

Sponsored by:  **DELTA DENTAL**

STRONGER TOGETHER

COMMUNITY ROADMAP



UNITED WAY
Johnson and
Washington Counties



UNITED IS THE WAY

MEETING THE NEEDS OF OUR COMMUNITY TOGETHER

UNITED WAY'S APPROACH TO THE COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

United Way is dedicated to fostering a thriving community by addressing critical needs in health, youth opportunity, community resilience, and financial stability. To support our community, we conducted a comprehensive Community Needs Assessment (CNA) to analyze current data, evaluate the impact of existing programs, and identify areas requiring additional support.

Our CNA process was rooted in community collaboration, data-driven decision-making, and strategic planning. Through partnerships with local organizations, partner agencies, and residents, we gathered qualitative and quantitative insights to inform the “Stronger Together Community Roadmap”.

GOALS OF THE COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT:

- **Evaluate Progress Over Time** – Assess changes in our community over the past decade.
- **Identify Critical Needs** – Examine social, economic, environmental, and health-related challenges affecting residents.
- **Prioritize Key Issues** – Guide resource allocation based on data-driven insights.
- **Address Service Gaps** – Identify unmet needs and opportunities for enhanced programming.
- **Strengthen Community Collaboration** – Foster cross-sector partnerships to drive collective impact.
- **Empower Residents and Organizations** – Equip stakeholders with knowledge and resources to advocate for sustainable change.

Through this process, United Way has developed this shared community roadmap that unites local stakeholders in driving meaningful, long-term change.

STEERING COMMITTEE

The Steering Committee oversaw the Community Needs Assessment by setting objectives and goals, developing strategies to ensure equity, and guiding the workgroups. The steering committee includes:

- Lynette Jacoby, Johnson County Social Services
- Cady Gerlach, Better Together 2030 & Greater Iowa City
- Paul Johanson, University of Iowa Health Care
- Jennifer Banta, United Way of Johnson and Washington Counties
- Emily Meister, United Way of Johnson and Washington Counties
- Jenifer Roberts, Washington County Public Health

Dear Friends,

Thank you for taking the time to read the Stronger Together Community Roadmap. Your engagement is important as we work toward building a more equitable, healthy, and thriving community for all.

I invite you to stay involved: share the report, join a workgroup, volunteer, or support this work through giving. Together, we can turn insight into action and create lasting change.

With gratitude,

Jennifer Banta
President & CEO

OUR AREAS OF IMPACT

At United Way of Johnson and Washington Counties, we dedicate our efforts and investments to four interconnected areas that help families in our community achieve self-sufficiency. These areas work together to drive progress toward our goals.

Youth Opportunity

Connecting kids with the support they need to thrive from preschool through college and into their careers

Financial Security

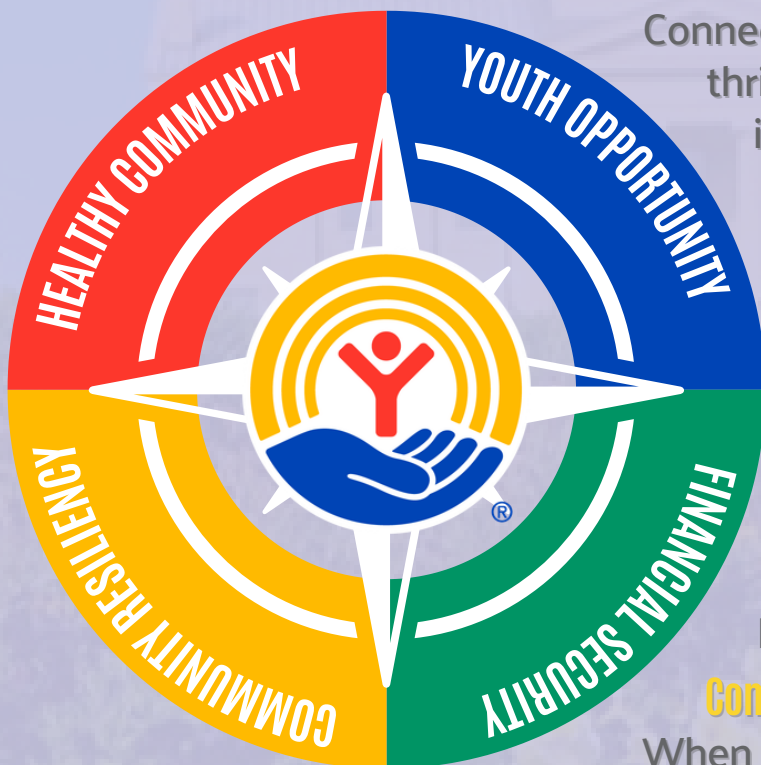
Everyone deserves the opportunity to earn a living to sustain a family and build security - we help achieve those goals

Healthy Community

Helping families stay healthy. Getting seniors to appointments. Improving health and wellbeing for all

Community Resiliency

When disasters occur, we're there with immediate relief and rebuilding support



COMMUNITY GOAL: All children experience quality early learning, so they start school ready to succeed

KEY EARLY LEARNING MEASURES IN OUR COMMUNITY:



Statewide, most 4-year-olds attend public preschool, but few 3-year-olds do

HOW WE WILL MOVE CLOSER TO OUR GOALS:

- ★ Increase **family support** resources for parent-led at home early learning
- ★ Increase the number of **accredited and quality-rated** preschool programs
- ★ Expand the number of children enrolled in pre-school, focusing on **expanding access to quality programs** that offer **all-day and 3-year-old options** & those operating in areas underserved by preschool or child care



SHARE OF 3- AND 4-YEAR-OLDS NOT ENROLLED IN PRESCHOOL

49% in Johnson County

38% in Washington County

COMMUNITY GOAL: All students are prepared academically for a wide range of careers

KEY MEASURES OF OF YOUTH & FAMILY SUPPORT IN OUR COMMUNITY:

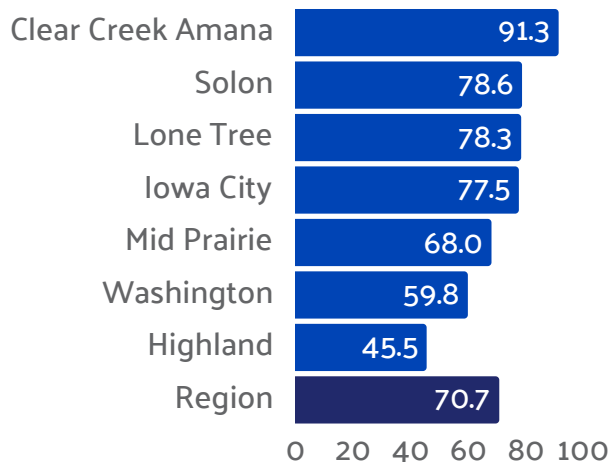


Nearly one-third of eighth graders are **not proficient in math**



Overall, 9 of 10 students graduate from high school on time, but some groups – notably **students with disabilities** & those in rural areas – **have much lower graduation rates**

PERCENT OF EIGHTH GRADERS PROFICIENT IN MATH BY SCHOOL DISTRICT



9.2% of the region's graduating seniors did not intend to go on any additional education or training or join the military

SHARE OF 18- AND 19-YEAR-OLDS NOT ENROLLED IN SCHOOL

25% in Washington County

8% in Johnson County

HOW WE WILL MOVE CLOSER TO OUR GOALS:

- ★ **Expand opportunities** for students to participate in career academies, trade programs, and apprenticeships
- ★ Increase access to **job and life mentoring** to help students develop skills for future careers
- ★ Increase access to **career advising** so students better understand their education and job options

COMMUNITY GOAL:

All youth and their families have access to basic needs and social and emotional supports so children are ready to learn

KEY MEASURES OF OF YOUTH & FAMILY SUPPORT IN OUR COMMUNITY:

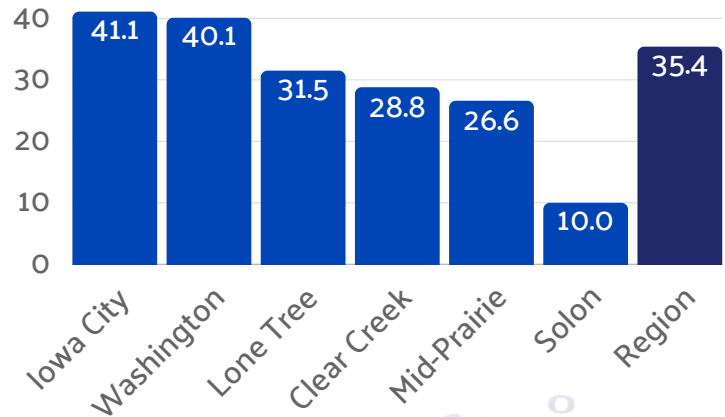


Region-wide, **more than a third** of students rely on **free or reduced-price school meals**



Students largely feel connected to school, but the degree of connection **varies by group**

PERCENT OF STUDENTS ELIGIBLE FOR FREE OR REDUCED-PRICED MEALS BY SCHOOL DISTRICT



HOW WE WILL MOVE CLOSER TO OUR GOALS:

- Expand access to non-academic support services by implementing **models that meet the unique needs** of local schools and districts
- Increase access to **career advising** so students better understand their education and job options
- Increase family support services to **help parents meet basic needs** and foster strong, nurturing relationships with their children

UNITED WAY'S ROLE IN YOUTH OPPORTUNITY

FUND & COLLABORATE

We're investing in **cradle-to-career education** by supporting **quality child care and early childhood education**, including programs like **Reading Buddies** and **Math Kits** to foster early learning and build strong connections with families. We know that parents are children's first teachers. We also lead initiatives that prepare youth for success in the classroom and beyond, through **tutoring, mentoring and social-emotional learning** such as empathy and confidence.

ADVOCATE & EDUCATE

United Way advocates for youth opportunities by **raising awareness** of early learning gaps, expanding preschool access, and supporting parent-led education at home. It strengthens family support through services that address **basic needs and mental health** while promoting student engagement and belonging. To enhance academic and career readiness, United Way advocates for **career academies, apprenticeships, and mentoring programs** while addressing proficiency gaps in reading and math. By sharing critical data, increasing resources, and advocating for policy changes, United Way ensures all children have access to quality education and support systems that prepare them for future success.



IMPACT AREA Healthy Community

COMMUNITY GOAL: Everyone receives the health care they need to live healthy & fulfilling lives

KEY MEASURES OF HEALTH IN OUR COMMUNITY:



The highest share of **uninsured people** is among working-age adults



Public insurance programs are an important source of health coverage, **especially for children**

17% of Johnson Co. residents haven't seen a dentist in over 2 years
Top reason cited:
Don't have dental insurance, concerned about expense

23% of Johnson Co. residents don't have a primary care provider
Top reason cited:
High cost of health care

HOW WE WILL MOVE CLOSER TO OUR GOALS:



Increase the share of people covered by **affordable insurance** and **increase access to free or reduced-cost** clinics for those without coverage

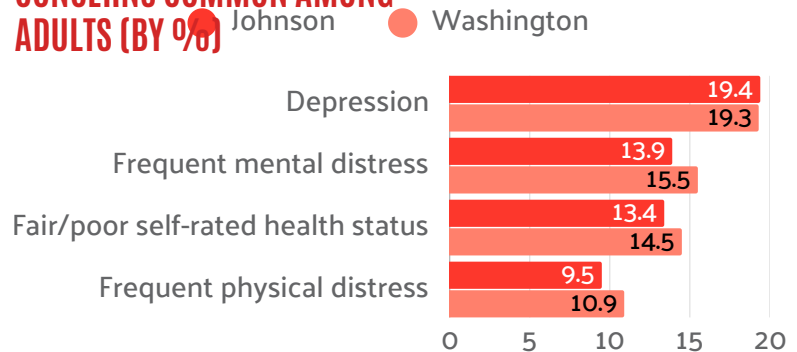


Ensure more people receive essential health services, including **behavioral health, dental and primary care**



Integrate social determinants of health into health care services so providers can assess and refer patients who have **additional barriers to wellbeing**

MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH CONCERNS COMMON AMONG ADULTS (BY %)



COMMUNITY GOAL: Everyone has access to safe, secure housing with the supports they need to maintain long-term stability

KEY MEASURES OF HOUSING IN OUR COMMUNITY:



Shelters, jails & ERs are not substitutes for **adequate housing supports & mental health care**



People with **serious mental illness** are more likely to experience homelessness



Stable housing is one of the most powerful predictors of health according to the CDC

2 BEDS PER 100,000 RESIDENTS



Iowa Ranks **LAST** in the nation for psychiatric bed availability



3 OUT OF 4 WOMEN who have experienced homelessness have also endured domestic violence or sexual assault

HOW WE WILL MOVE CLOSER TO OUR GOALS:



Understand the impact of **serious mental illness** & trauma on long-term housing stability & identify **needed supports**



Coordinated, community-based services to **prevent homelessness** & provide **ongoing support** for those moving from homelessness to **stable housing**



Expand **permanent supportive housing** to reduce cycling through emergency systems like hospitals, jails & shelters



COMMUNITY GOAL: Everyone in our community has enough food to eat

KEY MEASURES OF FOOD SECURITY IN OUR COMMUNITY:



Food pantries are serving record numbers, making it challenging to maintain a steady, reliable supply of **nutritionally & culturally appropriate foods**

11.5%
of our
community

are food insecure



Many who qualify for SNAP **don't enroll due to barriers** like low benefit amounts, stigma, confusion, or lack of info—missing out on support to buy healthy, personally chosen foods

FOOD INSECURE RESIDENTS NOT ELIGIBLE FOR SNAP

39%

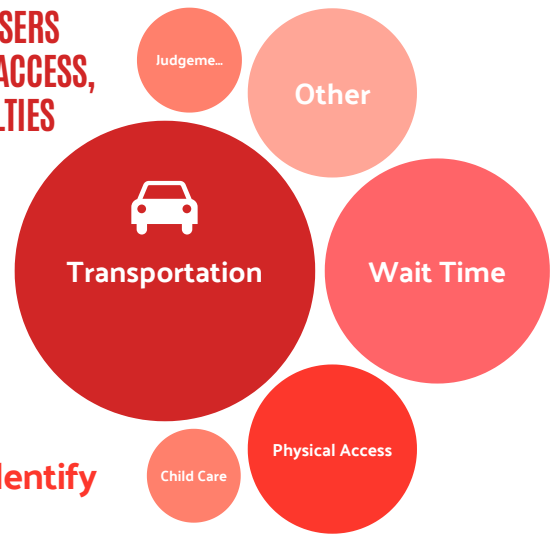
Johnson County

47%

Washington County

Source: Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap, 2024

20% OF PANTRY USERS FACE BARRIERS TO ACCESS, THESE ARE DIFFICULTIES IDENTIFIED



HOW WE WILL MOVE CLOSER TO OUR GOALS:

- ★ Improve food pantry offerings by **increasing the variety and availability of nutritious and culturally appropriate foods**
- ★ Integrate community wide data across local pantries to **identify gaps and areas for improvement**
- ★ Increase participation in SNAP by **reducing barriers to enrollment** and **expanding outreach** to seniors and other populations with low participation rates

UNITED WAY'S ROLE IN HEALTHY COMMUNITY

FUND & COLLABORATE

United Way is committed to **Community Health** by investing in strategies and programs that reduce health disparities and improve well-being for all. Using **community-based approaches**, we address barriers to health equity and work to **better align health care options and resources** to improve health outcomes for our community. Through collaboration & targeted investments, we strive to create a healthier future for everyone.

ADVOCATE & EDUCATE

We advocate for policies and practices to improve health and well-being and provide **equitable access to care** for every member of our community. We advocate for **food security initiatives** by increasing SNAP participation, improving food availability at pantries, and integrating data for stronger support systems. We educate and promote policy change to **address our community's gaps in essential oral health services**.



IMPACT AREA Financial Security

COMMUNITY GOAL: People have the resources they need to support themselves & their families

KEY MEASURES OF FINANCIAL SECURITY IN OUR COMMUNITY:



When family budgets & SNAP run out, area **food pantries are key** to filling the gap



People of color are more likely than white people to **live in poverty**



Many of the common & needed jobs in our community **pay below what it takes to make ends meet**

41%

of Johnson County households

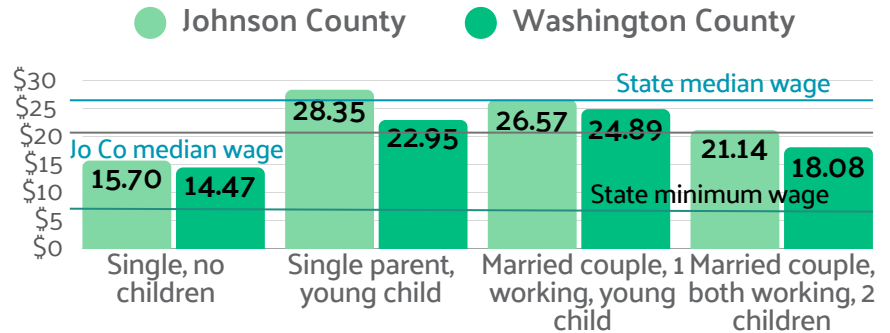
37%

of Washington County households

are ALICE

(Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed)

HOURLY EARNINGS REQUIRED TO MEET A BASIC-NEEDS BUDGET BY FAMILY TYPE, JOHNSON & WASHINGTON COUNTIES



HOW WE WILL MOVE CLOSER TO OUR GOALS:

- ★ **Increase** the number of people who earn enough to support their basic needs
- ★ **Improve access to public benefits** & community basic needs supports like food to help individuals and families **bridge gaps** during times of financial hardship, illness, or job loss
- ★ Strengthen workforce readiness by **increasing participation in career training programs** & **creating stronger pathways** from high school to in-demand local jobs

COMMUNITY GOAL: Families have access to quality childcare they can afford

KEY CHILD CARE MEASURES IN OUR COMMUNITY:



Low pay – among the lowest of any profession – makes it difficult for child care centers to hire enough workers to meet demand and makes it difficult for child care workers to support their own families



Despite a great need in our region, participation in Child Care Assistance – the state's program to help low-wage working parents afford child care is declining

78.5%
of young children in Johns. & Wash. Cos. **have all available parents in the labor force**

AVG ANNUAL COST OF CHILD CARE JOHNS. & WASH COS.

	Johns. Co.	Wash. Co.
Licensed Child Care Center		
Infant	\$16,705	\$10,196
3-year-old	\$12,651	\$8,864

Tuition & fees at U I

\$11,283

The cost of full-time child care nears or beats cost of tuition and fees at UI

\$12.57
is the average wage of child care workers in Johns. & Wash. Counties

HOW WE WILL MOVE CLOSER TO OUR GOALS:

- ★ Reduce the financial burden of child care by **increasing the number of centers accepting Child Care Assistance** (CCA) & expanding the availability of CCA-funded slots
- ★ **Increase wages for childcare workers** through non-tuition funding sources, helping centers attract staff, expand available slots & improve provider options for families



COMMUNITY GOAL:

Everyone has safe and stable housing that they can afford

KEY MEASURES OF HOUSING AFFORDABILITY & ADEQUACY IN OUR COMMUNITY:

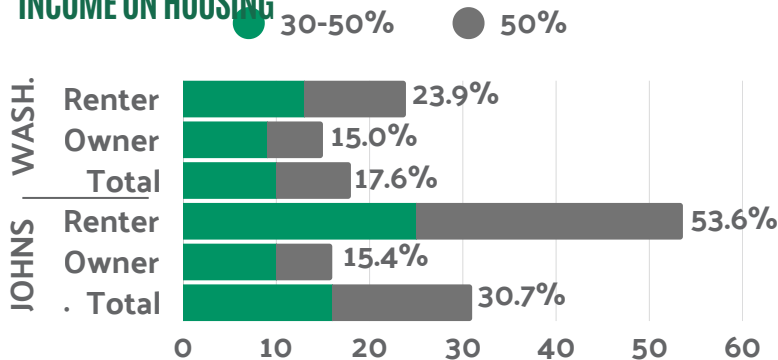


Many households are burdened by **high housing costs**; renters face biggest burdens, but homeowners are not exempt

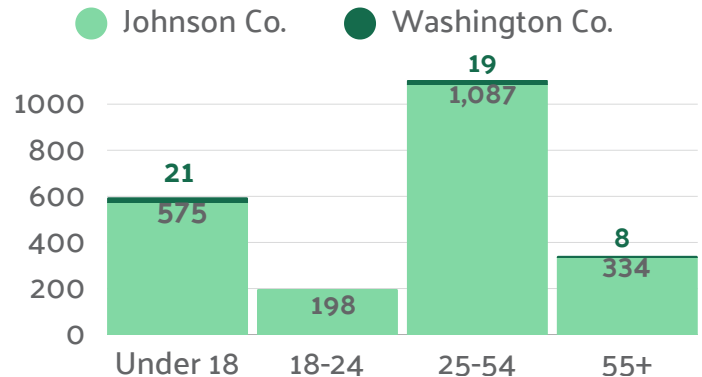


Many individuals face housing instability – falling behind on rent, frequent moves or doubling up – long before seeking formal support. This means service data **greatly underrepresents** true need

PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS SPENDING MORE THAN 30% OF INCOME ON HOUSING



PEOPLE WHO SOUGHT FORMAL HOUSING SERVICES OR SHELTER, JOHNSON AND WASHINGTON COUNTIES, 2023



HOW WE WILL MOVE CLOSER TO OUR GOALS:

- ★ Increase the supply of affordable housing units by increasing the number of **landlords who accept housing vouchers** and exploring other innovative solutions
- ★ Improve the **safety and quality** of housing by reducing the number of poorly maintained, deficient units

UNITED WAY'S ROLE IN FINANCIAL SECURITY

FUND & COLLABORATE

We're investing in strategies and local programs that help families achieve economic stability. Through partnerships, we connect individuals with resources to access affordable child care, housing and other basic needs and connect to job training programs. In addition, we support the **Child Care Coalition** and invest in proven approaches to reduce family homelessness, including improving access to food, providing case management, and expanding housing options.

ADVOCATE & EDUCATE

At United Way, we believe financial stability is the foundation for a thriving community. Yet, 40% of Johnson and Washington County individuals and families – facing barriers to stable employment, affordable housing, and essential resources – struggle to make ends meet.

We advocate for access to affordable housing and child care to help individuals build long-term financial security. We advocate for an increase to the Child Care Assistance reimbursement rates, to increase access to quality child care and promote stabilization in the child care workforce.



COMMUNITY GOAL: Residents are prepared for and able to recover from disasters & other adversity

KEY MEASURES OF PREPAREDNESS IN OUR COMMUNITY:

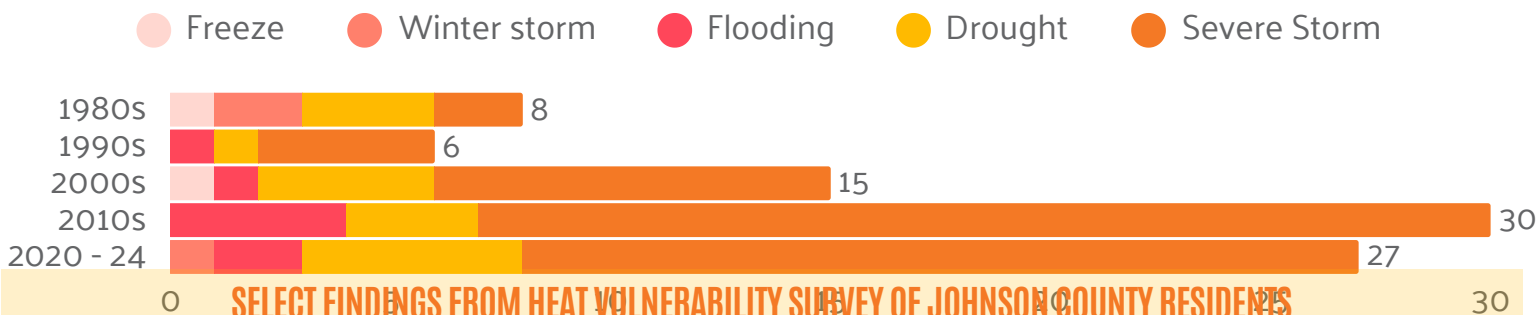


Some area households have **no or limited internet access** to rely on for guidance before or during emergencies; **low-income households are more likely** to lack access

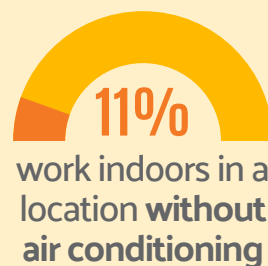
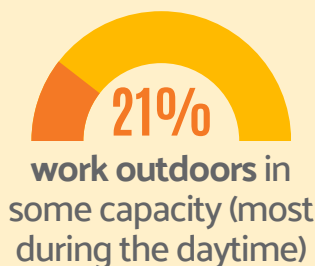
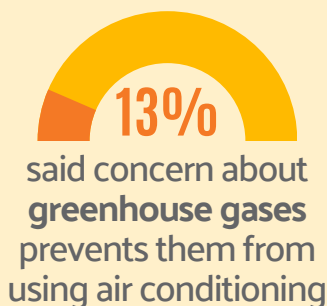
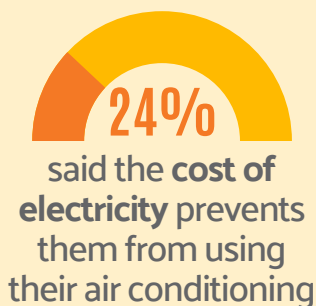


Some area residents **cannot easily leave their homes** during emergencies

BILLION-DOLLAR DISASTERS IN IOWA BY TYPE, 1980-2024



SELECT FINDINGS FROM HEAT VULNERABILITY SURVEY OF JOHNSON COUNTY RESIDENTS



SHARE OF ADULTS WHO LACKED RELIABLE TRANSPORTATION IN THE LAST YEAR

5.9%

in Johnson County

6.4%

in Washington County

HOW WE WILL MOVE CLOSER TO OUR GOALS:

- ★ Enhance **emergency preparedness** and response through **improved collaboration** among **community-based organizations** and **local emergency management** in a cross-sector approach
- ★ Expand the number of neighborhoods with **disaster plans and strategies** and the number of people trained in resilience “work”

UNITED WAY'S ROLE IN COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

ADVOCATE & EDUCATE

We recognize that climate change disproportionately impacts vulnerable populations, threatening housing stability, financial security and overall wellbeing. A resilient community is one that can adapt, withstand and recover from climate-related challenges while ensuring all individuals have access to essential resources.

We advocate for **climate-resilient housing, sustainable infrastructure, and neighborhood-based emergency preparedness** to protect communities from extreme weather and environmental disruptions.



COMMUNITY GOAL: Residents feel connected to their neighborhood and the broader community

KEY MEASURES OF RESILIENCE IN OUR COMMUNITY:

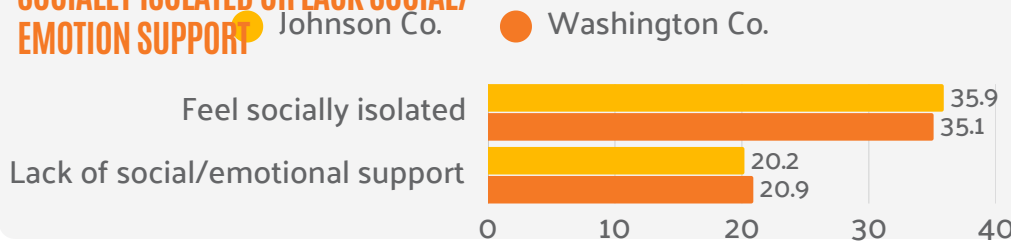


Johnson County lags state & nation in presence of social associations; Washington measures above

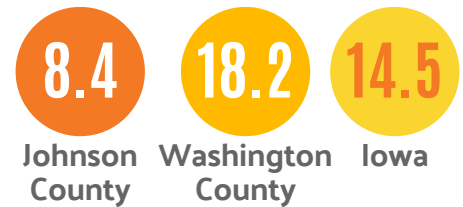


New arrivals to our community may need **extra language support** to build community connections and knowledge

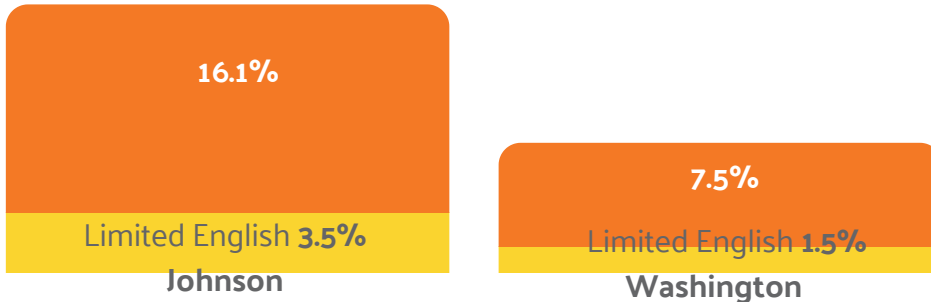
PERCENT OF ADULTS REPORTING THEY FEEL SOCIALLY ISOLATED OR LACK SOCIAL/EMOTION SUPPORT



MEMBERSHIP ORGANIZATIONS PER 10,000 PEOPLE



NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS SPEAKING A NON-ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND SHARE THAT ARE LIMITED-ENGLISH SPEAKING



Regionwide,

2,509 students were receiving English Language Learners services

HOW WE WILL MOVE CLOSER TO OUR GOALS:

- ✦ Increase number of **neighborhood hubs** and increase the share of people who engage with their neighborhood groups to foster **stronger community connections**
- ✦ **Increase community awareness of resources**, making certain those resources are **culturally & linguistically accessible** and **recognizable** within the different communities being served

FUND & COLLABORATE

Strong, resourced communities are better able to build back from adversity. United Way strengthens Community Resilience by **bringing people and organizations together** to address challenges and create lasting solutions. Through our extensive network of **nonprofits, businesses and community leaders**, we help our community **understand problems, co-create solutions** and ensure accountability for results. We lead the **Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD)**, ensuring a coordinated response to local crises, and operate 211, a vital helpline that connects individuals to essential resources like housing, food, and crisis support. By leveraging partnerships and resources, we build a stronger, more resilient community that can adapt and thrive in the face of challenges.



HOW TO SUPPORT THIS WORK

SCAN ME!



WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Learn More About “Stronger Together”
Community Roadmap

See our full Community Needs Assessment –and how we can work together to meet those needs. The Stronger Together Roadmap highlights key findings from the Community Needs Assessment and outlines a shared vision for a healthier, more equitable future.

Read the full roadmap at
www.unitedwayjwc.org/our-impact-cna
and find out how you can get involved or donate today to help make lasting change.



UNITED WAY
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Washington Counties

www.unitedwayjwc.org