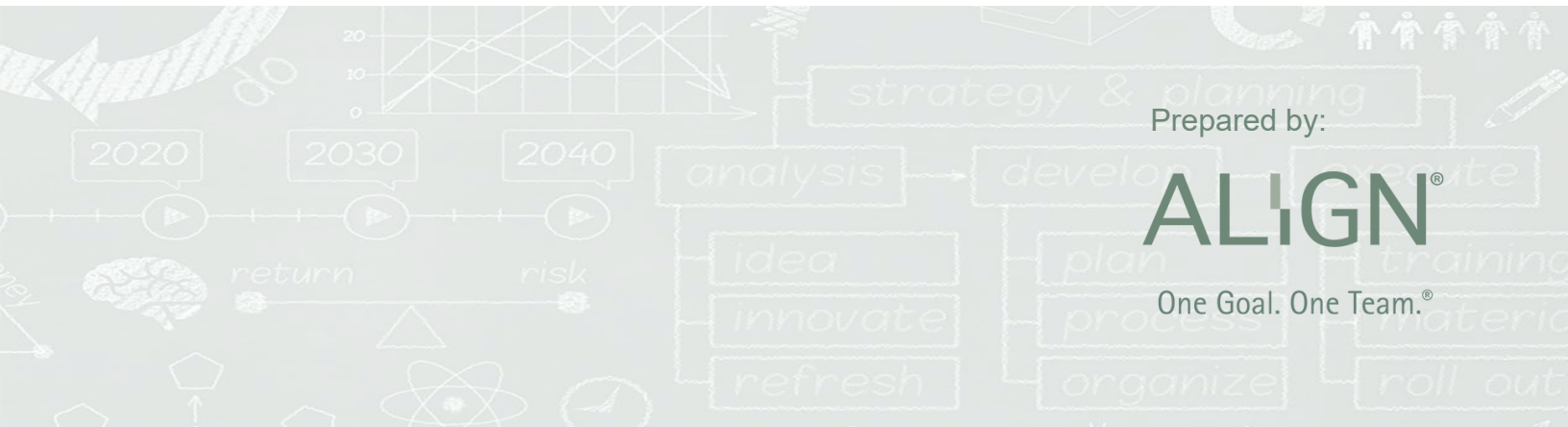


# Community Needs Assessment

## Weston County

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2020



Prepared by:

**ALIGN**<sup>®</sup>

One Goal. One Team.<sup>®</sup>

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# Introduction and Overview

In 1964, Congress passed the Economic Opportunity Act as part of America's War on Poverty. This act created a funding stream for communities to address poverty on the local level. Today, each state receives Community Services Block Program (CSBG) funds according to a statutory formula. In turn, states fund a network of local entities for the purpose of assisting low-income individuals and families with activities and support services that empower them to overcome the effects of poverty and to support their progress towards greater self-sufficiency.

The Wyoming Department of Health administers CSBG funds in Wyoming. In the federal fiscal year 2020, there were 17 CSBG agencies in Wyoming that provided CSBG assistance in 23 counties. These agencies consist of public and nonprofit entities. There are three national goals of CSBG:

1. Individuals and families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security.
2. Communities where people with low incomes live are healthy and offer economic opportunity.
3. People with low incomes are engaged and active in building opportunities in their communities.

Community Needs Assessments are a requirement of CSBG. The Community Needs Assessment is a systematic process for creating a profile of the needs and resources of a given community or target population. CSBG funding priorities are based on needs and resources in the community.

Western States Learning Corporation, d/b/a Align, was the grantee for the CSBG funds for Weston County from October 2018 to September 2020. Align stepped into this role until a local or regional grantee could be identified. Align is a Wyoming-based nonprofit headquartered in Cheyenne that works across the state and region. Align's mission is to create stronger communities by partnering with nonprofits, government, and businesses for more impactful, successful organizations and programs.

During Align's tenure as the grantee for Weston County, CSBG funds were utilized for assisting households with rent and mortgage payments, utility bills and health expenses. Recipients of these funds must meet income eligibility requirements. Effective October 2020, Goshen Help is the grantee for Weston County. Goshen Help's mission is to improve the quality of life for people in need by empowering them to become more self-sufficient. They will be utilizing the findings from this Community Needs Assessment in developing priorities for funding services.

This Community Needs Assessment was conducted by Align through two separate contracts with the Wyoming Department of Health's Public Health Division. One contract was for the purpose of funding and oversight of the CSBG program in Weston County. The second contract expanded the Assessment scope to include a health component. Many of the CSBG requirements for a Community Needs Assessment overlap with Community Health Needs Assessment requirements.

Align consulted with the Wyoming Department of Health's Office of Rural Health and Community Service Program in defining the process for this collaborative community needs assessment. This included the formation of a local advisory group for the assessment process,

which included Weston County Health Services CEO as well as representatives from other agencies and organizations.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented many challenges for this Assessment process. Originally, the timeline for the Assessment was from May 2020 through August 2020. Typically, Align would be in the communities conducting interviews and working with local agencies and the hospital in the distribution of surveys. Due to the pandemic, the Assessment process was put on hold. In July, another strategy was identified. This strategy included phone interviews instead of in-person interviews. Also, surveys would be mailed to households instead of distributed through local agencies and the hospital.

The information contained in the Community Needs Assessment analyzes and synthesizes many types of information, including quantitative and qualitative data from multiple sources. Align collected demographic information, as well as data specific to poverty and its prevalence as related to gender, age and race/ethnicity for the service areas. Quantitative data was also collected in the areas of cost of living, income, housing, food insecurity, employment, education and health. All sources of information are noted in this report.

Qualitative data is the process of collecting people's opinions and observations. This information was collected through a combination of key informant interviews and the Community Needs Assessment Survey.

The local advisory group members were interviewed as part of the process. Advisory group members also helped identify additional interviewees. There were 25 individuals, representing 18 different organizations, interviewed in September and early October. The list of interviewees is included in this report.

The Community Needs Assessment Survey was distributed to 3,282 households in Weston County in August 2020. There was a total of 556 survey responses. The complete survey results are in this report.

Following the Introduction and Key Findings, the report is broken into sections by topic area. Each topic area incorporates both quantitative and qualitative data.

Align is extremely grateful to the multitude of people and agencies that contributed to this report. Without the information provided from agencies and the thoughtful input from residents of Weston County, this Assessment would not have been possible. The project lead for this Assessment was Jody Shields, Vice President, Align. Any questions about this report can be directed to her at [jshields@TheAlignTeam.org](mailto:jshields@TheAlignTeam.org) or 307-772-9148.

# Key Findings

As mentioned in the Introduction and Overview section, Align utilized key informant interviews and the Community Needs Assessment Survey to gather input for this report.

When interviewees were asked what their community strengths were, most cited a strong sense of community where people step up to help each other. There were also several people that mentioned the schools as an asset in the county. When asked about the greatest challenges, the most common responses were the remoteness and lack of resources. Several interviewees mentioned the lack of medical services, including specialty care, and the lack of mental health providers.

According to the most recent U.S. Census data available, Weston County's population has dropped by 4% since the 2010 U.S. Census. In Weston County, 17% of the population is over 65 years of age. This compares to 15% for Wyoming as a whole. As stakeholders use the information in this report in developing funding and service priorities, it will be important to compare the demographic data in this report to the 2020 U.S. Census data when it becomes available.

The Median Household Income for Weston County is \$52,867, which is less than Wyoming overall (\$62,268). According to the Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE), the poverty rate is 12%, compared to Wyoming overall, which is 10%. When interviewees were asked why they thought the poverty rate was higher in Weston County, the most common response was lack of education and job opportunities.

Most interviewees rated the local economy as fair. They cited the loss of energy sector jobs and the impacts of COVID-19 closures on small businesses as the main reasons for this rating. In addition, several interviewees mentioned that the the closing of schools and childcare facilities in the spring created difficult challenges for working families.

## **Low-Income Individuals and Families**

To determine the greatest areas of need for low-income individuals and families, Align used quantitative data, survey responses and key informant interviews. Align was able to extract survey data for households that were near or below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines. The following needs were identified as priorities:

- Housing
- Food insecurity; Money for gas
- Job opportunities (livable wage)
- Access to affordable medical and mental health services

When asked if these needs changed with the current pandemic, the majority of interviewees responded that the needs haven't change. The reader of this report will find information on each

of the needs listed above in the sections that follow. Job opportunities is addressed in the Employment section.

## **Health Needs**

The Community Needs Assessment Survey asked what services they would like to see offered in their local healthcare facilities. The top responses were:

1. Urgent care
2. Women's health
3. Tied:
  - a. Same day surgery
  - b. Home health care

When asked what the three most pressing health concerns were in the county, the top responses were:

1. Cost of healthcare
2. Cancer
3. Prescription drug affordability

Cost of healthcare rose to the top in response to several other survey questions. See the Cost of Living and Health Sections, as well as the Community Needs Assessment Survey in this report.

The following health education needs were identified:

1. Healthy lifestyle education
2. Health screenings
3. Mental health education

When survey respondents were asked what needed to be added, changed, or removed to improve their access to and use of medical services in the county, the top three responses were:

- Lower health care costs
- Ensure the timely replacement of retiring physicians and add additional specialty physicians
- Additional services: urgent care, more mental health providers, obstetrics

This Assessment utilized the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps program to look at health outcomes and health factors. Weston County ranked 13 out of 23 counties in Wyoming in health factors. The report highlighted the following areas for improvement: adult smoking, adult obesity, uninsured individuals, number of primary care physicians, mammography screening and flu vaccinations.

A shortage of mental health providers is a challenge across the state. When survey respondents were asked if they have a mental health specialist they can go to, 51% of the respondents replied "no". A lack of mental health providers was an issue brought up by several interviewees. In addition to cost, one of the barriers to accessing mental health services is societal stigma.

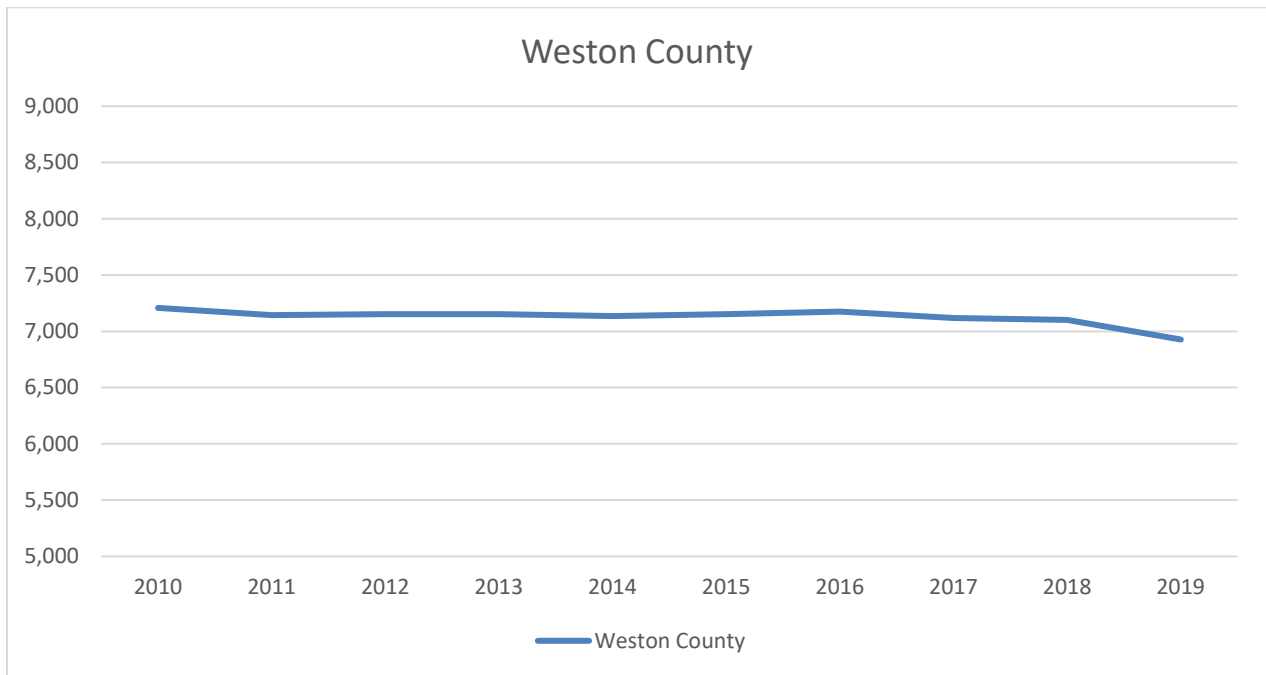
Additional information can be found in the Health Section of this report.

# Demographics

The estimated population of Weston County in 2019 was 6,927. This reflects a 3.90% decrease in population since the 2010 Census.

## Weston County Population by Year

2019 Population Estimate	2015 Population Estimate	2010 Census Population
6,927	7,152	7,208



U.S. Census Bureau – 2010 Census, 2011-2019 Population Estimates

## Population – Incorporated city/towns and outside of city/town limits

	2019 Estimate	2010 Census
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>6,927</b>	<b>7,208</b>
Newcastle	3,397	3,532
Upton	1,056	1,100
All other	2,474	2,576

U.S. Census, Population Division – Annual Estimates of the Resident Population for Incorporated Places in Wyoming; 2010 Census, 2019 Population Estimates

## Population – Gender and Age

The most recent population data break down by gender and age is the U.S. Census 2018 5-Year Estimate. The only increase in population has been in the 65 and over age group.

### 2018 Population Estimate and 2010 Census by Gender and Age

	2018 Estimate	2010 Census	Percent Change
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>7,100</b>	<b>7,208</b>	<b>-1.5%</b>
Gender:			
Male	3,768	3,790	-0.58%
Female	3,332	3,418	-2.52%
Age:			
Under 5	372	410	-9.27%
5 to 19 years	1,238	1,301	-4.84%
20 to 44 years	2,108	2,116	-0.38%
45 to 64 years	2,042	2,232	-8.51%
65 and over	1,340	1,149	16.62%

U.S. Census Bureau – 2010 Census, 2018: ACS 5-Year Estimate

### 2018 Population Estimate Comparison

	Weston County	Wyoming
	Percentage	Percentage
Gender:		
Male	53.07%	51.04%
Female	46.93%	48.96%
Age:		
Under 5	5.24%	6.41%
5 to 19 years	17.44%	19.83%
20 to 44 years	29.69%	32.97%
45 to 64 years	28.76%	25.71%
65 and over	18.87%	15.09%

U.S. Census Bureau – 2010 Census, 2018: ACS 5-Year Estimate

## Race

Race	Percent
White alone	93.2%
Black or African American alone	0.7%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	1.9%
Asian alone	1.7%
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander alone	--
Two or more races	2.5%
Hispanic or Latino	4.1%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	90.0%

U.S. Census – Population Estimates, July 1, 2019



## Cost of Living

The State of Wyoming’s Economic Analysis Division produces the Wyoming Cost of Living Index (WCLI) Report biannually. The Comparative Cost of Living Index compares each county’s cost of living in one period (not over time) to the statewide average (100). Price data are collected in Wyoming cities and towns and the data is used to build a Comparative Cost of Living Index by county. There are 140 consumer items surveyed and then aggregated into six categories. These categories are then weighted to reflect their overall importance in the average consumer’s budget. The categories and respective weights are:

Housing	48.4%
Transportation	16.3%
Food	13.3%
Recreation & Personal Care	9.5%
Medical	8.7%
Apparel	3.8%

For the second quarter of 2020, the Comparative Cost of Living Index ranked Weston County 90 for all items, which is lower than the statewide average of 100. The highest category was Apparel at 106, followed by Medical at 105. The lowest category was housing at 79. As stated, these values reflect relative price levels at the time of data collection, not over time.

### Weston County Cost of Living Index

All Items	Food	Housing	Apparel	Transportation	Medical	Recreation & Personal Care
90	100	79	106	101	105	97

Wyoming Economic Analysis Division - The Wyoming Comparative Cost of Living Index: 2nd Quarter, 2020

## Survey Results

### Medical Costs

The Community Needs Assessment Survey included questions related to healthcare costs.

Survey Question: “In the past three years, was there a time when you or a member of your household thought you needed health services but did NOT receive or were delayed in receiving medical services?”

Out of the 539 respondents to this question, 101 answered “yes”. The follow-up question for those that answered yes, was ‘What was the primary reason(s) you did not receive health care services? Out of the 101 respondents, 55 selected “It costs too much”.

Survey Question: “Are medical, dental or prescription co-pays a large enough problem that you postpone or go without services or prescriptions?”

Of the 538 respondents to this question, 26% replied “yes”.

Survey Question: “In your opinion, what are the three most pressing health concerns in the county?” *A list of choices was provided.*

“Cost of health care” ranked number one and “Prescription drug affordability” ranked number three.

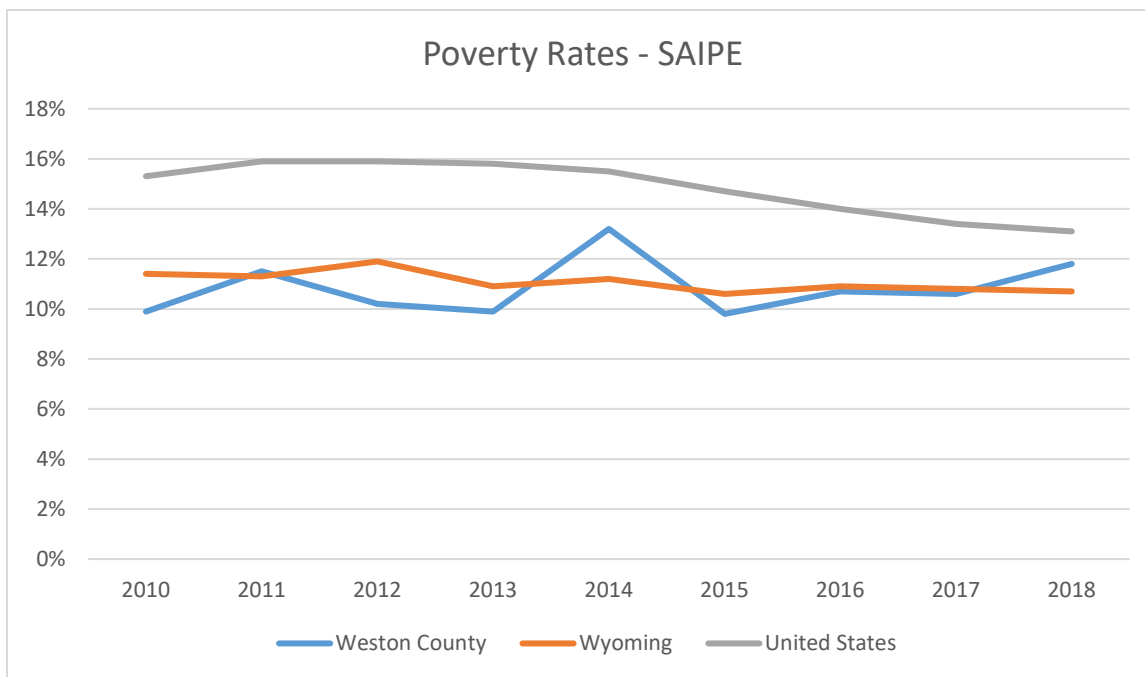
When survey respondents were asked what needed to be added, changed or removed to improve their access to and use of medical services in the county, the most common response was “lower health care costs”.

# Poverty

The U.S. Census Bureau reports poverty data from several different household surveys and programs. This report contains two different estimates: The Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) and the American Community Survey (ACS).

SAIPE are model-based estimates of income and poverty produced annually for school districts, counties, and states. The U.S. Census Bureau states “SAIPE estimates are specifically designed for use in annual Title 1 allocations to school districts. The SAIPE methodology combines the 1-year American Community Survey (ACS) estimates with other data sources to provide more timely, precise, and stable estimates than the 5-year ACS estimates”. SAIPE provides these estimates for the administration of federal programs and the allocation of federal funds to local jurisdictions.

According to SAIPE, Weston County’s poverty rate was 11.8% in 2018. Wyoming was 10.7% in 2018. There have been some fluctuations over the past eight years as indicated in the chart below. The highest percentage was 13.2% in 2014 and the lowest was 9.8% in 2015.



U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE)

While the SAIPE estimates are more precise and stable than the 5-year ACS estimates alone, the ACS provides some additional information. The table below reflects Weston County percentages for the 2018 5-Year Estimate based on the ACS.

Percent below poverty level		
	Weston County	Wyoming
<b>All Population</b>	17.4%	11.1%
<b>Gender:</b>		
Male	17.1%	9.7%
Female	17.7%	12.6%
<b>Age</b>		
Under 18 years	29.4%	12.8%
18 to 34 years	21.7%	16.7%
35 to 64 years	12.5%	8.1%
65 years and over	9.1%	7.9%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
White alone	13.5%	10.5%
Black or African American alone	*	12.4%
American Indian & Alaska Native alone	*	24.3%
Asian alone	*	18.5%
Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander alone	-	4.8%
Some other race alone	-	23.5%
Two or more races	-	13.4%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	*	21.2%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	13.5%	9.6%

US Census - 2018: ACS 5-Year Estimates

\*not including in this report due to high margin of error

The US Department of Health and Human Services has two slightly different versions of the federal poverty measure: poverty thresholds and poverty guidelines.

The **poverty thresholds** are the original version of the federal poverty measure. They are updated each year by the Census Bureau. The thresholds are used mainly for statistical purposes. All official poverty population figures are calculated using the poverty thresholds, not the guidelines.

The **poverty guidelines** are the other version of the federal poverty measure. They are issued each year in the Federal Register by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The guidelines are a simplification of the poverty thresholds for use for administrative purposes such as determining financial eligibility for certain federal programs. See the next page for the current Poverty Guidelines.

## 2020 Poverty Guidelines for the 48 Contiguous States and the District of Columbia

Persons in family/household	Poverty guideline
1	\$12,760
2	\$17,240
3	\$21,720
4	\$26,200
5	\$30,680
6	\$35,160
7	\$39,640
8	\$44,120
For families/households with more than 8 persons, add \$4,480 for each additional person.	

US Department of Health and Human Services

## Survey Results and Interviews

Align extracted survey results for households near or below 200% of the poverty guideline. There were 121 households that were in this group. Survey responses specific to this group are noted in selected sections in this report.

When interviewees were asked about the key drivers for poverty in Weston County, the most common response was lack of jobs and lack of education.

## CSBG Program

From October 1, 2018 to September 30, 2019, 24 Weston County households were assisted as part of the Community Service Block Grant Program. The average amount of the aid was \$848.36. A total of \$20,361 was distributed. Of that total, 66% went towards rent assistance, 17% towards utilities assistance, 14% towards mortgage assistance, and 3% for medical expenses.

From October 1, 2019 to September 30, 2020, sixteen Weston households were assisted as part of the CSBG Program. The average amount of aid was \$1,186.22. A total of \$18,979.58 was distributed. Of that total, 53% went towards rent, 33% went towards utilities, 9% went towards medical assistance and 5% went towards mortgage expenses.

## Additional Wyoming Data

Wyoming 2-1-1 is a statewide helpline and website that provides free, confidential health and human services information and referral. By dialing 2-1-1 or visiting the website from anywhere in the state of Wyoming, people are linked to information about local nonprofit and government resources.

In a 12-month period from October 2019 to September 2020, Wyoming 2-1-1 received 32 calls from Weston County. The number one need was for utility service payment assistance, followed by rent payment assistance.

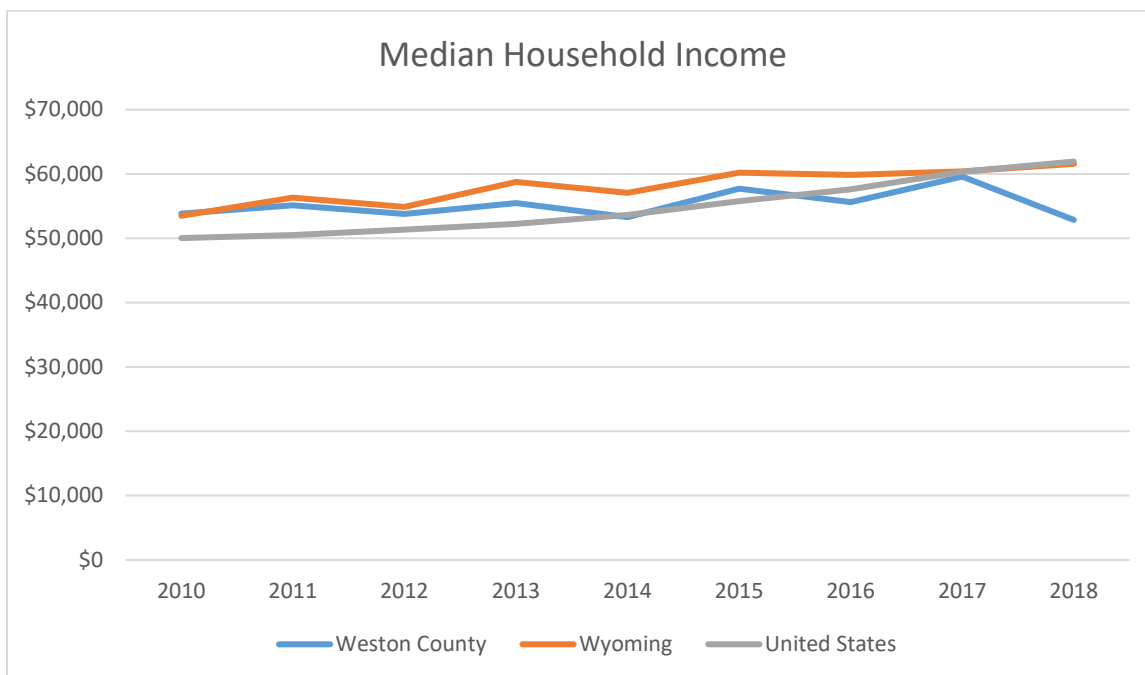
# Income

In 2018, the median household income in Weston County was lower than Wyoming and the United States.

Area	Median Household Income
Weston County	\$52,867
Wyoming	\$62,268
United States	\$61,937

U.S. Census Bureau – 2018: ACS 5-Year Estimates

In 2010, the median household income in Weston County was \$53,853 which was very close to the state average (\$53,512). Weston County’s median income has fluctuated as illustrated below, with a dramatic drop in 2018 to \$52,867.



U.S. Census Bureau: ACS 5-Year Estimates from 2010 to 2018

# Education

## Graduation Rates

A cohort year is a group of students expected to graduate on-time (4 years) at the end of the same school year.

### Weston County School District #1

There were 58 students in the 2018-2019 cohort for Weston County School District #1. Of the 58 students, 50 graduated for a 86.2% graduation rate.

2018-2019 Cohort	Weston County School District #1	Wyoming
All Students	86.2%	82.1%
Male	85.3%	79.3%
Female	87.5%	85.1%
Lunch Eligible*	83.3%	71.9%

*\*Students who qualified for free or reduced lunch*

Wyoming Department of Education

### Weston County School District #7

There were 25 students in the 2018-2019 cohort for Weston County School District #7. Of the 25 students, 19 graduated for a 76% graduation rate.

2018-2019 Cohort	Weston County School District #7	Wyoming
All Students	76.0%	82.1%
Male	81.8%	79.3%
Female	71.4%	85.1%
Lunch Eligible*	62.5%	71.9%

*\*Students who qualified for free or reduced lunch*

Wyoming Department of Education



## Education Attainment

Education attainment refers to the highest level of education that an individual has completed. This is different from the level of school the individual is attending. The tables below and on the next page provide the educational attainment levels and percentages for Weston County 18 to 24-year-old individuals and for those over 25 years old.

### Educational Attainment – 18 to 24 years

	Total	Percent
<b>Population 18 to 24 years</b>	581	
Less than high school graduate	40	6.9%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	206	35.5%
Some college or associate degree	255	43.9%
Bachelor's degree or higher	80	13.8%

U.S. Census Bureau – 2018: ACS 5-Year Estimates

### Educational Attainment - 25 years and over

	Total	Percent
<b>Population 25 years and over</b>	5,014	
Less than high school graduate	389	7.8%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	1,796	35.8%
Some college, no degree	1,334	26.6%
Associate degree	534	10.7%
Bachelor's degree or higher	961	19.2%

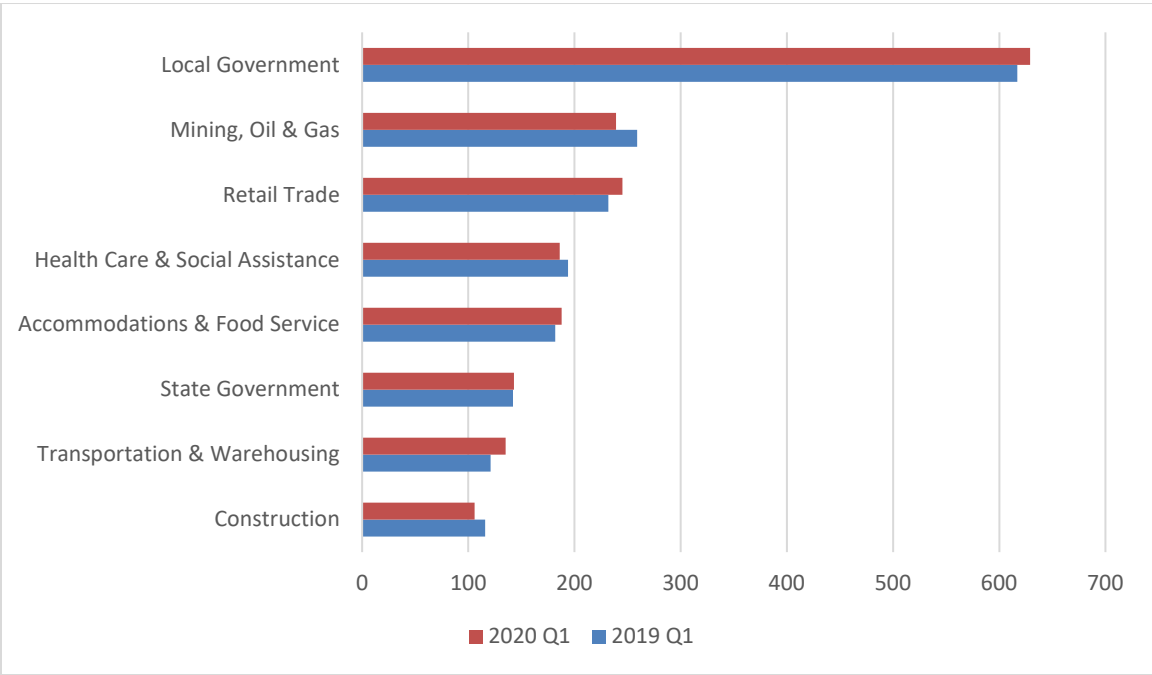
U.S. Census Bureau – 2018: ACS 5-Year Estimates

# Employment

According to the Wyoming Department of Workforce Services, Research and Planning Division, Wyoming experienced weakened job growth in the first quarter of 2020 mostly due to large job losses in the mining sector. This included oil and gas. Weston County has experienced fluctuations in employment numbers as illustrated below.

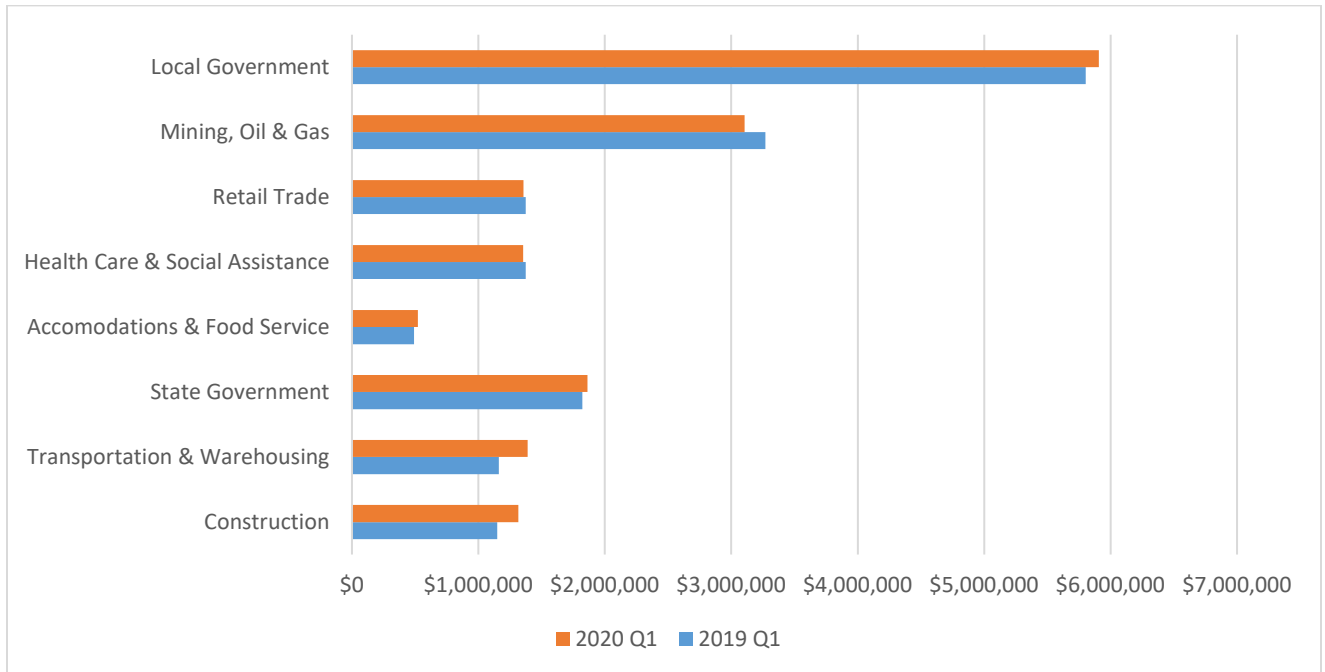
Quarter	Average Monthly Employment Total
Quarter 1, 2020	2,317
Quarter 4, 2019	2,372
Quarter 3, 2019	2,309
Quarter 2, 2019	2,375
Quarter 1, 2019	2,316

The graph below compares 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 2020 with 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 2019 for the top 8 industries in terms of employment numbers in Weston County. The graph on the next page compares total wages by these same industries.



Wyoming Department of Workforce Services, Research & Planning – Wyoming Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 2020 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter

Total Wages (2020 Quarter 1 and 2019 Quarter 1) – Same Industries as Previous Graph



Wyoming Department of Workforce Services, Research & Planning – Wyoming Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 2020 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter

According to the Wyoming at Work website, the three largest employers in Weston County are:

- Weston County Health Services
- Weston County School District #1
- Dan Hart Patrol Services

## Unemployment

With the coronavirus-related business impacts and the energy sector decline, Wyoming’s economy has experienced layoffs and other negative impacts. The first two columns compare unemployment rates for October 2020 and October 2019. The remaining six columns show unemployment rates since April. Weston County had the 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest unemployment rate in the state for October 2020.

	Oct 2020	Oct 2019	Sept 2020	August 2020	July 2020	June 2020	May 2020	April 2020
Weston County	3.3% <sub>p</sub>	2.5% <sub>b</sub>	3.6% <sub>r</sub>	3.8% <sub>r</sub>	4.6% <sub>r</sub>	5.0% <sub>r</sub>	5.0% <sub>r</sub>	5.7% <sub>r</sub>
Statewide	5.0% <sub>p</sub>	3.4% <sub>b</sub>	5.6% <sub>r</sub>	6.1% <sub>r</sub>	6.8% <sub>r</sub>	7.6% <sub>r</sub>	8.7% <sub>r</sub>	9.6% <sub>r</sub>
Statewide seasonal adjusted	5.5% <sub>p</sub>	3.7% <sub>b</sub>	6.1% <sub>r</sub>	6.6% <sub>r</sub>	7.1% <sub>r</sub>	7.6% <sub>r</sub>	8.8% <sub>r</sub>	9.6% <sub>r</sub>

Wyoming Department of Workforce Services – Wyoming Labor Force Trends, September 2020, August 2020, July 2020; Aug/Sept/Oct 2020 Monthly News Releases (p = preliminary, r = revised, b = benchmarked)

## Survey Results and Interviews

Of the 394 respondents to the survey question that rated difficulty level for “Being employed with a livable wage”, 16.5% identified this as “difficult for me most of the time” or “sometimes difficult for me”. When looking at low-income households that responded to this question (78), this percentage goes up to 32%.

Of the 549 respondents that answered the question regarding employment status, 6.92% were unemployed/not searching for a job and 2.55% were unemployed/job searching. Nine households reported that unemployment was due to the coronavirus and the related economic downturn.

Based on the respondents, top barriers to employment were:

- Physical disability
- No jobs for my skills
- Mental disability

When interviewees were asked about the local economy, the overwhelming response was “fair”. The energy sector decline was the primary reason for the rating of the economy in addition to the impact of COVID-19 on small businesses.

## Childcare

There are three different licensing categories in Wyoming:

- Child Care Center – Care provided for 16 or more children
- Family Child Care Center – Care provided in a residential or commercial structure for no more than 15 children
- Family Child Care Home – Care provided in the provider’s own home for up to 10 children

**In Weston County, there are 8 licensed providers.**

- Child Care Center (CCC) – 3
- Family Child Care Center (FCCC) – 1
- Family Child Care Home (FCCH) – 4

Statewide Training and Resources Center (STARS)

## Survey Results and Interviews

Availability of childcare was not a high need based on the surveys and interviews. Only a couple of interviewees mentioned childcare as a need for low-income families. However, several interviewees noted that when the schools transitioned to remote learning and childcare providers closed this past spring, it presented a significant hardship for families.

# Housing

## Rentals

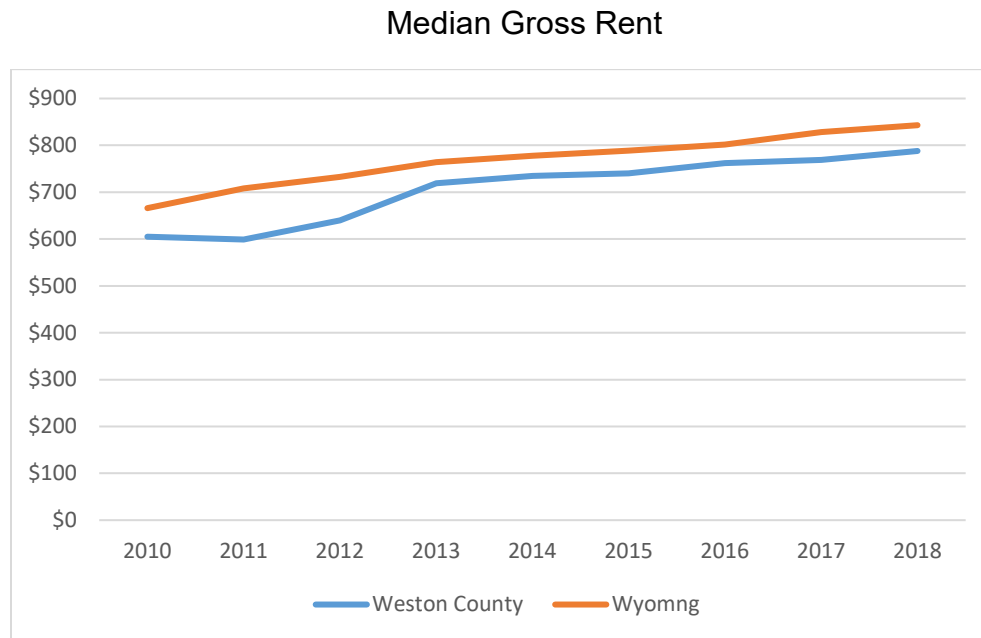
The Wyoming Cost of Living Index (WCLI) produced by the Wyoming Economic Analysis Division reports average rental rates. The average rental rates reported in the WCLI are broken down by specific types of housing. Apartment averages are for two-bedroom, unfurnished units without gas and electric. Mobile Home Lots are single-wide, including water. Houses are two or three-bedroom, single family, and exclude gas and electric. Mobile homes are two or three-bedroom and lot rent is included. Average rental rates are collected by pulling information from newspapers, online sources and real estate companies that handle rentals. Income-restricted rentals are not included in the data, nor are any housing units located outside the city limits or in rural parts of the county.

	2020 Quarter 2	2019 Quarter 2	Percent Change
Apartment - Weston County	\$578	\$570	1.3%
Apartment - Statewide Average	\$781	\$757	3.1%
Mobile Home Lot - Weston County	\$175	\$166	5.1%
Mobile Home Lot - Statewide Average	\$386	\$360	7.3%
House - Weston County	\$638	\$679	-6.1%
House - Statewide Average	\$1,133	\$1,007	2.3%
Mobile Home - Weston County:	\$528	\$530	-0.3%
Mobile Home - Statewide Average:	\$768	\$734	4.7%

Wyoming Cost of Living Index - Second Quarter of 2020  
Wyoming Economic Analysis Division

## Median Gross Rent

The American Community Survey data, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, varies from the above data for various reasons. This discrepancy can be attributed to the fact that the median gross rent listed in the ACS includes estimated cost of utilities. In addition, the data includes all rentals regardless of type, i.e. apartment, house, mobile home, etc. and of all sizes, 1 bedroom, 2 bedrooms, etc. In addition, data from the ACS is collected through household surveys sent to a sample of housing units with margins of error calculated with the data.



U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2018,2017, 2016, 2015, 2014, 2013, 2012, 2011, 2010

Median gross rent has steadily increased since the 2010 Census. According to this data, Weston County remains well below Wyoming as a whole.

## Housing Cost Burdened

Households that spend more than 30% of their income on housing are termed “housing cost burdened”. If you are renting, this percentage includes utilities. According to the US Census, American Community Survey 2018 5-Year Estimate, 27.9% of renters in Weston County are housing cost burdened.

## Weston County Affordable Housing Options

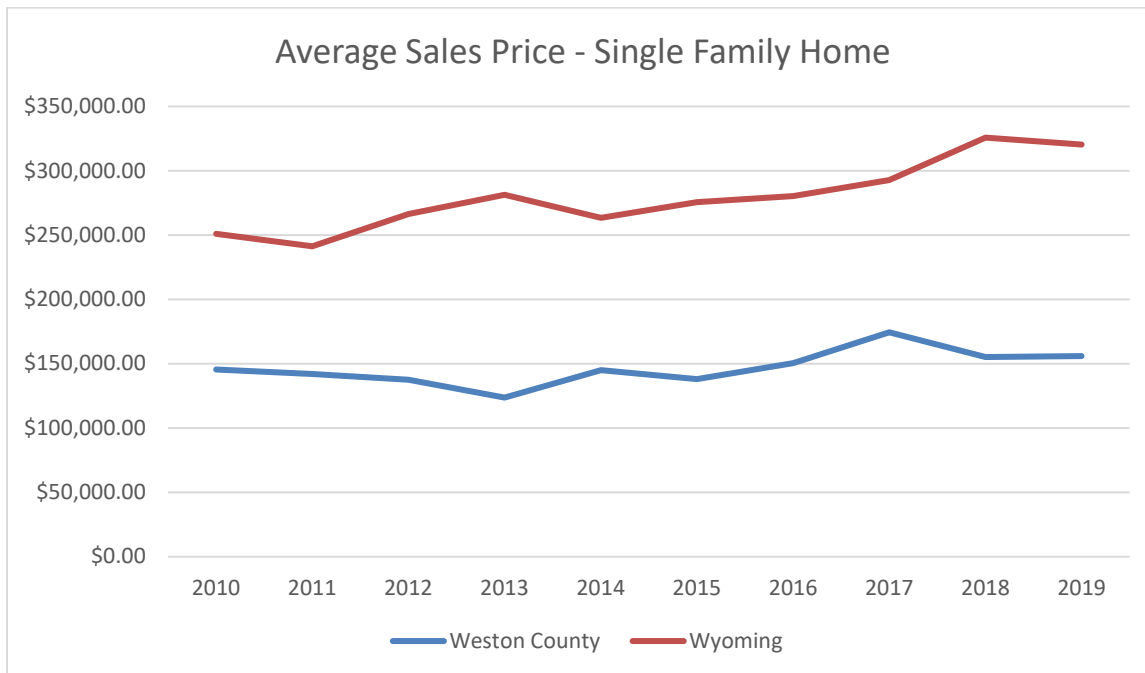
According to Cheyenne Housing Authority, the state contract administrator for the federal HUD Section 8 program, Newcastle Apartments is the only Project-Based Section 8 Housing available for Weston County. They offer 24 units of Multi-Family, Section 8 HUD Project-Based Housing. They are a privately-owned property who have contracted with the federal government to offer the Project-Based Section 8 Housing Program to applicants who income-qualify. Once an applicant income-qualifies for the unit, they are required to pay 30% of their adjusted income to the owner/management company. Section 8 subsidizes the remainder of rent due.

In addition to Newcastle Apartments, the Wyoming Community Development Authority also lists Antelope Heights Senior Apartments in their rental directory for affordable housing.

## **Home Ownership**

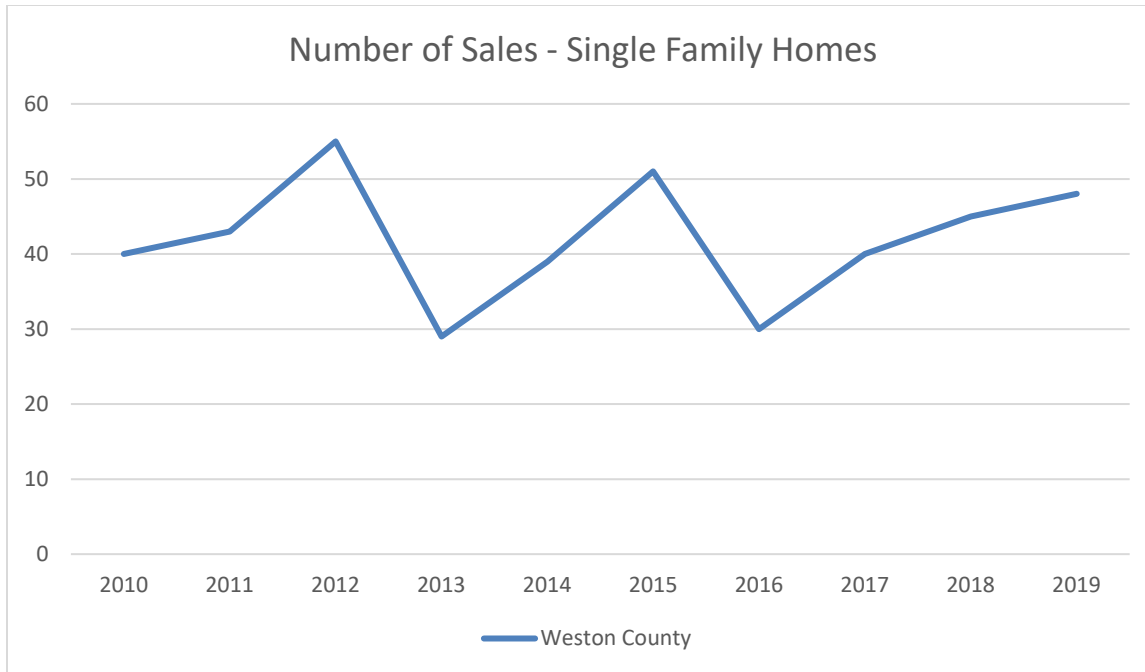
### **Home Ownership – Average Sales Prices and Number of Sales**

According to the Wyoming Department of Revenue, the average sales price of existing, detached, single-family homes in Weston County was \$156,081 in 2019.



Wyoming Department of Revenue, Wyoming Community Development Authority, County Profile (September 4, 2020)





Wyoming Department of Revenue, Wyoming Community Development Authority, County Profile (September 4, 2020)

According to the 2018 US Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate, the median home value in Weston County is \$169,900. This compares to the Wyoming median home value of \$213,300.

Of the 2,379 owner-occupied housing units, 1,128 of these have a mortgage. The monthly owner costs median is \$1,340. The US Census includes the sum of payment for mortgages, real estate taxes, various insurances, utilities, fuels, mobile home costs and condominium fees in the monthly owner cost calculation.

As stated earlier, households that spend more than 30% of their income on housing are termed “housing cost burdened”. In Weston County, 21.8% of homeowners are housing cost burdened.

## Survey Results and Interviews

Of the survey respondents, 11.3% of the households are currently living in a rental unit. The average rental payment was \$566.70. Both apartments and houses are included in this average. Of the survey respondents, 88.1% of the households are currently living in a home they own. For those with a mortgage (and provided a response to the payment question), the average mortgage payment was \$1,035.15.

On the question of housing problems, 12% of households reported one or more of the housing problems below. These are ranked from highest response to lowest.

1. I cannot afford to make needed repairs on my home – 78%
2. I cannot find affordable housing to buy – 13%
3. Bad credit makes it hard to find a place to rent – 13%
4. I cannot find affordable housing to rent - 6%
5. I am at risk of eviction from a home that I rent – 2%

Looking at low-income household responses to the same question above, 24% of households reported one or more of the housing problems. The top four responses are below.

1. I cannot afford to make needed repairs on my home - 69%
2. I cannot find affordable housing to buy – 21%
3. Bad credit makes it hard to find a place to rent - 17%
4. I cannot find affordable housing to rent – 10%

Being able to pay my rent or mortgage was identified as “difficult for me most of the time” or “sometimes difficult for me” by 15.78% of the 393 respondents to the question. When looking at low-income households that responded to this question (78), this percentage goes up to 40%.

As stated in the Key Findings, interviewees identified housing as one of the top needs of low-income individuals and families

# Food Insecurity

Feeding America, the nation’s largest domestic hunger-relief organization, defines food insecurity as follows:

Food insecurity refers to the USDA’s measure of lack of access to enough food for an active healthy life for all household members and limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods. Food-insecure households are not necessarily food insecure all the time. Food insecurity may reflect a household’s need to make trade-offs between important basic needs, such as housing or medical bills, and purchasing nutritionally adequate foods.

According to Feeding America, the Weston County food insecurity rate in 2018 was 14% or an estimated 990 people. The child food insecurity rate was 22.3% or 340 children. Wyoming’s overall food insecurity rate was 12.2%. The child food insecurity rate was 15.9%.

Of the estimated 990 food insecure individuals:

- 50% are below 130% poverty and qualify for SNAP, free lunch meals, WIC
- 8% are between 130% and 185% poverty and qualify for WIC and reduced-price school meals.
- The remaining 42% don’t qualify for federal programs.

Gundersen, C., A. Dewey, E. Engelhard, M. Strayer & L. Lapinski. *Map the Meal Gap 2020: A Report on County and Congressional District Food Insecurity and County Food Cost in the United States in 2018*. Feeding America, 2020.

Food costs in Weston County match the statewide average. Based on the Wyoming Comparative Cost of Living Index for 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2020, Weston County’s index for food was 100. The Statewide average is 100.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides monthly benefits that help low-income households buy the food they need for good health. According to the Wyoming Department of Family Services, for most households SNAP funds account for only a portion of their food budget. They must also use their own funds to ensure they have enough food for the month. According to the U.S. Census, 2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates, 4.7% of households in Weston County participate in SNAP.

According to the Wyoming Hunger Initiative website, food pantries are operated by Bread, Inc., Upton Community Food Bank and Weston County Senior Services.

## Survey Results and Interviews

Of the 418 respondents to the question that rated difficulty level of “Having enough food in the home”, 11.96 % identified this as “difficult for me most of the time” or “sometimes difficult for me”. When looking at low-income households that responded to this question (86), this percentage goes up to 31.4% of the respondents. Interviewees identified food as a top need of low-income individuals and families in Weston County.

# Health

The Wyoming Facility Directory produced by the Wyoming Department of Health, lists the following health facilities in Weston County:

- Weston County Health Services – Critical Access Hospital, Home Health Agency, Nursing Home
- Monument Health Newcastle Clinic – Rural Health Clinic
- Regional Medical Health Clinic (Upton) – Rural Health Clinic
- Mondell Heights Retirement Community – Assisted Living Facility

Northern Wyoming Mental Health offers mental health services (outpatient) in Weston County.

Weston County Public Health offers a variety of services including adult and child immunizations, chronic disease prevention education, maternal child health programs and other services.

## **Health Rankings**

For this Community Needs Assessment Report, the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps (CHR&R) program is being used as the primary source of information. CHR&R is a collaboration between the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. As stated on their website, “CHR&R program provides data, evidence, guidance, and examples to build awareness of the multiple factors that influence health and support community leaders working to improve health and increase health equity”. The county rankings provide a measurement of the overall health of each county in the United States. They also evaluate different measures that impact future health of communities. For example, high school graduation rates, access to healthy foods, rates of smoking, children in poverty, and teen births.

## **2020 CHR&R Rankings**

### **Health Outcomes**

The overall rankings in health outcomes represent how healthy counties are within the state. Health outcomes are measured by length and quality of life. The healthiest county in the state is ranked #1. Weston County ranked #4 in overall health outcomes.

Length of life is measured by premature death which is years of life lost before age 75. In looking at Length of Life, Weston County ranks 2 out of the 23 counties. Years of Potential Life Lost is used to measure the rate and distribution of premature mortality.

The other component of Health Outcomes is Quality of Life. This is measured by the percentage of adults reporting poor or fair health, poor physical health days and poor mental health days. In addition, low birthweight is factored in. This data is provided by National Vital Statistics System. Births are counted in the county corresponding to the mother’s address on the child’s birth certificate, not the county in which the child was born. In looking at Quality of Life, Weston County ranks 8 out of the 23 counties.

### Health Factors

Health Factors are the things that people can change to improve health for all. The ranks are based on four types of measures health behaviors, clinical care, social and economic factors and physical environment. Overall, Weston County ranked #13. The four components and their rankings for Weston County are outlined below.

Health Behaviors – Weston County ranked 16 out of the 23 counties. The report highlights the following as areas to explore for improvement:

- Adult Smoking
- Adult Obesity

Clinical Care – Weston County ranked 11 out of the 23 counties. The report highlights the following as areas to explore for improvement:

- Uninsured
- Primary care physicians
- Mammography screening
- Flu vaccinations

Social & Economic Factors – Weston County ranked 11 out the 23 counties. There were no areas highlighted for improvement.

Physical Environment – Weston County ranked 8 out of the 23 counties. There were no areas highlighted for improvement.

### Health Insurance

According to the US Census Small Area Health Insurance Estimates (SAHIE) for 2018, 12.7% of the population under 65 years old are uninsured.

## Survey Results and Interviews

When asked about local health services, facilities and the perception in the community, the majority of interviewees said that local health services are viewed favorably. Several mentioned that there is a lack of services, including specialty care. A few mentioned that there is room for improvement in emergency services.

When asked about the barriers or limitations to access health and mental health services, many people mentioned the stigma associated with accessing mental health services, lack of mental health providers and cost. In terms of medical services, the lack of specialty services was mentioned most often.

In reviewing the survey findings, it is important to note that 51% of respondents included at least one person over 65 years old in the household. When looking at total people included in survey numbers, 34% were over the age of 65.

Of those 41 households that indicated someone in the house had no health coverage, 76% of them selected “cannot afford to pay for health insurance” as the reason.

There were 550 responses to the question on rating personal health. 59% selected Very Healthy or Healthy, 31% selected Somewhat Healthy, and 10% selected Unhealthy or Very Unhealthy.

When asked about providers, 96% respondents reported that they have a doctor to go to. 92% of respondents stated they had a dentist to go to. On the question as to whether they had a mental health specialist they can go to, 49% responded yes. Note, 105 respondents skipped the question on mental health providers.

When asked which facilities they use in Weston County, 14% of the households reported that they don’t use the hospital or local clinic. When asked why, the most common response was that they go elsewhere for services due to specialty care. A few responses cited cost and a bad experience.

When asked what services they would like to see offered at their local health care facilities, the top responses were:

- Urgent Care
- Women’s Health
- Tied: Home Health and Same Day Surgery
- Mammography

When asked if there was a time within the last three years they, or a member of their household, needed health care services but didn’t receive it or were delayed in receiving it, 19% responded “yes”. The primary reason was “it costs too much” followed by “too long to wait for an appointment”.

The foremost pressing health concerns in the county were:

- Cost of health care
- Cancer
- Prescription drug affordability

When asked what resources they rely upon to keep themselves and their family healthy, the top three were:

- Clinic
- Hospital
- Outdoor recreation

When asked what the greatest health education need in the county is, the top four were:

- Healthy lifestyles education
- Healthy screenings
- Mental health education
- Substance abuse education

When asked what needs to be added, changed, or removed to improve your access to and use of medical services in our county, the most common responses were:

- Lower health care costs
- Physicians (replace retiring doctors) and more specialists
- Additional services – Urgent care, additional mental health providers, obstetrics

More information on health survey responses can be found in the Community Needs Assessment Survey section.

# Community Needs Assessment Survey

The Community Needs Assessment survey was mailed to 3,282 households in Weston County. Respondents were given four choices for completing the survey:

- Complete the paper survey and mail back in the enclosed postage-paid envelope; or
- Take the survey online by going to the hospital or public health websites for the survey link; or
- Scan the QR code with their phone; or
- Call Align if they had a language barrier or needed other assistance with completing the survey.

As an incentive for completing the survey, respondents could provide their first name and phone number to be entered in a drawing for a \$200 gift card. These names and phone numbers were kept confidential and this information is not contained in any part of this report or in the survey results.

556 surveys were completed for a rate of 17%. Of the 556 surveys, 531 were returned in the mail and the remaining 25 were completed online.

## Survey Results

### Where do you live?

Response	Percentage
Newcastle	72.46%
Upton	19.93%
Osage	4.71%
Four Corners	1.27%
Other:	1.63%

*Answered: 552; Skipped:4*

### Which best describes your household? (Check only one)

Answer Choices	Response %
Two adults NO children at home	45.31%
Single person	24.73%
Two-parent household	18.77%
Single parent male	3.43%
Single parent female	3.07%
Multi-family household	1.08%
Grandparent(s) and grandchildren	1.08%
Other	2.53%

*Answered: 554; Skipped:2*



**Including yourself, how many people live in your household?**

Response	# of responses	Response %
One	174	31.29%
Two	276	49.64%
Three	31	5.58%
Four	45	8.09%
Five	22	3.96%
Six	6	1.08%
Seven	2	0.36%

*Answered: 556*

**Including yourself, how many people in your household are:**

Answer Choices	Number of household responses	Total number of people in this age category
0 to 5 years old	42	58
6 to 17 years old	81	146
18 to 49 years old	137	247
50 to 64 years old	190	291
65+ years old	278	394

*Answered: 545; Skipped: 11*

**What best describes the place where you are living currently? (Check only one)**

Answer Choices	Response %
Live in home that I/we own	86.10%
Rental unit	11.73%
Share home with family/friends/roommate	0.72%
Other	1.44%

*Answered: 554; Skipped: 2*

**What is your monthly payment for housing?**

Type of Housing	Number of Responses with payment	Average Payment
Rental	64	\$566.70 Average Rental Payment
Own	172	\$1,035.15 Average Mortgage

Number of responses with no payment or no response:

Type of Housing	Number of Responses	Response
Rental	2	No response
Own	239	\$0 (paid off)
Own	66	No response/other

**Do you receive help with your rent or house payment from a government program or agency?**

Answer Choices	Response %
Yes	0.74%
No	99.26%

*Answered: 542; Skipped: 14*

**Do any of these housing problems apply to you? (Check all that apply)**

Answer Choices	Response %
I am at risk of eviction from home that I rent	0.19%
I am at risk of foreclosure on home that I own	0.38%
I cannot find affordable housing to rent	0.75%
I cannot find affordable housing to buy	1.51%
I cannot afford to make needed repairs on my home	9.06%
Bad credit makes it hard to find a place to rent	1.51%
Criminal background makes it hard to rent a home	0.00%
None of these apply	88.30%

*Answered: 530; Skipped: 26*

**What is the employment status for each adult in your household? (Check all that apply)**

Answer Choices	Response %	Response #
Full-Time	44.44%	244
Part-Time	8.38%	46
Self-Employed	12.20%	67
Retired	49.54%	272
Unemployed/Job Searching	2.55%	14
Unemployed/Not Searching	6.92%	38

*Answered: 549; Skipped: 7*

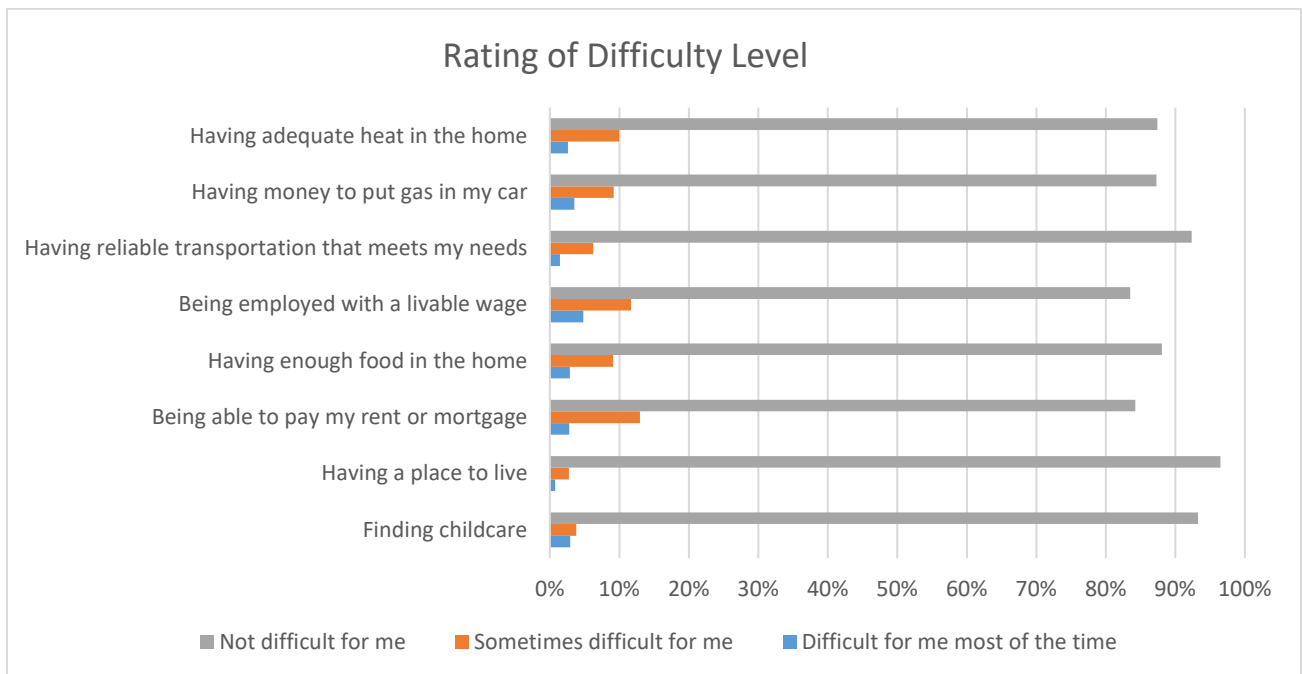
**If unemployed, is the reason you are unemployed due to COVID-19 and the related economic downturn?**

Nine households responded “yes”

**If unemployed, what are your barriers to employment? (Check all that apply)**  
*Only showing results for selected employment status as unemployed.*

Answer Choices	Response #
No jobs for my skills	5
No transportation	1
Pay too low to support family	1
No childcare during work	1
Lack of training or experience	1
Physical or mental disability	15

**Please rate the following by putting an “x” in the appropriate column: Not difficult for me; Sometimes difficult for me; or difficult for me most of the time.**



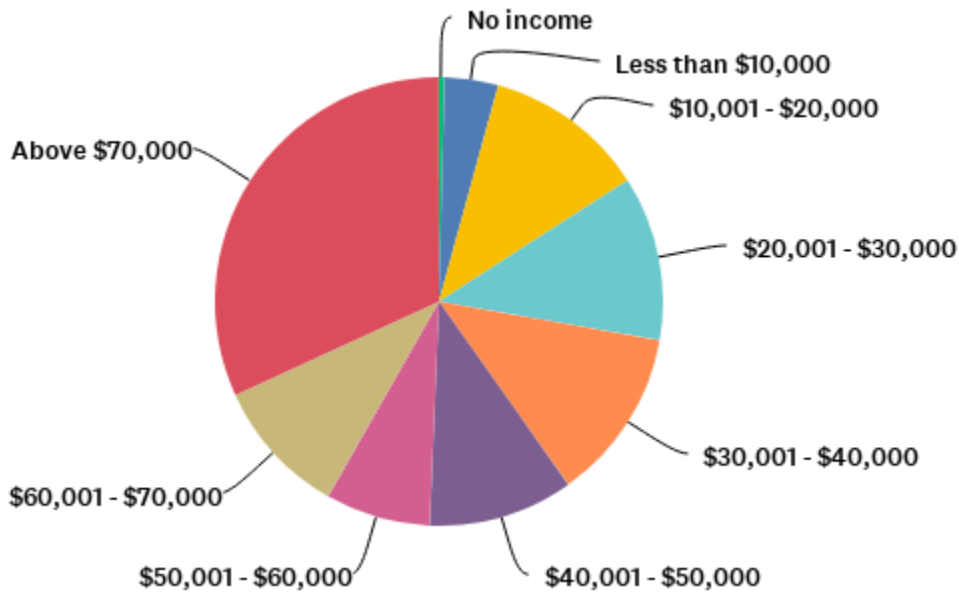
*Answered: 445; Skipped: 111*

Utilizing a weighted average to the question, the highest degree of difficulty was:

1. Being employed with a livable wage 2.79
2. Being able to pay my rent or mortgage 2.81
3. Having money to put gas in my car 2.84
4. Both responses rated 2.85
  - a. Having adequate heat in the home
  - b. Having enough food in the home
5. Finding childcare 2.90
6. Having reliable transportation that meets my needs 2.91
7. Having a place to live 2.96

*See Poverty Section in Report for further analysis on this question.*

**What is your annual household income from all sources? (Including, but not limited to employment, self-employment, Social Security, retirement, disability, worker’s compensation, unemployment, VA benefits, alimony).**



Answered: 515; Skipped:41

**For each adult in the household, what is the highest level of education completed?**

Answer Choice	Responses
Less than high school diploma	7.64%
High school graduate	40.36%
GED or high school equivalency	12.18%
Vocational or trade school	11.09%
Some college (or still in college)	22.18%
Two-year college degree	14.91%
Four-year college degree	22.18%
Graduate college degree	12.73%
Other:	4.00%

Answered: 550; Skipped: 6

Indicate your health coverage for each individual in your household.

Coverage Choices:	Percentage (based on total people)
Medicare	27.84%
Medicaid	6.18%
Employer’s health insurance	36.86%
Retirement insurance plan	6.82%
Veteran’s Administration; Military	5.61%
Privately insured	11.08%
Kid Care CHIP	0.64%
No health coverage	4.97%
Other	2.49%

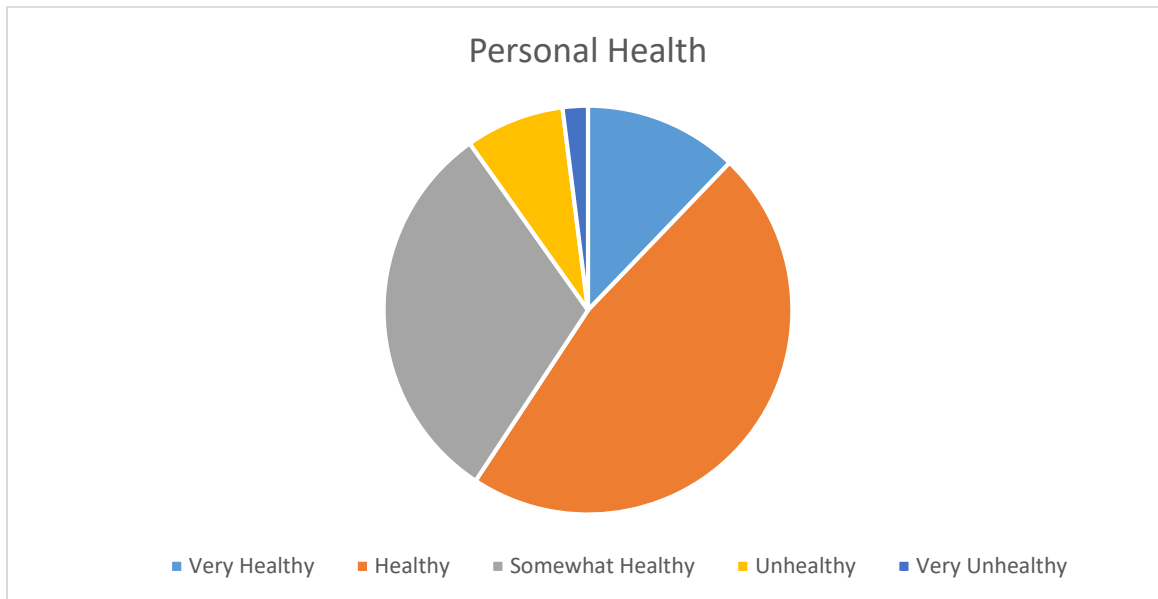
Answered: 552; Skipped: 4

If you do NOT have insurance, please check why:

Answer Choices:	Reponses
Cannot afford to pay for health insurance	75.61%
Employer doesn’t offer insurance	12.20%
Don’t know how to apply or too difficult to apply	2.44%
Choose not to have health insurance	7.31%
Skipped	2.44%

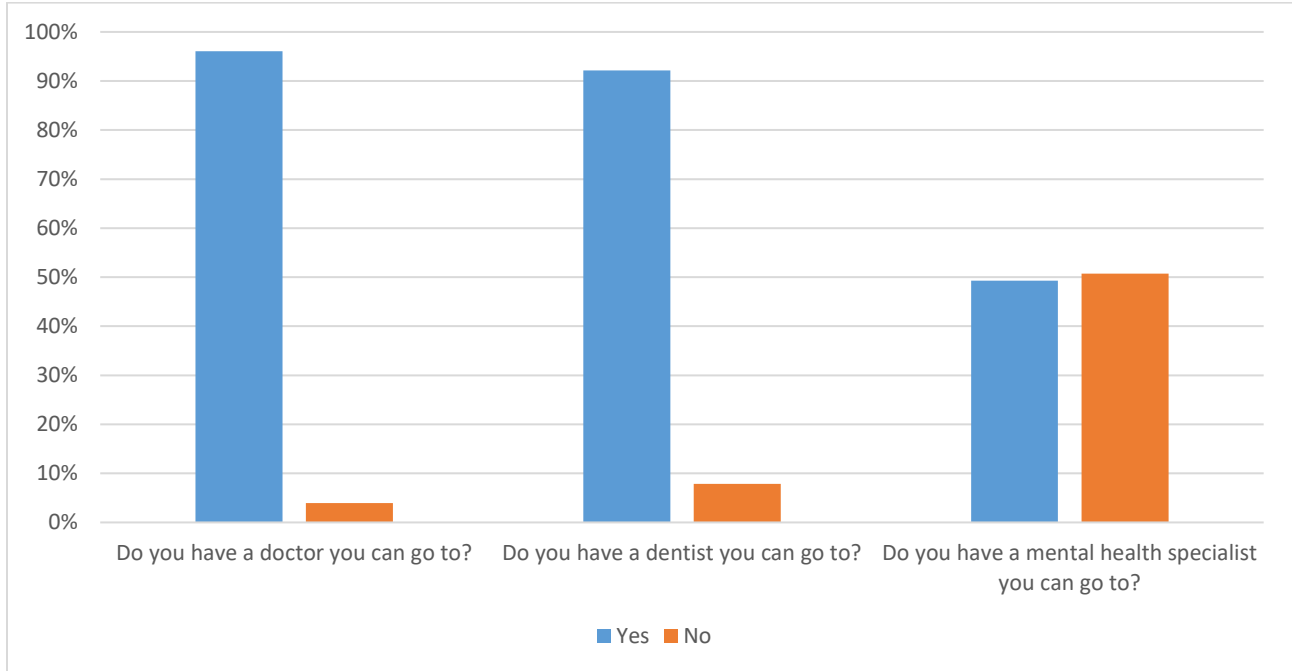
Only showing results for those respondents that selected “no health coverage” on previous question.

Overall, how would you rate your personal health?



Answered: 550; Skipped:6

**If you or a household member have a health care need:**



Answered: 537; Skipped:19

**Which medical facilities do you use in Weston County?**

Answer Choices	Responses
Clinic	25.47%
Hospital	1.20%
Both Hospital and Clinic	59.18%
Neither	13.86%

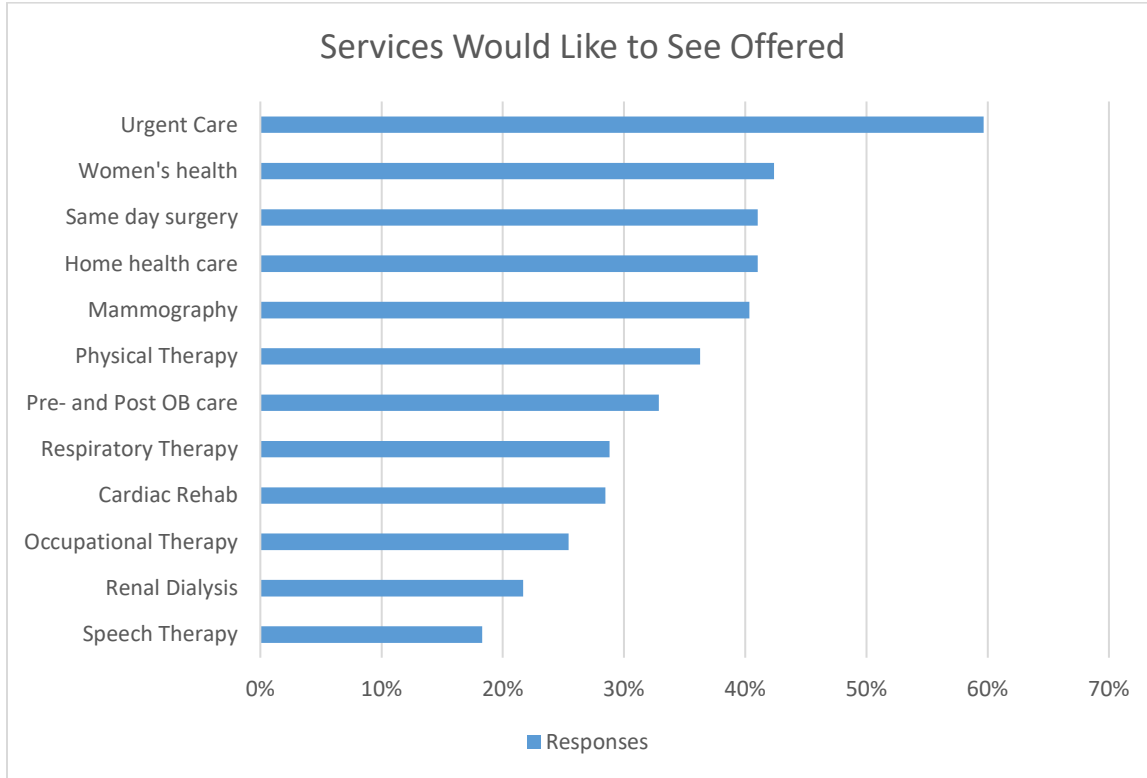
Answered: 534; Skipped:22

**If you do not use medical facilities in Weston County, why not?**

This was an open-ended question with 126 households responded. Most common responses were:

1. Go elsewhere for services due to specialists and/or preference (74)
2. Cost (17)
3. Bad experience (11)

**What services would you like to see offered in your local health care facilities?**



Answered:295; Skipped:261

**In the past three year, was there a time when you or a member of your household thought you needed health care services but did NOT receive or were delayed in receiving medical services?**

Answer Choices	Responses	Number
Yes	18.74%	101
No	81.26%	438

Answered: 539; Skipped:17

**If yes, what was the primary reason(s) why you did not receive health care services?  
(Check all that apply)**

Answer Choices	Reponses
It costs too much	56.03%
Too long to wait for an appointment	26.72%
Not covered by insurance	23.28%
Office wasn't open when I could go	18.10%
Could not get an appointment	18.10%
Don't like doctors	13.79%
Could not get off work	8.62%
Transportation problems	6.03%
Had no one to care for my children	3.45%
Too nervous or afraid	0.86%
Language barrier	0.00%
Other	21.55%

*Answered: 116; Skipped:440*

**Are medical, dental or prescription co-pays a large enough problem that you postpone or go without services or prescriptions?**

Answer Choices	Responses	Number
Yes	25.84%	139
No	74.16%	399

*Answered: 538; Skipped:18*

**In the past three years, have you or a household member received care in a hospital?**

Answer Choices	Responses	Number
Yes	56.59%	305
No	43.41%	234

*Answered: 539; Skipped:17*

**If yes, name of hospital(s):**

*Reporting top responses*

- Weston County Health Services
- Monument Health, Rapid City Surgical Hospital
- Campbell County Hospital
- Spearfish Hospital



**In the past three years, have you or a household member seen a primary health care provider such as a family physician, physician assistant or nurse practitioner for health care services?**

Answer Choices	Responses	Number
Yes	92.10%	501
No	7.90%	43

*Answered: 544; Skipped:12*

**If yes, where was the primary health care provider located?**

*Reporting top responses*

- Newcastle
- Rapid City
- Gillette

**In the past year, have you or someone in your household had a medical emergency?**

Answer Choices	Responses	Number
Yes	38.40%	207
No	61.60%	332

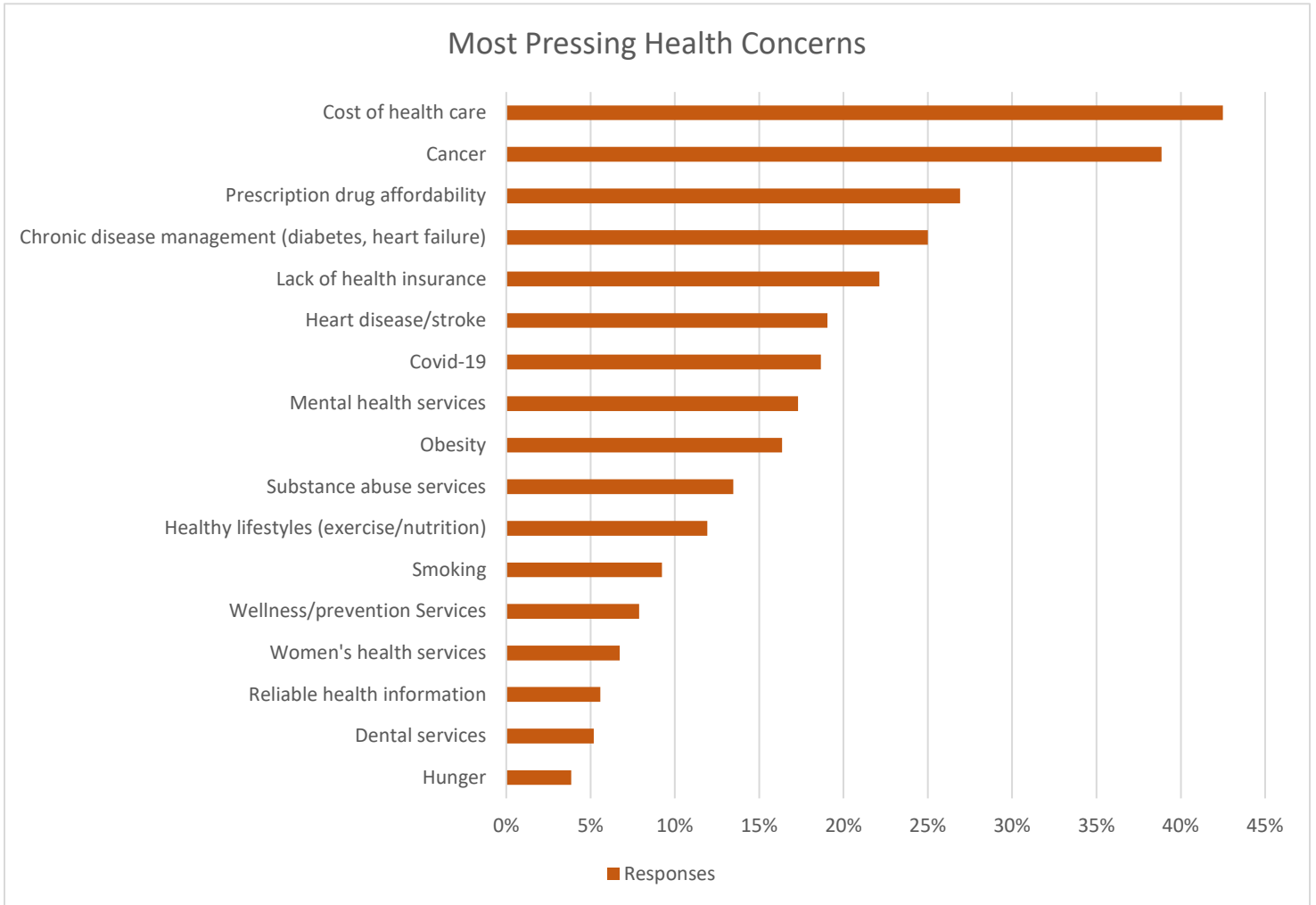
*Answered: 539; Skipped:17*

**If you answered yes to the above question, did you access the 911 system for an ambulance?**

Answer Choices	Responses	Number
Yes	12.50%	17
No	47.64%	39

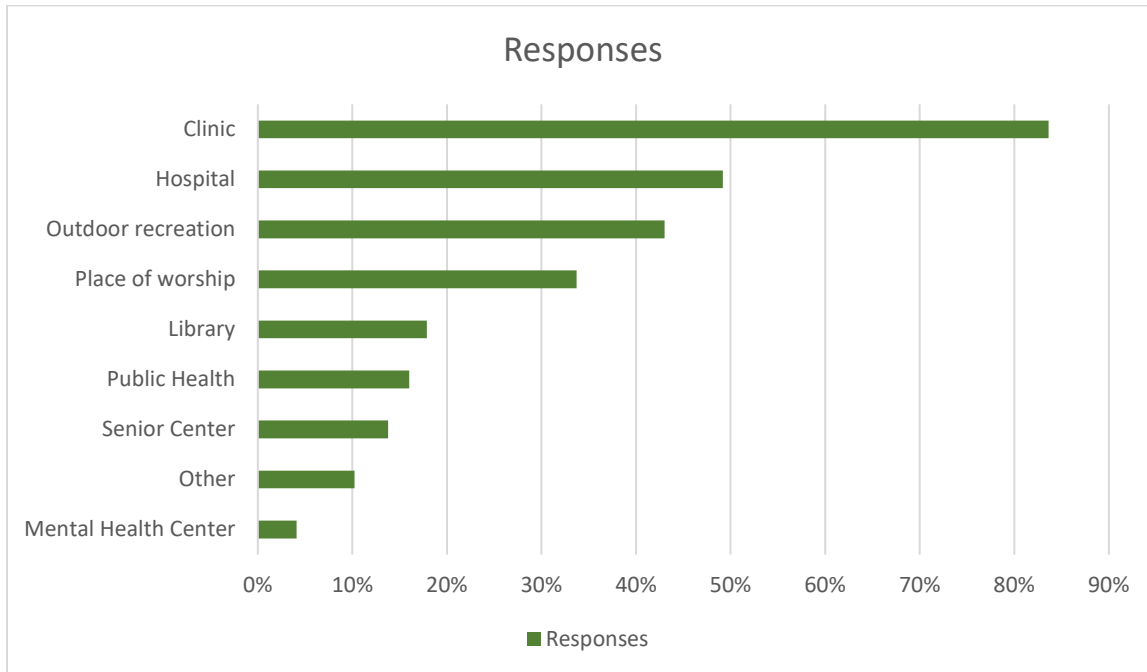
*Answered 424; Skipped: 132*

**In your opinion, what are the three most pressing health concerns in the county? (Choose only 3)**



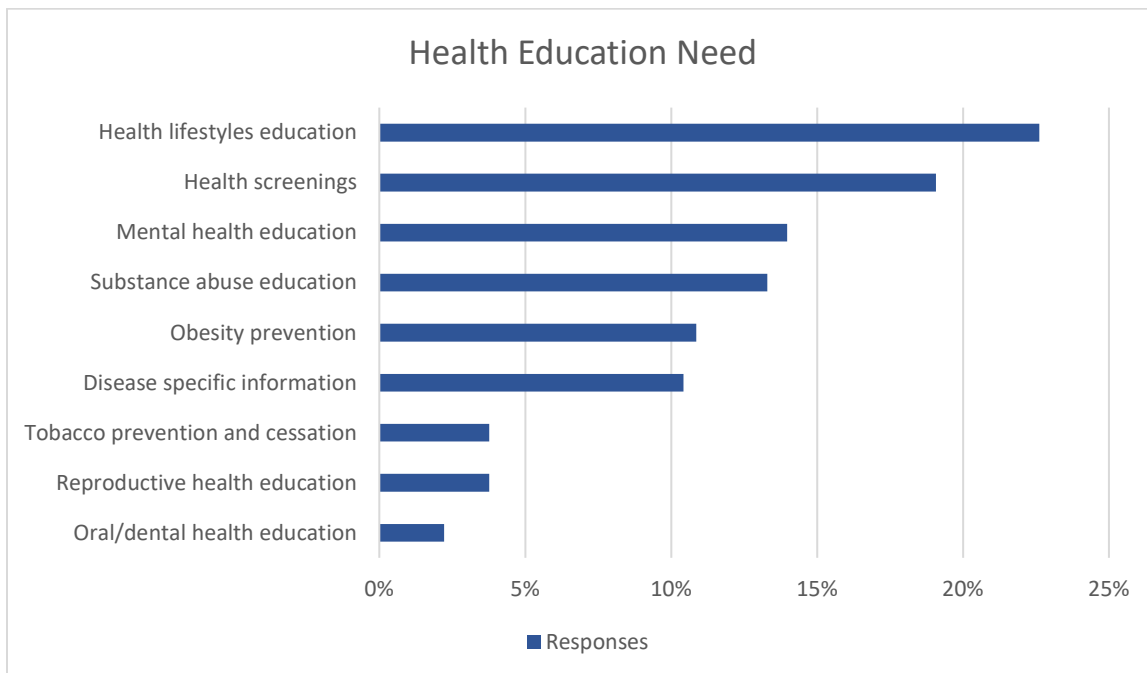
*Answered: 520; Skipped:36*

**What resources do you rely upon to help keep you and your family healthy? (Check all that apply)**



Answered: 537; Skipped:19

**What is the greatest health education need in our county? (select one)**



Answered: 451; Skipped:105

**What needs to be added, changed, or removed to improve your access to and use of medical services in your county?**

The most common responses included:

- Lower health care costs
- Physicians (replace retiring doctors) and more specialists
- Additional services – Urgent care, additional mental health providers, obstetrics

# Key Informant Interviews

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Name</b>
Alliance 21	Kristi Lipp, Community Prevention Specialist
City of Newcastle	Gregory James, City Clerk/Treasurer
City of Newcastle	Stacy Johnson, Deputy Clerk/Treasurer
Hometown Medical Clinic, P.C.	Ashley Tupper, APRN, FNP-BC, COHN-S
Monument Health Medical Clinic	Kim Scharf, RN
Newcastle Area Chamber of Commerce	Janet Olson, Director
Newcastle Ministerial Association	Jon Anderson
Northern Wyoming Mental Health Center	Leslie Patterson, Case Manager
Town of Upton	Kelley Millar, Clerk/Treasurer
Upton Economic Development Board	Stephanie Salazar, Executive Director
Weston County Children's Center Weston County School District #1	Tina Chick, LPC WCCC; Board Chairman WCSD #1
Weston County Emergency Management	Gilbert Nelson, Emergency Mgmt Coord
Weston County Emergency Planning	Don Steveson, LEPC Chairman
Weston County Health Services	Maureen Caldwell, CEO
Weston County Health Services	Carmen Allison, Director of Home Health
Weston County Health Services	Piper Allard, Director of Patient Care
Weston County Health Services	Caitlin Hesse, Occupational Therapist
Weston County Library	Brenda Ayers, Director
Weston County Public Health	Lori Bickford, Director of Services
Weston County School District #1	Marisa Scalise, K-12 School Nurse
Weston County School District #7	Mary Rankin, District School Nurse
Weston County School District #1	Brad LaCroix, District Administrator
Weston County Senior Services	Carolyn Shields, Executive Director
Wyoming Department of Family Services	Noelle Yonkee, Social Worker
Wyoming Department of Workforce Services	Tammy Smith, Vocational Rehab Counselor