower respiratory diseases, similar to the leading causes statewide (2013).

Waldo County's mortality rate per 100,000 population was 752.3, compared to 745.8 for the state (2009-2013).

In the CHNA report, a group of Waldo County service providers and stakeholders identify the region's five highest priority health issues:

1. Obesity: In Waldo County in 2013, 40.1% of adults were overweight and in 2019, 28.7% were obese, higher than the statewide rates. About one quarter of adults led a sedentary lifestyle (slightly higher than the state rate) and only half met physical activity recommendations (slightly lower than the state rate).
2. Drug and alcohol abuse: Overall, drug-induced mortality per 100,000 population (2012-2016) was higher in Waldo County at 16.9 than the state rate of 12.4. The rate of opiate poisoning per 100,000 population was 20.4 in Waldo County and 25.1 in Maine (2013-2017); the rate of substance-abuse hospital admissions per 100,000 population was 260.3 in Waldo County, significantly lower than 328.1 in Maine (2011).

As points of reference, 13.3% of adults in Waldo County binge drink, 5.4% use marijuana, and 15.4% smoke cigarettes. Alcohol-induced mortality per 100,000 population was 5.0, lower than the state rate of 8.0 (2009-2013).

3. Mental health: 14.3% of adults receive outpatient mental health treatment, lower than 17.7% statewide. 20.8% of adults in Waldo County have had depression at some time in their lives (2011-2013).
 - 45% of people report an increase in mental health distress due to COVID-19
 - There are only 5 mental health treatment centers in Waldo County, and a majority of resources are in surrounding counties.
 - Stay at home order stalled public transportation.
 - Waldo County General, the county's hub of healthcare, does not provide inpatient or outpatient services for mental health and substance use.
 - People residing in mental health treatment facilities are at a high risk of contracting COVID-19.
 - There is a lack of testing in Maine
 - Sweetser School, a mental health treatment facility/school for children, is located in Belfast.
 - Mental health resources are turning to telehealth methods during the pandemic to continue serving their clients.
 - 17.8% of Waldo County households do not have internet
4. Tobacco use: 15.4% of adults smoke cigarettes in Waldo County, lower than the statewide rate of 20.2% (2011-2013).

Stakeholders identified five populations as disproportionately affected by the health issues above:

1. People with incomes below the federal poverty level
2. People without a high school diploma
3. Uninsured and underinsured people
4. People with disabilities
5. People living in rural areas

Finally, stakeholders identified five influential factors as contributing to poor health:

1. Poverty
2. Employment
3. Transportation
4. Health care insurance
5. Housing stability

The immediate impacts of COVID-19 have been felt across all sectors of society. In particular, some of the greatest impacts relevant to the Community Action Network have been in the areas of health, education, employment, human services provision, and community resources. In this community, vulnerability is highest in the following areas:

- Individuals over 60, especially those with underlying health conditions have been shown to be at particular risk for severe health implications from COVID-19.
 - 20.3% of Waldo Counties residents are aged 60 or older
- People with underlying health conditions (especially, lung disease, asthma, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, kidney disease, liver disease, severe obesity, and individuals with immunocompromised conditions) are at higher risk as well.
- 17.8% of adult Waldo County residents smoke.
- 22.5% of Waldo County residents have diabetes.
- 4.3% of Waldo County residents have asthma.
- 21.3% of Waldo County residents have cardiovascular disease.
- Waldo County residents are 10% more likely to be overweight than the general population of Maine.
 - Despite its low population, Waldo County is 6th in most amount of cases of COVID-19 in the state, and 2nd in most amount of COVID-19 related deaths. (Maine CDC)

Maine Shared Community Health Needs Assessment 2019: Select Statistics

	Year(s)	Waldo	Maine
GENERAL HEALTH			
Adults who rate their health fair to poor	2011-2013	15.9%	15.6%
Adults with 14+ days lost due to poor mental health	2014-2016	16.8%	16.7%
Adults with 14+ days lost due to poor physical health	2014-2016	19.0%	19.6%

Sedentary lifestyle – no leisure-time physical activity in past month (adults)	2016	23.4%	20.6%
Obesity (adults)	2016	30.5%	29.9%
Overweight (adults)	2013	40.1%	36.0%

MORTALITY

Life expectancy (female)	2012	81.2	81.5
Life expectancy (male)	2012	77.6	76.7
Overall mortality rate per 100,000 population	2009-2013	752.3	745.8

ACCESS

Adults with a usual primary care provider	2014-2016	68.4%	71.8%
Individuals who are unable to obtain or delay obtaining necessary medical care due to cost	2014-2016	11.8%	10.3%
Maine care enrollment	2015	30.7%	27.0%
Percent of children (age 0-19) enrolled in Maine care	2015	48.2%	41.8%
Percent uninsured	2012-2016	11.9%	9.5%

Year(s) Waldo Maine

CHRONIC CONDITIONS AND CANCER

Adults with three or more chronic conditions	2011-2013	28.7%	27.6%
Asthma emergency department visits per 10,000 population	2009-2011	50.9	67.3
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) diagnosed	2011-2013	6.5%	7.6%
Incidence – all cancers per 100,000 population	2007-2011	513.8	500.1
Acute myocardial infarction mortality per 100,000 population	2009-2013	30.0	32.2
Stroke mortality per 100,000 population	2009-2013	42.8	35.0
Diabetes prevalence (ever been told)	2011-2013	9.4%	9.6%

SCREENINGS

Children with confirmed elevated blood lead levels (% among those screened)	2009-2013	1.3%	2.5%
Children with unconfirmed elevated blood lead levels (% among those screened)	2009-2013	5.0%	4.2%
Immunization exemptions among kindergarteners for philosophical reasons	2015	6.5%	3.7%

MENTAL HEALTH

Adults who have ever had anxiety	2011-2013	16.5%	19.4%
Adults who have ever had depression	2011-2013	20.8%	23.5%
Adults with current symptoms of depression	2011-2013	9.8%	10.0%
Adults currently receiving outpatient mental health treatment	2011-2013	14.3%	17.7%

PREGNANCY AND INFANTS

Infant deaths per 1,000 live births	2012-2016	8.5	6.5
Live births for which the mother received early and adequate prenatal care	2010-2012	79.5%	86.4%
Live births to 15- to 19-year-olds per 1,000 population	2010-2012	28.4	20.5
Low birth weight (<2,500 grams)	2010-2012	6.6%	6.6%
Drug-affected baby referrals received as a percentage of all live births	2014	9.6%	7.8%

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Alcohol-induced mortality per 100,000 population	2009-2013	5.0	8.0
Binge drinking of alcoholic beverages (adults)	2011-2013	13.3%	17.4%
Chronic heavy drinking (adults)	2014-2016	6.6%	7.6%
Drug-induced mortality per 100,000 population	2012-2016	18.2	18.1
Emergency medical service overdose response per 100,000 population	2014	179.3	391.5
Opiate poisoning (ed visits) per 100,000 population	2009-2011	20.3	25.1
Past-30-day nonmedical use of prescription drugs (adult)	2011-2013	1.0%	1.1%
Prescription monitoring program opioid prescriptions (days' supply/population)	2014-2015	7.8	6.8
Substance-abuse hospital admissions (per 100,000 population)	2011	260.3	328.1
Current smoking (adults)	2014-2016	21.5%	19.8%

Source: Maine Shared Community Health Needs Assessment, 2019

Health Ranking

According to the latest County Health Rankings by the University of Wisconsin's School of Medicine and Public Health, Waldo is the 9th healthiest county in Maine. The ranking is based on health outcomes (length of life and quality of life, ranked 9th best in comparison to other Maine counties) and health factors (health behaviors, clinical care, social and economic factors, and physical environment, ranked 9th best). From 2015 to 2018, while the quality-of-life ranking improved significantly, from 15th to 10th best, Waldo County lost ground in health behaviors (substance use, food access, obesity, etc.) and physical environment (air, water, housing, transportation).

2019 Health Ranking for Waldo County

	Waldo County	Maine	County Rank (of 16)
HEALTH OUTCOMES			9
LENGTH OF LIFE			7
PREMATURE DEATH*	6,900	7,000	X
QUALITY OF LIFE			10
POOR OR FAIR HEALTH	15%	15%	✓
POOR PHYSICAL HEALTH DAYS (OUT OF 30)	3.6	4.2	✓
POOR MENTAL HEALTH DAYS (OUT OF 30)	4.0	4.4	✓
LOW BIRTH WEIGHT (<2,500 GRAMS)	7%	7%	✓
HEALTH FACTORS			10
HEALTH BEHAVIORS			7
ADULT SMOKING	18%	20%	✓
ADULT OBESITY (BMI ≥ 30)	29%	29%	✓
FOOD ENVIRONMENT INDEX (0-10)	7.9	8.0	✓
PHYSICAL INACTIVITY (ADULTS AGE 20+)	18%	20%	✓
ACCESS TO EXERCISE OPPORTUNITIES	50%	70%	X

EXCESSIVE DRINKING	18%	21%	✓
ALCOHOL-IMPAIRED DRIVING DEATHS	50%	37%	X
SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (PER 100,000 POPULATION)	245.2	312.6	✓
TEEN BIRTHS (PER 1,000 FEMALES AGE 15-19)	24	17	X
CLINICAL CARE			13
UNINSURED	12%	10%	X
PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIANS	1,10:1	890:1	X
DENTISTS	3,060:1	1,590:1	X
MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDERS	400:1	220:1	X
PREVENTABLE HOSPITAL STAYS	4,260	3,699	X
DIABETIC SCREENING (AGE 65-75)	90%	89%	✓
MAMMOGRAPHY SCREENING (FEMALES AGE 67-69)	42%	47%	X
SOCIAL & ECONOMIC FACTORS			10
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION	86%	88%	X
SOME COLLEGE	64%	67%	X
UNEMPLOYMENT	3.6%	3.3%	X
CHILDREN IN POVERTY	19%	14%	X
INCOME INEQUALITY**	4.5	4.6	✓
	Waldo County	Maine	County Rank (of 16)
CHILDREN IN SINGLE-PARENT HOUSEHOLDS	32%	32%	✓
MEMBERSHIP ASSOCIATIONS (PER 10,000 POPULATION)	8.9	11.1	X
VIOLENT CRIME (PER 100,000 POPULATION)	73	126	✓
INJURY DEATHS (PER 100,000 POPULATION)	90	82	X
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT			5
AIR POLLUTION PARTICULATE MATTER (PM2.5)	7.1	7.4	✓
DRINKING WATER VIOLATIONS	No	NA	NA
SEVERE HOUSING PROBLEMS	15%	16%	✓
DRIVING ALONE TO WORK	76%	79%	✓
LONG COMMUTE DRIVING ALONE	39%	32%	X

Source: University Of Wisconsin, School Of Medicine And Public Health, Population Health Institute, 2019
✓ = Waldo County Is Equal Or Better Than Maine's Overall
X = Waldo County Is Worse Than Maine Average
*Premature Death = Years Of Potential Life Lost Before Age 75 Per 100,000 Population (Age-Adjusted)
**Income Inequality = Ratio Of Household Income At The 80th Percentile To Income At The 20th Percentile

Opioids

Use and abuse of drugs, specifically opioids, is a growing problem nationally and Waldo County is no exception. In fact, the problem may be even worse there. In 2014, the rate of overdose responses by emergency personnel was more than double the state average (391.5 versus 179.3 per 100,000 population).

Community survey respondents identify drugs as one of the biggest problems facing youth in Waldo County, and it ties with jobs as the biggest problem facing adults. Seventy-five percent of survey respondents see opioid use as a major or critical issue. Respondents cite Drug use and substance abuse often when talking about the biggest problems facing adults and youth in Waldo County. While current statistics are not readily accessible, the firsthand experiences of survey respondents paint a picture of a community facing a serious, widespread challenge.

Attorney General Releases Drug Death Report for Second Quarter of 2020 dated 10 21, 2020

The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) and the Office of Chief Medical Examiner have released figures demonstrating that drug overdose deaths continued to increase in the second quarter of 2020. The report confirms preliminary analysis released by the OAG in July, and mirrors similar increases in other states. Attorney General Aaron M. Frey says that the report makes clear that the opioid epidemic is a serious public health emergency, made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It is clear from the data that the increase in deaths from the opioid epidemic can be partially attributed to the increased isolation of living through the pandemic," said Frey. "The data in this report confirms that the crisis has continued to intensify nationally. It is another reminder that our communities are stronger when we are connected with one another and pro-actively make efforts to help our neighbors. We have to ensure that Mainers who are struggling with substance use disorder are connected with the resources they need to protect them and help them advance in recovery. This increase in drug overdose deaths also reminds us that working with public health experts and community leaders to combat the pandemic is crucial in order to successfully protect the public from other major challenges. All Mainers are in this struggle together, and I will continue to work with legislators, Governor Mills, the executive branch, and leaders throughout the state to address this crisis."

The report compiled by Dr. Marcella Sorg of the University of Maine's Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center, showed that 132 deaths were caused by drugs in the second quarter of 2020. This is a 4% increase over the first quarter of 2020. The 258 deaths caused by drugs in the first two quarters of 2020 represent a 27% increase over the last two quarters of 2019. 82% of deaths were caused by at least one opioid. 81% of deaths were caused by two or more drugs.

The report notes that these increases are comparable to increases being seen nationally, which are partly attributed to factors connected to the pandemic, including "isolation, avoidance of medical services, and alterations in the illicit drug supply."

Attorney General Frey noted that combatting drug deaths continues to be a priority of the Office of the Attorney General. He is a member of the Governor's Prevention and Recovery Cabinet.

Community Survey

[FACT: According to survey respondents, lack of affordable housing is one the most critical problem in Waldo County.]

The preceding statistics offer high-level insights on the needs of Waldo County residents. To gain deeper understanding of how they affect residents' everyday lives, WCAP and its partners conducted a community survey that drew 548 responses (a 31% increase from 419 responses in

2017). The survey consisted of 52 questions and was available in both print and online formats in early October 2020. It was publicized by WCAP and its partners through social media and email lists, and print versions were distributed by local service providers.

Survey participants included WCAP clients, service providers, parents and students, and a broad range of other community members, from local officials to business and faith leaders. The majority of respondents (78%) were community members and service providers. All respondents live and/or work in Waldo County. Collectively, their responses provide valuable personal insight into the conditions hinted at by the data. The following tables show responses for each question.

....
Question 46: I believe the biggest problem facing youth (ages 0-17) in Waldo County is:

Most Common Responses	Approximate Mentions
Drugs abuse (by caregivers or youth)	79
Need for jobs, job training, or education	65
Lack of out-of-school activities	31
Poverty	28
Lack of aspirations, drive, or discipline	19
Inadequate housing	19
Lack of health services and providers	12
Food insecurity	11
Poor parenting	11
Unhealthful lifestyles or poor nutrition	9
Unhealthful lifestyles or poor nutrition	9
Alcohol abuse	8
Lack of transportation	8
Bullying or peer pressure	5
No or poor-quality childcare	4
Violence or safety issues	3

Question 47: I believe the biggest problem facing adults in Waldo County is:

Most Common Responses	Approximate Mentions
Drugs abuse (and lack of treatment)	91
Lack of livable-wage jobs (especially for low-skilled workers)	89
Lack of affordable housing	45

Poverty	30
Need for education or job training	29
Lack of transportation	22
High cost of living	31
Alcohol abuse	15
Lack of social services (especially for elderly)	12
Lack of mental health services	11
Lack of access to health care	11
Lack of drive or work ethic	11
Lack of medical insurance	10
Property taxes	8
Lack of childcare	5
Domestic violence	5
Isolation	5

Summary

This report provides a comprehensive picture of economic and social conditions in Waldo County from September 2017 and updated with a COVID 19 assessment in May 2010 and a community needs survey in November 2020. This section summarizes the major findings detailed throughout this report.

Population: Waldo is an old county within an old state. More than 1 in 4 residents (27%) are age 60 or older. This will likely challenge the growth of local businesses as more and more Baby Boomers retire. Like the rest of Maine, the county lacks the younger, more diverse populations that are generating growth elsewhere in the country.

Poverty: Waldo County is noticeably less wealthy than its neighboring coastal counties, and poverty disproportionately affects the region's children. More than 1 in 4 children under age five (27%) are living in poverty, much higher than the overall poverty rate of 16% and triple the rate for residents age 65 and older (9%). Two out of three households headed by single mothers of children under five are poor (66%). Lack of livable wages continues to contribute to low income households struggling to move from poverty to self-sufficiency. The good news is that prior to COVID 19 overall poverty rates appear to have stabilized after growing for more than a decade.

Employment: In 2016, Waldo County finally recovered the jobs it lost during the closure of MBNA and the Great Recession of 2007-2009. Unemployment is low (4.2% in 2016), although it continues to rise in winter when many seasonal businesses close. Despite this progress, not all Waldo County residents are benefitting from the region's growth. Many residents are struggling to find jobs for which they are qualified that pay a livable wage, and logistics such as transportation and childcare create barriers for many would-be workers. Community members report a lack of well-paying local jobs for residents without education or training beyond high school.

Education: At each level of Waldo County's education system, data shows opportunities for improved service, participation, or attainment. Roughly half of four-year-olds are not enrolled in

public pre-kindergarten; a large percentage of students are not proficient in math or English; 15% of high school youth don't graduate on time; and more than two-thirds of adults don't have a college degree. Although these trends are fairly consistent with the rest of Maine, they will nevertheless encumber the ability of Waldo County's population to reduce poverty and help all residents achieve economic self-sufficiency.

Youth: Youth emerged as the most vulnerable segment of Waldo County's population. Almost two-thirds (62%) of students are eligible for subsidized school lunch, 1 in 5 children live in poverty, and 1 in 4 are food insecure. Adding to the challenges of poverty, the opioid epidemic is affecting children through their parents and caregivers. Community survey respondents identify drugs as the biggest problem facing youth in Waldo County.

Self-sufficiency: Many individuals in Waldo County struggle to achieve self-sufficiency. The transportation issues inherent to a rural area, high energy and tax bills, and the cost of living put pressure on low-income households. Nearly 6,000 residents are food insecure (15% of the population).

Housing: Housing affordability continues to be a challenge for many of Waldo County's low-income residents looking stable housing as well as workforce housing. By state and federal definitions, housing is considered affordable if a household does not spend more than 30% of its monthly income on housing. In deciding whether to make mortgage loans, banks use similar definitions of affordability. From 2007 to 2018, those earning the median income in the region could not afford to buy the median priced home in Belfast. According to the Maine Housing, Belfast's median income earning households could afford only 56% of the median home sale price in Belfast and only 86% of the median home sale price in Waldo County. Of course, those in the low-income category, earning just 80% of the median household income, could afford even less. Information from the 2010 census corroborates information from the Maine Housing with 53% of the population being identified as being unable to afford a median priced home.

Almost half (49.5%) of renters in Belfast could not afford the median rent charged for a 2-bedroom apartment. This has resulted in the higher occupancy of some units (families sharing apartments) and the occupancy of substandard units for which lower rents are charged.

Health: Opioid use and obesity were the highest concerns of community members who participated in WCAP's survey, ahead of such common challenges as food insecurity, transportation, and job training. In 2014, the rate of overdose responses by emergency personnel was more than double the state average. Compared to other Maine residents, Waldo County residents are about as healthy by most other measures but are about 10% more likely to be overweight and 20% more likely to lack medical insurance. Also, the percentage of children who lack immunizations is nearly double the state average.

Community Survey: WCAP's community survey garnered 550 responses from a broad collection of community members and service providers. The top concerns identified by those stakeholders for Waldo County youth were drug abuse (primary by caregivers), the need for

more jobs or job training, and the lack of out-of-school activities. The top concerns identified for Waldo County adults were drug abuse, lack of livable-wage jobs, and lack of affordable housing.

Recommendations:

- Invest in and expand access to emergency, transitional and affordable housing options to ensure:
 - Adequate supply of housing options
 - Supports to meet homeless needs
 - Transitional housing and support to offer support to housing stability
 - Resources to support retention of housing for seniors and those with disabilities: home repair and accessibility assistance.
 - Creation of special needs housing for seniors, homeless and those with disabilities.
- Provide services and supports to assist low income individuals and families to move from poverty to self-sufficiency:
 - Expand whole family services approach,
 - Assistance with access to stabilizing/bridging funds including funds rental assistance, childcare assistance, transportation assistance and assistance in meeting household needs.
- Provide for workforce development access and supports.
 - Educational opportunities and supports
 - Technical training skills
 - Mentoring programs
- Increase access to affordable and flexible child-care.
- Provide for expanded and flexible transportation system and supports
 - Add support for car maintenance and repair
 - Provide for creative access for vehicle ownership
 - Assistance with Insurance costs
 - Expanded volunteer driving pool
 - Expand access to affordable public transportation for shopping and other needs
- Provide for and support of expansion of Substance use Treatment opportunities including recovery housing.

Works Cited

City of Belfast Comprehensive Plan

<https://www.cityofbelfast.org/DocumentCenter/View/3120/Belfast-Comp-Plan---Housing-and-Memo-09242019>

Community Action Partners: Engagement Network. 2020

Brookings Institution, *Getting Ahead or Losing Ground: Economic Mobility in America*.

http://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/legacy/uploadedfiles/pcs_assets/2008/pewempgettin_gaheadfull2pdf.pdf

Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap web site, 2019. <http://map.feedingamerica.org/FEMA> & Global Resilience Institute, "Maine: COVID-19 Economic Recovery Support Function: Mission Scoping Assessment," 2020.

Kids Count, 2018

Maine Attorney General Releases Drug Death Report for 2nd Qtr. of 2020

Maine Department of Health and Human Services and Maine Department of Education, "Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey: Waldo County 2017 MIYHS high school report," 2017.

Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Snap Recipients 2018

Maine Department of Education, "Homeless Children and Youths Enrolled in Maine Public Schools," 2016.

Maine Department of Education, Enrollment Data 2018

Maine Department of Labor

Maine Governor's Energy Office, "Current heating fuel prices" web site, 2019.

http://www.maine.gov/energy/fuel_prices/

Maine Revenue Services, "Estimated full-value tax rates," 2017.

Maine Senior College Network, "Survey of board chairs and board presidents of the Maine Senior College Network – 2015," 2015.

Maine Shared Health Needs Assessment and Planning Process, "2019 Shared Community Health Needs Assessment: Waldo County," 2018.

Maine Housing, "2020 Housing Facts and Affordability Index for Waldo County," 2020.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Living Wage Calculator, 2018 update

Office of Head Start- Program Information Report (PIR) Disability Report – National, State, Program Level (2014-2018)

OUT Maine, "Changing Maine Statistics," 2020.

Pew Research Center, "The rising cost of not going to college," February 11, 2014.

State of Maine COVID Response, Office of the Governor.

<https://www.maine.gov/covid19/timeline>

University of Wisconsin, Population Health Institute, School of Medicine and Public Health, County Health Rankings & Roadmaps web site, 2019.

<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>

U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey Five-year Estimates

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/waldocountymaine> Waldo County Homeless Coalition, 2020 Waldo County Homeless Community Assessment Survey

Waldo Community Action Partners Community Needs Survey Sept 2020 to November 2020

Waldo Community Action Partners Annual Report 2019

WCAP Head Start/Early Head Start PIR, 2018