PUBLIC SURVEY COMPARISON REPORT
2020–2021 and 2026 Community Needs Assessments

Prepared for WYO HELP
Carbon • Crook • Goshen • Niobrara • Washakie • Weston
September 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The earlier county assessments collected 2,635 completed public surveys, compared with 136 responses included in the 2026 county tables—a reduction of approximately 95 percent.

County	2020–2021 Surveys	2026 Surveys	Difference
Carbon	971	13	−958
Crook	582	16	−566
Goshen	297	69	−228
Niobrara	169	12	−157
Washakie	60	16*	−44
Weston	556	10	−546
TOTAL	2,635	136	−2,499

*Washakie received one additional response after the 16-response tables were prepared. It was discussed separately.

The central needs remained remarkably consistent: insufficient income and livable-wage employment, housing affordability, food, healthcare and mental-health access, transportation, childcare and family support.

The main change is emphasis. Earlier studies often focused on employment opportunities, education, childcare, health services and community development. The 2026 respondents more directly emphasized immediate financial pressures—food, utilities, inadequate income, housing affordability and difficulty locating or reaching help.

These findings cannot be treated as a statistical trend. Survey methods, questions, audiences and sample sizes changed substantially.

SURVEYS/INVITATIONS DISTRIBUTED AND COMPLETED

The table distinguishes invitations or messages sent, successful 2026 deliveries, and completed public surveys. “Not reported” means the earlier report described promotion methods but did not state how many people received or saw an invitation.

County	Earlier sent/invited	Earlier completed	2026 messages sent	2026 delivered	2026 completed
Carbon	6,891 households	971	419	408	13
Crook	3,279 households	582	411	390	16
Goshen	Not reported	297	424	400	69
Niobrara	1,144 households	169	401	381	12
Washakie	Not reported	60	426	405	16*
Weston	3,282 households	556	385	379	10
TOTAL KNOWN	14,596 mailings	2,635	2,466	2,363	136

SURVEY METHODOLOGY COMPARISON

Carbon: 2020 survey mailed to 6,891 households; 971 responses (14%). In 2026, 419 messages were sent, 408 were delivered and 13 public responses were received (3.2% of deliveries).

Crook: 2020 survey mailed to 3,279 households; 582 responses (18%). In 2026, 411 messages were sent, 390 were delivered and 16 responses were received (4.1%).

Goshen: 2021 online survey promoted through Facebook and email; 297 validated responses. In 2026, 424 messages were sent, 400 delivered and 69 responses received (17.3%).

Niobrara: 2020 survey mailed to 1,144 households; 169 responses (14.8%). In 2026, 401 messages were sent, 381 delivered and 12 responses received (3.1%).

Washakie: 2021 convenience survey recruited through social media, coalition contacts, newspaper coverage and Facebook advertising; 60 responses. In 2026, 426 messages were sent, 405 delivered and 16 responses included in the tables (4.0%), plus one later response.

Weston: 2020 survey mailed to 3,282 households; 556 responses (approximately 16.9%). In 2026, 385 messages were sent, 379 delivered and 10 responses received (2.6%).

The 2026 reports use “messages,” “successful deliveries,” “bounces” and “unsubscribes,” suggesting email distribution. They do not expressly identify the channel, list source, whether recipients were clients or general residents, additional promotion, reminders, paper options or partner sharing.

Goshen is a major outlier: 69 responses from 400 deliveries compared with 10–16 responses elsewhere from similar delivery counts. This could reflect local visibility, a more relevant list, additional promotion or wider link sharing. The reports do not establish the cause.

CARBON COUNTY

Participation: 971 responses in 2020; 13 in 2026.

Earlier priorities: food assistance; reliable transportation and gas; livable-wage employment and training; healthcare and mental-health services; childcare; housing assistance.

2026 public responses:
• Income: 11 of 13 identified it as a need.
• Affordable housing: 8 of 13.
• Healthcare: 5 of 13.
• Mental-health or substance-use support: 4 of 13.
• Utilities: 4 of 13.
• Food: 3 of 13; all three described it as urgent.

Understanding: The same problems persisted, but respondents described them more explicitly as affordability and navigation problems. Food was selected less often as a need but was urgent for all three selecting it and under strain for seven.

Caution: The broad 2020 household sample and small 2026 sample likely represent different portions of Carbon County.

CROOK COUNTY

Participation: 582 responses in 2020; 16 in 2026.

Earlier priorities: food and gas; livable-wage employment; medical and mental-health services; housing; internet and cellular access; limited local services.

2026 public responses:
• Affordable housing: 8 of 16.
• Food: 8 of 16.
• Income: 7 of 16.
• Utilities: 5 of 16.

• Healthcare: 5 of 16.
• Trusted local support: 3 of 16.
• Ten selected high costs; ten selected limited help; nine selected excessive distance.

Understanding: Crook shows strong continuity. The newer report clarifies that rural need is partly a reachability problem: services may exist but remain distant, expensive or difficult to locate.

Caution: The 2026 group was small and financially strained; 13 of 16 described money as very or somewhat tight.

GOSHEN COUNTY

Participation: 297 responses in 2021; 69 in 2026.

Earlier findings:
• Better-paying employment: 56.63%.
• Affordable childcare: 31.18%.
• Affordable housing: 36.84%.
• Homeownership or rehabilitation grants: 27.82%.
• Adult dental or hearing assistance: 53.88%.
• Adult vision assistance: 35.34%.
• Youth services, life skills, mental health, transportation and benefit cliffs.

2026 public responses:
• Income: 38 of 69.
• Housing: 31 of 69.
• Food: 26 of 69.
• Utilities: 24 of 69.
• Steady work: 18 of 69.
• Healthcare: 17 of 69.

Understanding: Goshen moved in emphasis from longer-term opportunity and service development toward immediate household stability. Employment remains important, but food, housing and utilities consume greater attention. Food had 26 need selections but 36 under-strain ratings; utilities had 24 need selections but 32 under-strain ratings.

Caution: Both rounds used nonprobability online recruitment, but the audiences may differ. Percentage changes cannot be projected to all county residents.

NIOBRARA COUNTY

Participation: 169 responses in 2020; 12 in 2026.

Earlier priorities: childcare; housing; job opportunities; healthcare; cost of care; limited local services. The 2020 survey was heavily weighted toward retirees: 53% were retired, and too few low-income respondents participated for substantive low-income analysis.

2026 public responses:
• Food: 8 of 12.

• Income: 8 of 12.
• Steady work: 5 of 12.
• Housing: 4 of 12.
• Healthcare: 4 of 12.
• Utilities: 3 of 12.
• Eight described money as very tight.

Understanding: The apparent shift may chiefly reflect different respondents. The retiree-heavy 2020 survey was poorly positioned to measure low-income hardship; the 2026 survey captured a tiny but distressed group.

Caution: It is not defensible to claim that food insecurity increased countywide. It is defensible to say the 2026 process revealed acute food and income pressure among its participants.

WASHAKIE COUNTY

Participation: 60 responses in 2021; 16 in the 2026 tables, plus one later response.

Earlier findings: better-paying jobs and benefits; affordable childcare; local certificate and degree programs; adult education; youth and substance-use services; youth mental health; dental, hearing and vision assistance; affordable housing and rehabilitation; broadband and credit resources.

Only nine of the 56 respondents answering the 2021 income question were classified as low income.

2026 public responses:
• Food: 11 of 16.
• Income: 10 of 16.
• Housing: 9 of 16.
• Utilities: 4 of 16.
• Healthcare: 3 of 16.
• Trusted local support: 3 of 16.
• Eleven described money as very tight.

Understanding: Earlier respondents emphasized opportunity and service development; 2026 respondents emphasized necessities. The connection remains: employment, education and childcare influence whether households can afford food, housing and utilities.

Caution: Both rounds were nonprobability studies. The earlier report explicitly said its convenience sample could not be extrapolated to Washakie County.

WESTON COUNTY

Participation: 556 responses in 2020; 10 in 2026.

Earlier priorities: housing; food insecurity and gas; livable-wage jobs; affordable medical and mental-health care; remoteness and limited services.

2026 public responses:
• Utilities: 6 of 10.

• Housing: 5 of 10.
• Food: 5 of 10.
• Income: 2 of 10.
• Childcare or family support: 2 of 10.
• Healthcare: 1 of 10.

Understanding: Weston demonstrates continuity. Housing and food remained prominent. Gas and remoteness evolved into broader access and navigation concerns. Utilities became more explicit.

Caution: The 2026 sample was less than 2% of the earlier sample. Each respondent equals ten percentage points if the results are expressed as percentages, so counts are more honest.

CROSS-COUNTY FINDINGS

Employment and income: Earlier reports emphasized jobs, training and livable wages. The 2026 reports emphasize earning enough to get by and finding steady work.

Housing: Earlier reports discussed assistance and availability. The 2026 reports distinguish affordability, usable supply, condition and location.

Food: Earlier reports identified food assistance or insecurity. Food is more immediate and prominent among 2026 respondents in Crook, Goshen, Niobrara and Washakie.

Transportation: Earlier reports emphasized gas and reliable vehicles. The 2026 reports broaden this to distance, reachability, navigation and application access.

Healthcare: Cost, providers, specialists and mental health were prominent earlier. These needs persist but compete with immediate household expenses in 2026.

Childcare, education and youth: These were more prominent in some earlier studies. Lower visibility in 2026 does not show that they became unimportant; small crisis-focused samples may prioritize immediate necessities.

Utilities: Earlier reports often grouped utilities under general assistance. In 2026, utilities emerged as a distinct household pressure.

Navigation: Earlier reports generally treated navigation implicitly. In 2026, limited help, eligibility barriers, distance and not knowing where to start became explicit.

KEY METHODOLOGICAL DISCREPANCIES

1. Sample sizes. The earlier assessments included hundreds of responses in most counties. The 2026 surveys included 10–69. The newer findings are participant perspectives, not representative county estimates.

2. Recruitment. Earlier methods included mailed surveys, Facebook, email, coalition outreach, newspapers and convenience sampling. The 2026 reports do not fully explain their message channel or contact lists.

3. Respondent populations. Niobrara's earlier survey was retiree-heavy; Washakie's included only nine low-income respondents; the 2026 groups frequently reported very tight finances.

4. Question design. Earlier surveys often asked about desired programs. The 2026 survey separated need, urgency, serious problem, under strain and access barriers. These categories cannot be converted directly.

5. Multiple selections. Need, urgency, seriousness and strain were separate questions. Counts cannot be added, and the same respondents may appear in multiple categories.

CONCLUSIONS

The 2026 assessments reinforce rather than replace the earlier studies.

- The central concerns persisted.
- Immediate household-cost pressure became more visible.
- Food and utilities deserve greater operational attention.
- Housing remains a structural concern throughout the service area.
- Distance and service navigation are substantive rural barriers.
- Employment, childcare, education, youth services and healthcare remain upstream issues even when they are not the most urgent immediate needs.
- The surveys should guide planning but cannot independently establish countywide prevalence or statistical change.
- WYO HELP should validate the findings through service utilization, partner experience, completed referrals and unmet-need records.

RECOMMENDED PUBLIC STATEMENT

The 2026 assessments reinforce many concerns identified in the 2020–2021 studies, including employment and income, housing, food, healthcare, transportation and childcare. The newer responses place greater emphasis on immediate household costs and difficulty reaching appropriate help. Because the assessment rounds used different recruitment methods, questionnaires and sample sizes, the results should not be interpreted as a direct statistical trend. WYO HELP will use both sets of findings alongside service utilization, partner knowledge, referral outcomes and unmet-need information to guide county-specific planning.

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