



Princeton Community Needs Assessment 2025

Key Findings and Recommendations

Municipality of Princeton | July 2026

About This Assessment

Objective: To understand the experiences and needs of Princeton residents facing systemic barriers, and to inform municipal priorities, planning, and service provision.

253

LMI households surveyed, representing 521 adults and 280 children

Aug – Dec 2025

17

Listening session participants

Diverse backgrounds

49

Non-LMI older adults (addendum)

Age-friendly planning

12

Languages offered in survey

Multilingual outreach

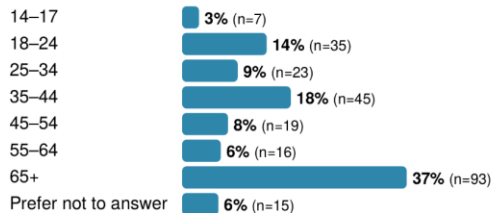
- Embedded data collection with outreach and on-the-spot service delivery, meeting residents where they live and work.
- Purposive, place-based sampling to reach traditionally underrepresented residents, including older adults.
- Findings are not statistically generalizable but offer meaningful insight into needs and priorities.

Who Participated

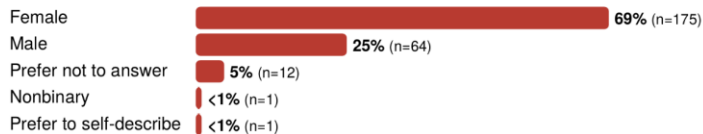
At-a-Glance: Demographic Characteristics of LMI Respondents

N = 253

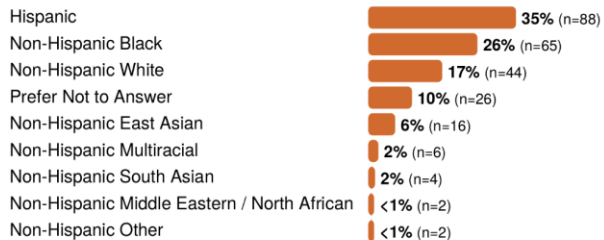
Age



Gender Identity



Race / Ethnicity



38%

One-person households

~33%

Reported a disability in household

31%

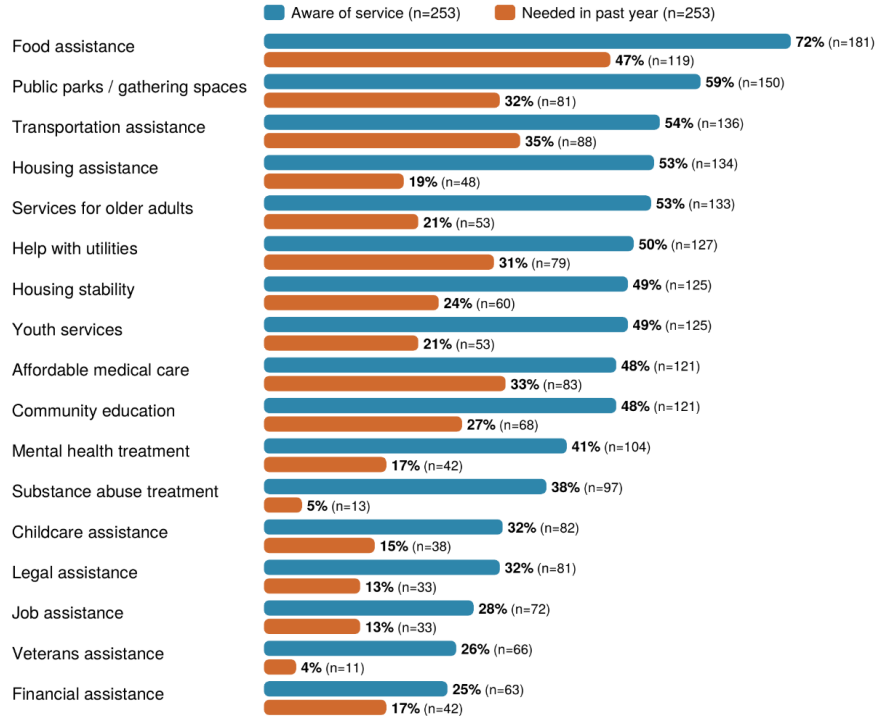
Spoke Spanish at home

50 yrs

Average age

Awareness and Needs Among LMI Respondents

At-a-Glance: Awareness and Service Need Among LMI Respondents



Services most challenging to access

- Affordable Medical Care
- Housing Stability
- Utility Assistance
- Transportation Assistance

Key barriers to access

- Lack of awareness & information
- Application difficulties

Food Security & Health Care

● Food & Nutrition

43%

Worried food would run out

47%

Used food assistance

65%

of users relied on it monthly or weekly

- **Anxiety persists.** Meal-skipping fell from 40% in 2014 to 23% in 2025, while worry about food remained widespread.
- **Higher anxiety among youth.** Among younger respondents (under 24), more than half (57%) worried their food would run out before they had money to buy more.
- **Preferred models.** Residents favored choice-based pantries and expanded delivery.

● Health Care

25%

Could not pay medical/dental bills

~30%

Skipped or delayed care due to cost

43%

On Medicaid/NJ FamilyCare

- **Coverage was largely public.** 64% reported a fully insured household; Medicare covered 42%, while about a quarter had mixed coverage and 4% none.
- **Medical debt.** Hospital and ER bills were the most frequent sources of unpaid debt, with dental care the most commonly skipped service.
- **Cost and distance compounded.** About half of those who skipped care were under- or uninsured, and many traveled to Trenton or Hamilton for affordable care.

Housing & Economic Security

● Housing

84%

Renters

49%

In subsidized or
affordable housing

- **Waitlists and fragmented process.** Residents cited long subsidized housing waits, and complex and separate application process for each property as key concerns.
- **Rising costs.** Fees for parking, water, trash, and technology affected affordability of subsidized units.
- **Health-linked instability.** 11% report housing affected by medical problems.

● Income & Employment

9%

Report no
income at all

22%

Need credit and
budgeting help

- **Unemployment.** 10% were unemployed, with 12% actively looking for work.
- **The cliff effect.** Households can earn too much to qualify for assistance but too little for Princeton's cost of living.
- **Workforce requests.** Residents asked for bilingual job fairs, resume help, and support for older adults and people with disabilities.
- **Financial literacy gap.** Beyond budgeting, about 17% also said they needed help with tax preparation.

Safety, Legal Needs & Inclusion

● Safety & Legal

85%

Reported no safety incidents

5%

Cited discrimination as a concern

- **Local police interaction.** A majority of respondents reported positive perceptions of local law enforcement, while only 8% expressed discomfort and 6% expressed mistrust.
- **Most reported no safety issues.** 85% reported no safety incidents over the past year.
- **Concentrated legal needs.** Legal issues were limited but important for those who were affected.

● Equity & Inclusion

58%

Felt connected to their community

26%

Lacked reliable home internet

- **Connection and belonging.** Over half felt connected, while perceptions of Princeton as a welcoming community ranged from 60% for people with disabilities to 44% for immigrants and newcomers.
- **Transportation shaped access.** Residents relied on driving (46%), walking or rolling (41%), and community shuttles (24%); transit was often cited as a need for care outside Princeton.
- **Digital divide.** 26% had no or unreliable home internet, limiting telehealth, jobs, and services.

Older Adults (55+): Key Findings

162 respondents | 70% LMI | 66% reported a disability

Top Requests for Additional Services



Key Takeaways

- Most are aware of exercise and fitness, transportation, and arts and culture programs. Awareness is lower for other services.
- Among older adults, 22% experienced difficulty accessing services they needed, with transportation assistance being the most challenging to access.
- The biggest barrier to accessing services that were needed, was not knowing where to find information
- 30% of LMI older adults skipped or delayed medical care due to out-of-pocket costs.
- 28% worried about food running out and 49% relied on food assistance programs. Among those, 84% accessed food assistance at least monthly.
- ~23% lacked reliable internet. 32% said they needed technology education.

Evolving Needs: 2014 vs. 2025

Domain	2014	2025	Trend
Meals cut/skipped	40%	23%	Improved
Language barriers	~25%	1%	Improved
Unemployment	21%	10%	Improved
Postponed medical care	34%	~30%	Persistent
Housing/utility struggles	31%	24–31%	Persistent
Food assistance use	35%	47%	Higher reliance

Key Opportunities and Recommendations

1

Strengthen Community Coordination, Navigation, and Community Voice

- Support ongoing engagement between residents, CARES, community partners, and municipal departments to ensure that community experiences, service barriers, and emerging needs continue to inform planning, resource allocation, and awareness efforts
- Leverage volunteers and community navigators to connect residents to resources
- Establish real-time reporting mechanisms to capture emerging needs and service gaps

2

Expand Outreach, Awareness, and Access to Services

- Host neighborhood-based clinics and on-site navigation at housing developments and community spaces with mobile and satellite health, dental, social services (e.g. MCBOSS, Zufall, NJMVC Mobile Units)
- Expand the current Social Services Directory into a centralized, multilingual, digital, and print, community resource tool
- Utilize outreach not just for service delivery but to build community through social connection and reduce isolation among residents
- Sustain case management to support hands-on troubleshooting of barriers across multiple sectors

3

Improve Transportation Awareness and Coordination

- Explore bus stop kiosk solutions to centralize transportation information
- Support ongoing enhancements by gathering specific resident feedback on affordability and scheduling flexibility
- Explore opportunities for community-based and volunteer-supported approaches that complement existing transportation resources

4

Promote Affordability

- Continue efforts to offer technology access, affordable internet information, and digital literacy support
- Build on successful practical financial literacy programs on budgeting, credit, taxes, and household financial planning
- Link awareness of affordable housing opportunities and homeowner/tenant resources (including but not limited to Community Solar, ADU, and HomeShare)
- Develop and expand broader workforce development, lifelong learning, mentorship programs, and Age-Friendly employment policies

Looking Forward

Princeton benefits from strong institutional assets, an engaged service network, and a civic culture that residents value. This assessment provides an evidence-informed foundation for setting priorities, coordinating partners, and shaping future action.

Thank you!