

Community Needs Assessment

Sweetwater County School District #1
Head Start



2023



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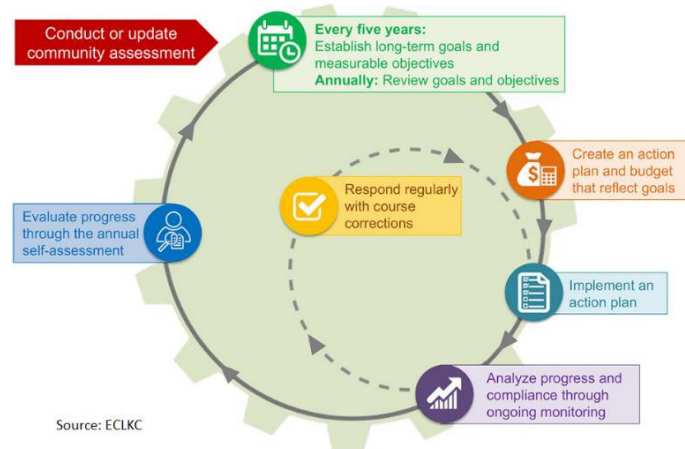
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE

Sweetwater County School District #1 conducts a comprehensive Community Assessment during each five-year period, and annually reviews and updates the Assessment to reflect any significant changes affecting infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and their families, as well as eligible expectant mothers throughout Sweetwater County. This Community Assessment Update has been developed as an addendum to the original Community Assessment. Quantitative data have been compiled from local, state, and federal data resources, including 2020 Census Bureau data.



Sweetwater County School District #1's 2023 Head Start Community Needs Assessment Update identifies strengths, challenges, and barriers to self-sufficiency of families with young children that are at-risk and/or living in poverty in Sweetwater County, Wyoming. The Assessment is intended to guide program planning, to implement programming that meets community needs, to build on strengths and resources of local communities, and to assist in reducing identified barriers to self-sufficiency for families in poverty—particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and growing economic concerns. The quantitative and qualitative data gleaned from the Community Assessment process will be used by leadership and governing bodies to inform decisions including, but not limited to:

- Determination of long- and short-range program goals, objectives, and priorities;
- Types of services most needed for pregnant women, children, and families living in poverty;
- Gaps in service and geographic areas to be served, if additional funding is available, or if limitations in the amount of resources make it impossible to serve the entire service area;
- Locations of Head Start and/or Early Head Start services;
- Criteria to define special populations to be prioritized for recruitment and selection for services;
- Community collaborations to develop or strengthen to provide needed services; and
- Identification of and reduction of inequity issues in communities.

METHODOLOGY

The Community Needs Assessment has been developed per the requirements of the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS). HSPPS Standard 1302.11 *Determining Community Strengths, Needs and Resources* (right) outlines the information that must be included and analyzed about each grantee's Head Start and/or Early Head Start funded service area.

Methods utilized for the collection of data included:

- family and community stakeholder surveys;
- local, state, and federal data resources;
- internal data (Program Information Reports);
- data reflecting COVID-19 impacts;
- 2020 Census Bureau data; and
- American Community Survey, 2020 Five Year estimates*.

*The American Community Survey (ACS) collects and produces information on social, economic, housing, and demographic characteristics about the U.S. population. The ACS is an official Census Bureau survey that is part of the decennial census program. Every year, the Census Bureau contacts over 3.5 million households nationwide to participate in the ACS. The survey is sent to a percentage of households monthly. This data is used to track shifting demographics and learn about local communities.¹

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some data may have been impacted or are missing in the Community Assessment.



KEY FINDINGS

Throughout the Community Assessment process, data trends, strengths and challenges have been identified. Below are key findings and data trends that most impact services for at-risk children/families and those living in poverty in Sweetwater County.

ADVOCACY

Key challenges in 2023 include, but are not limited to, the following: inflation on goods and services and families being forced to prioritize their greatest necessities; the need for more jobs with “livable wages”; limited quality, and affordable child care—particularly infant/toddler center-based care—for working families; and mental health challenges. These and other issues are interwoven, meaning families must remove a multitude of barriers to move towards self-sufficiency. Sweetwater County School District #1 Head Start’s continued role in community advocacy and collaboration are crucial. The School Board, Policy Council, leadership, family service staff, and staff can collectively focus on increased engagement in partnerships, community groups, and coalitions which strive to break down barriers for children and families in poverty. Further, the continued utilization of and the building of advocacy skills in Policy Council members and parents are critical to expressing the needs of their children and families. (e.g. speaking out at a community meeting to discuss affordable housing or expanded transportation routes).

ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

Wyoming's 2024 state minimum wage rate remains at \$7.25/hour. A full-time minimum wage worker earns \$15,080 per year. The 2023 Federal Poverty Level (FPL) for a family of two people is \$19,720 per year; therefore, a single parent with one child who is working full-time at minimum wage (\$15,080) falls below the FPL. Post-pandemic, many employers have struggled to hire and retain employees. Therefore, some employers have increased entry-level pay to \$9-\$12 or more.

While rising wages can be positive, a single parent with one child who is working full-time at \$9.50/hour (\$19,760) or more is considered above the FPL. A head of household of four who is working full time at \$13.50/hour (\$28,080) or more is above the FPL. Head Start staff will continue to be an invaluable support for struggling families who may now be ineligible for assistance. Living wage is the hourly rate that a full-time working individual must earn to adequately support the family and cover daily expenses. The living wage needed to support one adult and one child is \$31.95 in Sweetwater County.

Further, the U.S. inflation rate was 3.24% for the 12 months ended October 2023 after rising 8.2% in Sept. 2022—a 40-year high. In contrast, inflation was 7.7% in October 2022 and 6.2% in October 2021. The rising costs of food (10.9%), energy (17.6%), shelter (6.9%), transportation (15.2%), apparel (4.1%), and medical services (5.4%) have put a further cost burden on individuals and families.

QUALITY CARE FOR CHILDREN (BIRTH-FIVE)

There are nearly 3,000 children under five years old in Sweetwater County, while the total capacity of preschools and child care licensed by the Wyoming Department of Family Services is less than 1,000. That qualifies Sweetwater County as a child care desert, defined as an area where child care is available to less than one out of every three children under age five.

The poverty rate for children under 5 years old in Sweetwater County is 18.8%, higher than WY (15.4%) and the U.S. (19.1%). An estimated 2,613 children under age 5 reside in the county, with 491 children (295 infants/toddlers and 196 preschool-aged children) living in poverty.

Sweetwater County School District #1 is funded for 100 Head Start children. Locations with the highest numbers and percentages of poverty for children under age 5 are as follows: Rock Springs (318 children, 19.2% poverty), North Rock Springs (76 children, 35% poverty), and Green River (52 children, 7.9%). There are an estimated 127 preschool-aged children in poverty in Rock Springs, 30 in North Rock Springs, and just 21 in Green River.

There is a tremendous need for quality, affordable infant/toddler care and Early Head Start center-based care in Sweetwater County. Sweetwater County School District #1 may consider applying for future Early Head Start funding or supporting another organization's funding application.

POVERTY

Sweetwater County's general population poverty rate is 10.5% (4,396 people), compared to Wyoming (11.4%). 9% of the non-Hispanic White population (2,967 people), 19.6% of the Black population (95 people), 18.5% of the Asian population (89 people), 16.1% of Native Americans (81 people), and 6.6% (188 people) of the Multi-Racial population are in poverty. Of the Hispanic/Latino population, 17.1% (1,161 people) are in poverty.

Head Start can continue to support all races/ethnicities, as well as help reduce inequities by:

Providing services which build financial capability such as financial services; financial coaching; financial counseling; credit counseling; credit building; access to affordable financial products; free tax preparation assistance; assistance with accessing federal/state benefits; incentivized savings programs; and asset building/asset ownership programs; supporting individuals as they re-enter the workforce or interview for new jobs by researching with them equitable wages and benefits in the corresponding career field; and Promoting career counseling to identify higher-paying jobs/careers, including the trades.

FAMILY SURVEY (KEY FINDINGS)

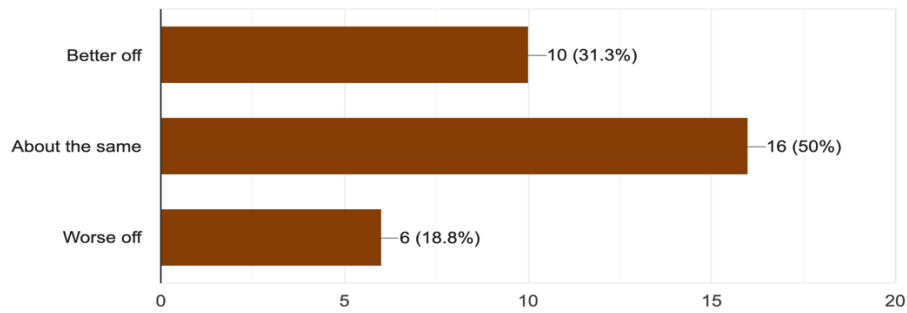
A survey was distributed to all Head Start families. Thirty-two responses were received. Refer to the Family Survey section for complete analysis.

Has your family recently experienced any challenges with the following (within last 12 months)?

	Never or Rarely	Some- times	Always or Often	Not Applicable
Having or Finding Affordable and Safe Housing	62.5%	15.6%	18.7%	6.2%
Having or Finding a Job with a Wage to Support my Family	46.8%	31.2%	18.7%	3.1%
Paying for Utilities (electricity, water, heat)	37.5%	37.5%	18.7%	6.2%
Access to Affordable Mental Health/Behavioral Health	46.8%	34.3%	12.5%	9.3%
Support for My Child with Disabilities	62.5%	15.6%	3.1%	21.8%
Immigration Concerns	62.5%	12.5%	0%	25%
Access to Quality, Affordable Child Care for my Infant/Toddler	53.1%	18.7%	12.5%	12.5%
Access to Quality, Affordable Child Care for my Preschooler	56.0%	21.8%	15.6%	9.3%
Dealing with my Child's Behaviors	37.5%	50%	6.2%	6.2%
Access to Adult Education Options (e.g., GED, college)	59.3%	21.8%	6.2%	12.5%
Family Member in Jail/Prison	56.2%	18.7%	9.3%	15.6%
Lack of Language Translation Services	68.7%	15.6%	3.1%	15.6%
	Never or Rarely	Some- times	Always or Often	
Managing and Budgeting Money	34%	46.8%	18.7%	
Access to Banking Services	81.2%	15.6%	3.1%	
Access to Affordable Medical Care/Insurance	65.6%	21.8%	12.5 %	
Access to Affordable Dental Care	56.0%	34.3%	12.5%	
Drug Abuse or Alcoholism in my Home	96%	0.0%	3.1%	
Feelings of Anxiety and/or Depression (sadness, loneliness, worry, and/or fear)	46.8%	43.7%	9.3%	
Violence in my Neighborhood	96.8%	3.1%	0.0%	
Verbal or Emotional Abuse in your Home (excessive control, insults, threats)	100%	0.0%	0.0%	
Having Enough Food to Feed My Family	62.5%	25.0%	12.5%	
Access to Affordable Food/Produce	56.2%	37.5%	9.3%	
Access to Phone Service	68.7%	25%	6.2%	
Access to Computer/Internet	62.5%	28.1%	9.3%	
Fear of Violence in your Home (hitting, threats, fighting)	100%	18.7%	0.0%	
Lack of Reliable Transportation	81.2%	18.7%	0.0%	

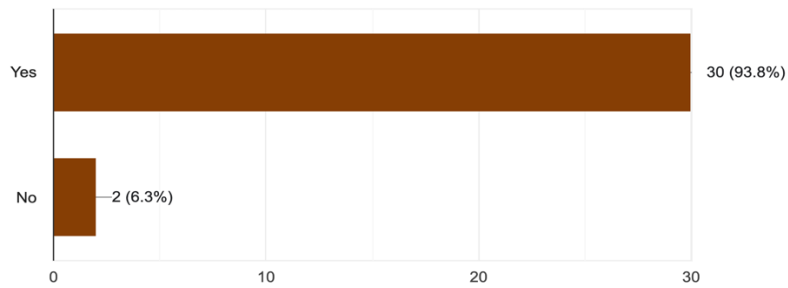
Compared with one year ago, is your family financially:

32 responses



Do the hours of our Head Start program meet your family's needs?

32 responses



Has your family been directly affected (past or present) by a drug problem in the community?

Percent of Respondents	
Yes	9.4%
No	90.6%
I prefer not to respond.	0%

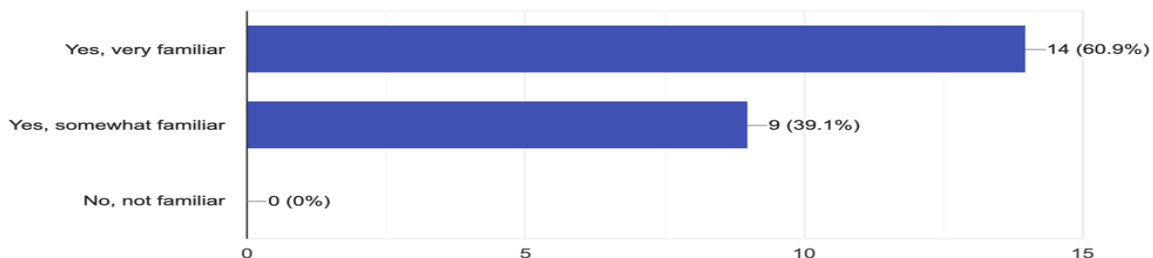
COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER SURVEY (KEY FINDINGS)

A survey was distributed to community organizations. Twenty-three responses were received. Refer to the Community Survey section for complete analysis.

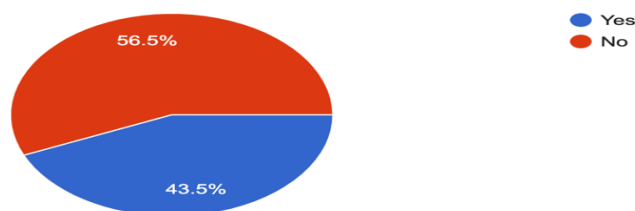
Barriers to Self-Sufficiency: What are the top (3) Community Conditions that most often prevent families from moving from poverty to self-sufficiency in your community?

Indicator	% of Respondents	# of Respondents
High Cost of Child Care (birth- age 5)	30.4%	7
High Costs of Housing	56.5%	13
Lack of Job Skills	17.4%	4
Lack of Jobs that Pay a Living Wage	43.5%	10
Substance Abuse/Misuse	43.5%	10
Undiagnosed/Untreated Mental Health Issues	39.1%	9
Low Educational Attainment	26.1%	6
Lack of Transportation	17.4%	4
Lack of Available Jobs	0.0%	2
Burden of High Debt	4.3%	1
Economic Challenges/Inflation	13%	3
Cultural Oppression in Local Communities	0.0%	0
High Costs of Health Care/Insurance	0.0%	0
Illegal Immigration/Undocumented Status	0.0%	0

Are you familiar with the Head Start program in Sweetwater County School District #1?
23 responses



Have you referred a parent and/or family to our Head Start program within the past year?
23 responses



DATA SUMMARY

Throughout the Community Assessment process, both strengths and challenges have been identified. Below is a summary of demographic information and data trends from the Community Assessment. For detailed information regarding any statistic, refer to the full narrative. Not all Community Assessment data have been included in this summary. As available, data sources reflecting the 2020 Decennial Census and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have been included. Due to the pandemic, some data may have been impacted or are missing in the Community Assessment.

Notes: Unless explicitly stated otherwise, a referenced year refers to a calendar year. A Program Year (PY) is reflective of 12-month data collected on the Program Information Report (PIR) that is submitted to the Office of Head Start annually in August. A School Year (SY) refers to the public-school year. Fiscal Year (FY) and Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) may also be utilized.

DEMOGRAPHICS

- While the U.S. population grew by 7.1% and Wyoming's population grew by 2.4% between 2010 and 2020, Sweetwater County's population declined by 3.5% (-1,534 people). Between 2010 and 2020, nearly all cities, towns, and Census Designated Places declined in population including Green River (-5.5%, -690 people), Superior (-45.2%, -152 people), and Wamsutter (-55%, -248 people). North Rock Springs (+10.5%, +232 people) and Rock Springs (+2.1%, +490 people) were the only locations that experienced population growth between 2010 and 2020. Places with the highest populations include the city of Green River (11,825 people) and the city of Rock Springs (23,526).
- Sweetwater County has an estimated 0-4 age population of 6.6% or 2,870 children, compared to Wyoming (6.1%) and the United States (6%).
- Following are the racial/ethnic demographics of Sweetwater County: Non-Hispanic White (78.8%); African-American (1.1%); Asian (.8%); Native American/Alaskan Native (1%); Other Race (.2%); and Multiple Races (2.2%). The Hispanic population is 16% (6,917 people), higher than WY (10.1%).
- Following were the racial demographics of enrolled Head Start children in Sweetwater County during PY 2022-2023: White (90.3%); Bi-racial/Multi-racial (0%); African-American (3.5%); Native American/Alaskan Native (1.7%); Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (0%) and Other (4.3%). Of enrolled children, 28.9% or 33 were Hispanic/Latino.
- Following are the most significant changes in Sweetwater County's racial/ethnic demographics between 2010 and 2020: White population decreased by 8.7% (-3,070 people) and Multiple Races increased by 231.9% (+1,294 people). The Hispanic population increased by 4% (+268 people).
- Of Sweetwater County's population, 5.2% or 2,255 people are foreign-born, more than Wyoming at 3.3% and significantly less than the national average of 13.5%. Of Sweetwater County's foreign-born population, 36.3% have become naturalized U.S. citizens and 63.7% are non-citizens. Of Sweetwater County's foreign-born population 69% or 1,556 were born in Latin America, 14.7% or 332 were born in different parts of Europe, 12.1% or 273 were born in Asia, and 4.2% were born in Canada or African countries.

- Of Sweetwater County's population, 89.5% speak English only, 8.4% speak Spanish, 1.4% speak Indo-European languages, .5% speak Asian/Pacific Islander languages, and .2% speak Other Languages.
- During PY 2022-2023, 85% of enrolled Sweetwater County HS families spoke English and 15% spoke Spanish.
- Of households in Sweetwater County, 64% are family households, slightly less than Wyoming at 67.2%. Of Sweetwater County's households, 36.7% have children—more than Wyoming (29.3%). Of the 36.7% of households with children, 21.6% are married family households. Of children, nearly 16% are estimated to be living in a single-parent household.
- During PY 2022-2023, 39% of Sweetwater County Head Start families were two-parent households and 61% were single-parent households.

EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

- Sweetwater County School District #1 is funded for 100 Head Start children. There is no Early Head Start funding in Sweetwater County.
- New this 2023-2024 school year, Sweetwater County School District #1 opened three Pre-K classes. These three Pre-K classes, the Head Start program and a daycare for District employees are housed in one building; Overland Elementary Early Childhood Education Program.
- In Sweetwater County, there are:
 - 13 Child Care Centers serving children between ages 0-5;
 - 7 Child Care Centers accepting child care subsidy;
 - 5 Child Care Centers serving infants;
 - 8 Child Care Centers serving toddlers; and
 - 13 Child Care Centers serving preschoolers.
- In Sweetwater County:
 - 11 of 15 (73.3%) Family Child Care Homes provide infant care;
 - 1 of 2 (50%) Family Child Care Centers provide infant care;
 - 1 of 2 (50%) Family Child Care Centers provide toddler care; and
 - 5 of 12 (41.7%) Child Care Centers provide toddler care.

In Wyoming:

- Child care for a 4-year-old costs \$9,009 (\$751/mo.) and infant care is \$10,647 (\$887/mo.);
- Child care for an infant and a 4-year-old costs \$19,657, 48.2% more than average rent in Wyoming. A family would have to spend 27.4% of its income on child care.
- Infant care for one child would take up 14.9% of a median family's income in Wyoming. Child care is affordable if it costs no more than 7% of a family's income. By this standard, only 8% of WY families can afford infant care.

BIRTH OUTCOMES AND PREGNANT WOMEN

- In 2021, there were 449 babies born in Sweetwater County, a decrease from 512 babies born in 2019 (pre-pandemic). Between 2017 and 2021, births decreased by -18.5%. In 2021, the birth rate in Sweetwater County dropped slightly to 10.8 births per 1,000 population from 12.1 births per 1,000 in 2019. The 2021 Wyoming birth rate was also 10.8 per 1,000 population.
- Of 2021 births in Sweetwater County, 5.1% or 23 were to teens ages 15-19, compared to 4.7% of births in Wyoming. The 2021 teen birth rate in Sweetwater County decreased to 15.2 per 1,000 teens from 25.3 per 1,000 teens in 2019. Sweetwater County's 2021 teen birth rate (15.2 per 1,000) was slightly less than Wyoming (16.1 per 1,000).
- In 2021, 31.4% or 141 women in Sweetwater County utilized Medicaid as the principal source of payment for their babies' births, slightly higher than 29.6% of new mothers in Wyoming. These numbers represent pregnant women who would be income-eligible for Early Head Start services.

Maternal/Infant Characteristics, 2021

	Sweetwater County	Wyoming
Women receiving less than adequate prenatal care.	18.0%	23.5%
Births to unmarried mothers.	37.6%	32.9%
Mothers who smoked during pregnancy.	9.4%	9.4%
Births to mothers with less than a high school diploma.	16.0%	8.9%
Pre-term birth.	6.5%	10.8%
Infants with low birth weights.	7.1%	9.4%
Cesarean deliveries	24.7%	26.7%
Mother breastfed their infant upon hospital discharge.	52.3%	83.4%
Infant Mortality Rate per 1,000 Live Births (5-Year Average)	4.2 per 1,000	5.4 per 1,000

DISABILITIES

- During FFY 2020, 114 children in Sweetwater County were served in Early Intervention. During 2019-2020, 191 children ages 3-5 received special education services.
- During PY 2022-23, 9.6% or 11 of Sweetwater County HS children had diagnosed disabilities, compared to 29.2% of HS children in Wyoming and 13.2% of HS children nationwide. Of enrolled Sweetwater County HS children, 12.6% or 14 were diagnosed with non-categorical/developmental delays and 7.2% or 8 were diagnosed with speech/language impairments.

ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and temporary and/or permanent closures of businesses, unemployment claims in Sweetwater County peaked at 10% in May 2022. As of September 2022, Sweetwater County's unemployment rate had dropped to 3.8%, compared to the state of Wyoming at 3.1% and the United States at 3.3%.

- The labor force is the sum of employed and unemployed persons. Between Sept. 2019 (pre-pandemic) and Sept. 2022, the labor force decreased by 9.4% (-1,963) in Sweetwater County.
- Wyoming's 2023 state minimum wage rate remains at \$7.25 per hour. A full time (2,080 hours) minimum wage worker earns \$15,080 per year (gross pay). The 2022 Federal Poverty Level (FPL) for a family unit of two people is \$19,720 per year; therefore, a single parent with one child who is working full time at minimum wage (\$15,080) falls below the FPL.
- The living wage (the rate a full-time working individual must earn to adequately support the family and cover expenses) for one adult and one child is \$31.95.
- Sweetwater County's median household income is estimated at \$73,384, higher than Wyoming (\$65,304) and the U.S. (\$64,994). Of Sweetwater County households, 16.4% earn under \$25,000. The median incomes of Native American (\$66,063) and Hispanic/Latino households (\$61,224) are \$11,000-\$16,000 lower than non-Hispanic, White households (\$77,281).
- The U.S. inflation rate was 3.24% for the 12 months ended October 2023 after rising 8.2% in Sept. 2022—a 40-year high. In contrast, inflation was 7.7% in October 2022 and 6.2% in October 2021.
- The Consumer Price Index (CPI) measures the average change in prices paid by consumers for goods and services needed for daily living (e.g., food, clothing, shelter, gas).

Consumer Price Index – October 2023

	1-Month Percent Change (from September 2023)	12 Month Percent Change (from October 2023)
All Items	0.4	3.2
Food	0.2	3.3
Food at home	0.1	2.1
Food away from home	0.4	5.4
Energy	1.5	-4.5
Gasoline (all types)	2.1	-5.3
Fuel oil	8.5	-21.4
Electricity	1.3	2.4
Utility (piped) gas service	-1.9	-15.8
All Items Less Food and Energy	0.3	4.0
New vehicles	0.3	1.9
Used cars and trucks	-2.5	-7.1
Apparel	-0.8	2.6
Shelter	0.6	6.7
Transportation services	0.7	9.2
Medical care services	0.3	-2.0

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

POVERTY

- Sweetwater County's general population poverty rate is 10.5% (4,396 people), compared to WY at 11.4% and the U.S. at 12.8%. Of Sweetwater County's population, 9% of the non-Hispanic White population (2,967 people), 19.6% of the Black population (95 people), 18.5% of the Asian population (89 people), 16.1% of Native Americans (81 people), and 6.6% (188 people) of the Multi-Racial population are in poverty. Of the Hispanic/Latino population, 17% (1,161 people) are in poverty.

Children under Age 5 in Poverty, Sweetwater County					
Children under Age 5		Infants and Toddlers		3- and 4-Year Old's	
Count	In Poverty	Count*	In Poverty	Count*	In Poverty
2613	491 (18.8%)	1568	295	1045	196

*Estimated infants/toddlers (60%) and 3-&4- Year-olds (40%) Source: American Community, 2021 5-Year Estimates

Locations with the highest numbers and percentages of poverty for children under age 5 are as follows: Rock Springs (318 children, 19.2% poverty), North Rock Springs (76 children, 35% poverty), and Green River (52 children, 7.9%).

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

- Of Sweetwater County's population in 2020, 6.4% was receiving SNAP, compared to WY at 5.9%. Between 2016 and 2020, the number of SNAP recipients in Sweetwater County increased by 1.7%. In 2022, 19.2% of Sweetwater County Head Start families were receiving SNAP upon enrollment, lower than HS families across Wyoming (28.2%) and HS families nationwide (47.7%). Sweetwater County HS families receiving SNAP decreased by 15.8% between 2019 and 2022.
- During PY 2022-2023, 6.2% of Sweetwater County Head Start families were receiving SSI upon enrollment, compared to 3.6% of Wyoming HS families and 5.9% of HS families nationwide.
- During PY 2022-2023, 2.6% of Sweetwater County HS families were receiving TANF upon enrollment, compared to HS families in Wyoming (3.3%) and HS families nationwide (5.8%).
- Between 2018 and 2021, the number of children receiving WIC in Sweetwater County declined from 138 to 116 (-10.7%).
- In 2022, 41.2% of Sweetwater County Head Start families were receiving WIC upon enrollment, more than HS families in Wyoming (31.2%) and less than HS families nationwide (43.8%). Sweetwater County HS families receiving WIC increased by 4.8% between 2019 (pre-pandemic) and 2022.

EDUCATION

- The rate of adults aged 25 and older without a high school diploma is 7.4% in Sweetwater County, compared to 6.4% in Wyoming and 11.5% in the U.S. Of Sweetwater County's Hispanic population, 17.2% do not have a high school diploma. Of Sweetwater County's population, 21.2% have a Bachelor's Degree, less than WY (28.2%) and the U.S. (32.9%).
- In PY 2022-23, 80% of Sweetwater County Head Start families had a high school diploma or higher degree, less than Wyoming HS families (90.9%) and HS families nationwide (89.5%).
- Sweetwater County School District #1's 2021-2022 four-year cohort high school graduation rate was 76.3%. At-risk populations in the district experienced significantly lower graduation rates, as follows: students with disabilities (49.1%); English Language Learners (75%); economically disadvantaged students (61.3%); and those experiencing homelessness (53.8%).
- Sweetwater County School District #2's 2021-2022 four-year cohort high school graduation rate was 84.5%. Economically disadvantaged students experienced a lower graduation rate (68.3%).⁵²

FOSTER CARE

- During PY 2022-2023, 3.5% of Sweetwater County Head Start children were in foster care, compared to 8.6% of Wyoming HS children and 3.3% of HS children nationally.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

- Of Wyoming's 23 counties in 2022, Sweetwater County is ranked 18th—among the least healthy—for Health Outcomes (length of life, quality of life). The county is ranked 15th—in the lower middle range—for Health Factors (health behaviors, clinical care, social & economic factors, environment).
- Low poverty rates, low graduation rates, low rates of physical inactivity (25%), and low excessive drinking (18%) are areas that positively affect the health of people in Sweetwater County. Adult obesity (34%), adult smoking (17%), and a high uninsured population (14%) are areas that most negatively affect the health of people in Sweetwater County.
- WY reported the highest suicide rate since 2004—the year that the state health department started publishing data. In 2021, the state recorded 189 suicides—or 32.8 suicides per 100,000 individuals. The suicide rate is more than double the nationwide rate of 13.5 suicides per 100,000 people. The 2021 suicide rate is up from the 30.6 rate recorded by the health department for 2020. State health data also shows that 108 WY residents died from drug overdoses in 2021 — 65 involved opioids, 44 involved methamphetamine, and 43 involved fentanyl; this is up from 108 deaths in 2020

- Following are COVID-19 data from the Wyoming Department of Health, as of Dec. 5, 2022:
 - There have been 1,938 COVID-related fatalities reported in Wyoming since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020 (318 deaths in 2022). Comorbidity data is unavailable. Of deaths, 85% were people over age 60. There have been 0 reported deaths of Wyoming children due to COVID-19.
 - Of Wyoming deaths, 91% were to the non-Hispanic White population, 8.4% to the Hispanic population, 5% to the Native American population, and 4% to Other or Unknown.
 - In Sweetwater County, there have been 134 deaths among patients with confirmed cases of COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020.
 - Of Sweetwater County's population, 45.5% have received the primary vaccine series, slightly lower than 47.2% in Wyoming. This includes 13.2% of children ages 5-11, 34.8% of adolescents ages 12-17, adults 18+, and 76.1% of seniors over age 65.
- Sweetwater County has areas/populations designated as Health Professional Shortage Areas, Medically Underserved Areas, and/or Medically Underserved Populations (refer to narrative).
- During the pandemic, the national obesity rate among children ages 2 to 19 increased to 22.4% in 2020, up from 19.3% in 2019. Of WY youth ages 10 to 17, 11% have obesity, giving the state a ranking of 47. Of Wyoming children ages 2 to 4 in the WIC program, 10.6% have obesity; this is a decrease from 11.8% in 2010.
- Wyoming is ranked 33rd in the nation with a 30.7% adult obesity rate. The adult obesity rate rose from 25.4% in 2010. The 2020 adult obesity rate was estimated at 34% in Sweetwater County, higher than Wyoming at 30.7%.
- During PY 2022-2023, 52.6% of Sweetwater County HS children were at a healthy weight and 20% had obesity, less than Wyoming HS children (14.1%) and HS children nationwide (18.2%). Further, 12.2% of Sweetwater County Head Start children were underweight and 8.7% were overweight.

HOMELESSNESS

- In 2022, twenty-nine Wyoming agencies counted 584 homeless men, women, and children in shelters and 64 individuals representing 57 households in unsheltered conditions. Of the total of sheltered and unsheltered individuals, 106 of them were under the age of 18. These numbers do not include people who are doubled up with others due to financial constraints.
- During 2020-21, Sweetwater County School District #1 enrolled 5,141 students; of these, .5% (26 students) were identified as experiencing homelessness per the McKinney-Vento Act. Sweetwater County School District #2 enrolled 2,359 students; of these, .5% (12 students) were reported as homeless.
- During PY 2022-23, 2.6% of enrolled Sweetwater County Head Start children were experiencing homelessness, compared to 8.3% of Wyoming HS children and 5.6% of HS children nationwide.

HOUSING

- Cost burdened households are those with costs exceeding 30% of total household income. Of Sweetwater County's housing units, an estimated 18.2% (2,869 households) are cost burdened, lower than Wyoming (23.4%). Cost-burdened rental households in Sweetwater County are higher (33.4%) than owner-occupied households with mortgages (16.2%).
- The 2022 monthly Fair Market Rent for a two-bedroom rental in Sweetwater County is \$802. The 2022 housing wage for a 2-bedroom rental is \$16.12/hr. and the 2023 housing wage will be \$17.14/hr. For monthly rent to be affordable for a minimum wage worker, it must be \$377 or less.

FOOD INSECURITY

- Sweetwater County's 2020 child food insecurity rate was 15.4% , higher than Wyoming (12.9%) and the U.S. (16.1%). Sweetwater County's 2020 *overall* food insecurity rate was 11.5%. While the overall food insecurity rate among the White, non-Hispanic population was 10%, the food insecurity rate was 14% for the Hispanic/Latino population. Data is not available for other races.

TRANSPORTATION

- Of Sweetwater County's households, just 1.9% are estimated to not have a vehicle, compared to 3.8% in Wyoming and 8.5% in the U.S. Of *renter-occupied* households in Sweetwater County, 3.9% are without a motor vehicle, compared to 1.3% of *owner-occupied* households.

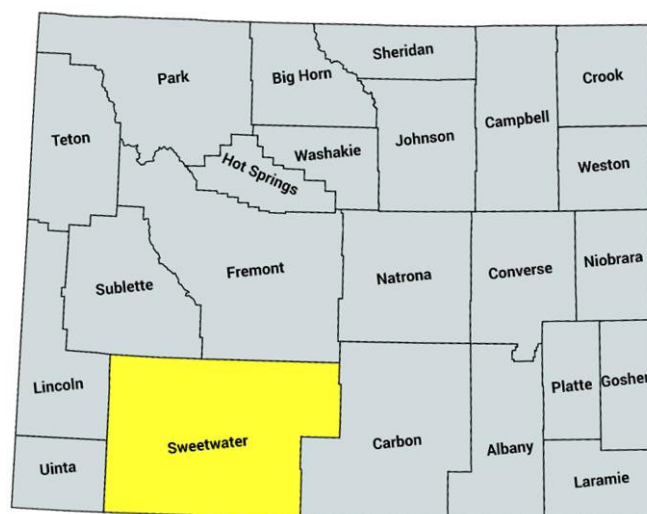
COMMUNITY PROFILE

Located in the mountain region of the western United States, Wyoming is bordered on the north by Montana, on the east by South Dakota and Nebraska, on the south by Colorado, on the southwest by Utah, and on the west by Idaho and Montana. The 2020 population of Wyoming was 576,851. Covering 97,818 square miles, Wyoming is the 10th largest state by area, the least populous, and the second most sparsely populated state in the country. Cheyenne is the state capital and the most populous city, with a 2020 population of 65,132.

Wyoming's mineral commodities include coal, natural gas, coal bed methane, crude oil, and trona. Wyoming ranks highest in mining employment in the United States. The mineral extraction industry and the travel and tourism sectors are the main drivers behind Wyoming's economy.

Sweetwater County is located in southwestern Wyoming with a 2020 population of 42,272. It is the largest county in the state with a total area of 10,491 square miles, of which 10,427 square miles are land and 64 square miles (.6%) are water. Its county seat is Green River. Sweetwater County is bordered by Fremont County to the north; Carbon County to the east; Moffat County, Colorado to the south; Daggett County, Utah to the southwest; Summit County, Utah to the west/southwest; Uinta County to the southwest; Lincoln County to the west; and Sublette County to the northwest. Sweetwater County comprises the Rock Springs, Green River, Wyoming Micropolitan Statistical Area.

Sweetwater County's economy is driven by a variety of industries including oil and gas extraction, innovative coal-mining practices such as coal gasification and clean-coal technology, health care & social assistance, and educational services. Sweetwater County is also home to the world's most massive and easily mineable deposits of Trona. Trona is the raw material for soda ash and used to make glass, paper, and many other products, as well as used in the manufacturing of chemicals such as baking soda and detergents. Minerals extracted in the county account for 67% of the area's total revenue.²



DEMOGRAPHICS

POPULATION

While the U.S. population grew by 7.1% and Wyoming's population grew by 2.4% between 2010 and 2020, Sweetwater County's population declined by 3.5% (-1,534 people).

Between 2010 and 2020, nearly all cities, towns, and Census Designated Places declined in population including Green River (-5.5%, -690 people), Superior (-45.2%, -152 people), and Wamsutter (-55%, -248 people). North Rock Springs (+10.5%, +232 people) and Rock Springs (+2.1%, +490 people) were the only locations that experienced population growth between 2010 and 2020.

Places with the highest populations include the city of Green River (11,825 people) and the city of Rock Springs (23,526).³

Population Changes (2010-2020), Sweetwater County

Location	Location Type*	Population		Population Change 2010-2020	
		2010	2020	Count	Percent
Sweetwater County	County	43,806	42,272	-1,534	-3.5%
Arrowhead Springs	CDP	63	59	-4	-6.3%
Bairoil	Town	106	68	-38	-35.9%
Clearview Acres	CDP	795	758	-37	-4.7%
Eden	CDP	281	235	-46	-16.4%
Farson	CDP	313	272	-41	-13.1%
Granger	Town	139	98	-41	-29.5%
Green River	City	12,515	11,825	-690	-5.5%
James Town	CDP	536	455	-81	-15.1%
Little America	CDP	68	47	-21	-30.9%
McKinnon	CDP	60	20	-40	-66.7%
North Rock Springs	CDP	2,207	2,439	232	10.5%
Point of Rocks	CDP	Not Available	53	-----	-----
Purple Sage	CDP	535	319	-216	-40.4%
Reliance	CDP	714	622	-92	-12.9%
Rock Springs	City	23,036	23,526	490	2.1%
Superior	Town	336	184	-152	-45.2%
Wamsutter	Town	451	203	-248	-55.0%
Washam	CDP	51	39	-12	-23.5%

*CDP refers to Census Designated Place

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010, 2020 Decennial Census

AGE

Sweetwater County has an estimated 0-4 age population of 6.6% or 2,613 children, compared to Wyoming (6.1%) and the United States (6%).⁴

Population by Age Groups

	0-4	5-17	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Sweetwater County	6.6%	19.5%	8.8%	13.6%	14.4%	12.0%	13.0%	12.2%
Wyoming	6.1%	17.1%	9.2%	13.5%	12.6%	11.4%	13.6%	16.4%
United States	6.0%	16.4%	9.3%	13.9%	12.7%	12.7%	12.9%	16.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2020 Five-Year Estimates

Children Ages 0-4

Location	Count	Percent of Population
Sweetwater County	2,613	6.6%
Wyoming	35,436	6.1%
United States	19,650,192	6.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2020 Five-Year Estimates

PRIMARY LANGUAGE

Of Sweetwater County's population, 89.5% speak English only, 8.4% speak Spanish, 1.4% speak Indo-European languages, .5% speak Asian/Pacific Islander languages, and .2% speak Other Languages.⁵

During PY 2022-2023, 85% of enrolled HS families in Sweetwater County spoke English and 15% spoke Spanish.⁶

Languages Spoken at Home (Population Age 5 and Over)

	English Only	Spanish	Indo-European	Asian/Pacific Islander	Other Languages
Sweetwater County	89.5%	8.4%	1.4%	0.5%	0.2%
	36,237	3,407	549	204	85
Wyoming	93.0%	4.7%	1.0%	0.7%	0.6%
United States	78.5%	13.2%	3.7%	3.5%	1.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2020 Five Year Estimates

RACE AND ETHNICITY

Following are the racial/ethnic demographics of Sweetwater County: Non-Hispanic White (78.8%); African-American (1.1%); Asian (.8%); Native American/Alaskan Native (1%); Other Race (.2%); and Multiple Races (2.2%). The Hispanic population is 16% (6,917 people), higher than WY (10.1%) and the U.S. (18.2%).⁷

Following were the racial demographics of enrolled Head Start children in Sweetwater County during PY 2022-2023: White (90.3%); Bi-racial/Multi-racial (0%); African-American (3.5%); Native American/Alaskan Native (1.7%); Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (0%) and Other (4.3%). Of enrolled children, 28.9% or 33 were Hispanic/Latino.⁸

Population by Race

Location	Non-Hispanic							Hispanic /Latino
	White	Black African-American	Asian	Native American	Native Hawaiian	Other Race	Multiple Races	
Sweetwater County	34,147 78.8%	473 1.1%	324 0.8%	423 1.0%	17 0.0%	86 0.2%	965 2.2%	6,917 16.0%
Wyoming	83.6%	0.8%	0.8%	2.0%	0.1%	0.1%	2.5%	10.1%
U.S.	60.1%	12.3%	5.6%	0.6%	0.2%	0.3%	2.8%	18.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2020 5 Year Estimates

Population By Hispanic Origin

Location	Hispanic Population (Count)	Hispanic Population (Percent)	Non-Hispanic Population (Count)	Non-Hispanic Population (Percent)
Sweetwater County	6,917	16.0%	36,435	84.0%
Wyoming State	58,854	10.1%	522,494	89.9%
United States	59,361,020	18.2%	267,208,288	81.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2020 5 Year Estimates

Following are the most significant changes in Sweetwater County's racial/ethnic demographics between 2010 and 2020: White population decreased by 8.7% (-3,070 people) and Multiple Races increased by 231.9% (+1,294 people). The Hispanic population increased by 4% (+268 people).⁹

2010-2020 Population Change by Race

County/ Location	Non-Hispanic							Hispanic or Latino
	White	Black African- American	Asian	Native American Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander	Other Race	Multiple Races	
Sweetwater County	-3,070 -8.7%	-64 -15.4%	-41 -12.7%	-58 -18.3%	20 48.8%	117 390.0%	1,294 231.9%	268 4.0%
Wyoming	-2.9%	8.8%	17.7%	-0.1%	34.0%	454.9%	185.1%	17.6%
U.S.	-2.6%	6.0%	35.6%	0.2%	29.2%	179.6%	127.1%	20.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census

2010-2020 Population Change by Hispanic Origin

Location	Hispanic or Latino Population Change		Non-Hispanic Population Change	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Sweetwater County	268	4.01%	-1,802	-4.9%
Wyoming	8,815	17.6%	4,409	0.9%
United States	11,163,011	20.6%	11,100,922	4.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census

FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION

The foreign-born population includes anyone who was not a U.S. citizen or a U.S. national at birth. This includes any non-citizens, as well as persons born outside of the U.S. who have become naturalized citizens. The native U.S. population includes any person born in the United States, Puerto Rico, a U.S. Island Area (such as Guam), or abroad of American (U.S. citizen) parent or parents.

Of Sweetwater County's population, 5.2% or 2,255 people are foreign-born, more than the State of Wyoming at 3.3% and significantly less than the national average of 13.5%. Of Sweetwater County's foreign-born population, 36.3% have become naturalized U.S. citizens and 63.7% are non-citizens.

Of the foreign-born population in Sweetwater County, 69% or 1,556 were born in Latin America, 14.7% or 332 were born in different parts of Europe, 12.1% or 273 were born in Asia, and 4.2% were born in Canada or African countries.¹⁰

Foreign-Born Population

Location	Foreign-Born Population		Foreign-Born Population with Citizenship		Foreign-Born Population without Citizenship	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Sweetwater Co.	2,255	5.2%	818	36.3%	1,437	63.7%
Wyoming	19,274	3.3%	7,535	39.1%	11,739	60.9%
United States	44,125,628	13.5%	22,456,684	50.9%	21,668,944	49.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2020 5 Year Estimates

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

According to the American Community Survey subject definitions, “A family household is any housing unit in which the householder is living with one or more individuals related to him or her by birth, marriage, or adoption. A non-family household is any household occupied by the householder alone, or by the householder and one or more unrelated individuals.”

Of households in Sweetwater County, 64% are family households, slightly less than Wyoming at 67.2%. Of Sweetwater County’s households, 36.7% have children—more than Wyoming (29.3%) and the U.S. (30.7%). Of the 36.7% of households with children, 21.6% are married family households.¹¹ Of children in Sweetwater County, nearly 16% are estimated to be living in a single-parent household.¹²

Household Composition

Location	Total Households	Family Households		Non-Family Households	
		Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Wyoming	233,231	149,353	64.0%	83,878	36.0%
Sweetwater County	15,726	10,565	67.2%	5,161	32.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2020 Five Year Estimates

Households with Children by Composition and Relationship to Householder Percentage of Total Households

Location	All Household Types	Married Families	Single-Male Families	Single-Female Families	Non-Family Households
Wyoming	29.3%	16.7%	3.6%	8.8%	0.2%
Sweetwater County	36.7%	21.6%	4.0%	10.7%	0.4%

During PY 2022-2023, 39% of Sweetwater County Head Start families were two-parent households and 61% were single-parent households. In comparison, 50.4% of HS families in Wyoming and 40% of HS families nationwide were two-parent households.¹³

EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

HEAD START/EARLY HEAD START

Sweetwater County School District #1 is funded for 100 Head Start children. There is no Early Head Start funding in Sweetwater County.

Sweetwater County School District #1 Head Start Funded Enrollment

Location	Head Start		Early Head Start	
	Center Based	Home Based	Home Based	Center Based
Rock Springs—5 classrooms Overland Elementary Early Childhood Education Program	100	0	0	0

PRE-K

Beginning in the 2023-2024 school year, Sweetwater County School District #1 opened Overland Elementary Early Childhood Education Program (OEECEP). OEECEP is the home to Head Start and new for the 2023-2024 school year, three District funded Pre-K classrooms and a daycare for district staff and teenage mom's and dad's who are finishing up high school. The three District Pre-K classrooms are funded for 20 students each. Sweetwater County School District #1 Administrators and Board of Trustee's have watched the Head Start program's waiting list over the last several years, and saw the need for additional Pre-K education in Sweetwater County. In collaboration with the Head Start Management team, the additional Pre-K classrooms were able to enroll students on our Head Start waiting list as well as others who did not quite qualify for Head Start.

HOME VISITATION PROGRAMS

"Studies show that maternal, infant, and early childhood home visiting can be effective at improving maternal and child outcomes and yielding strong returns on investment for states and communities. Voluntary home visiting strengthens families with young children by meeting with families in their homes and directly providing or connecting families with health, mental health, parenting, and other supports and services, depending on each family's unique needs."¹⁵

There are 5 primary home visiting programs in Wyoming:

- [Early Head Start](#) (Home-Based Model)
- [Family Spirit](#)
- [Nurse Family Partnership](#) (NFP)
- [Parents as Teachers](#) (PAT)
- [Wyoming Hand in Hand](#) (WHH)

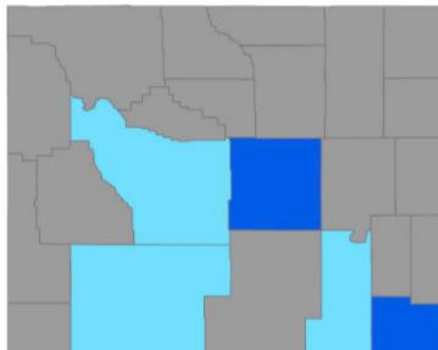
The **Wyoming Hand in Hand** Home Visitation Program is currently offered in all 23 counties, including Sweetwater County. Wyoming *Hand in Hand* is available at no cost to all women, during pregnancy and/or following the birth of the baby for assessment, information, and referral to community agencies. Each family served by WY Hand in Hand is partnered with a trained registered nurse during pregnancy or after birth and receives ongoing nurse home visits that continue through the child's second birthday. This program consists of at least 25 home visits. Each family has an opportunity to receive a variety of toys and activity items that help with developmental milestones.¹⁶

Parents as Teachers: As of 2021, the Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program served 5 counties in Wyoming including Sweetwater County. Across the state, 243 households and 587 children under age 5 and pregnant women were served for a total of 3,418 home visits. Of these, 60% of households were low income and 4.1% included a pregnant enrollee under age 21.¹⁷

Wyoming MIECHV Program At-a-Glance

■ Rural counties:
Albany, Fremont, Sweetwater

■ Non-rural counties:
Laramie, Natrona



CHILD CARE

Child Care Homes

In Sweetwater County, there are:

- 15 Family Child Care Homes with capacity for 128 children ages 0-12;
 - 2 Licensed Family Child Care Homes with capacity for 27 children ages 0-12; and
 - 12 Group Child Care Centers serving children ages 0-12.¹⁸
-
- 11 of 15 (73.3%) Family Child Care Homes provide infant care.
 - 1 of 2 (50%) Family Child Care Centers provide infant care.
 - 4 of 12 (33.3%) Child Care Centers provide infant care.
-
- 12 of 15 (80.0%) Family Child Care Homes provide toddler care.
 - 1 of 2 (50%) Family Child Care Centers provide toddler care.
 - 5 of 12 (41.7%) Child Care Centers provide toddler care.

There are nearly 3,000 children under five years old in Sweetwater County, while the total capacity of preschools and daycares licensed by the Wyoming Department of Family Services is less than 1,000. That qualifies Sweetwater County as a child care desert, defined as an area where child care is available to less than one out of every three children under age five.

Family Child Care (FCC) Homes and Centers, Sweetwater County

Location/ District	Family Child Care Homes			Family Child Care Centers		
	# of FCC Homes	Capacity*	Accepts Child Care Subsidy	# of FCC Centers	Capacity*	Accepts Child Care Subsidy
Sweetwater County	15	128	6	2	27	1
Green River	5	50	4	1	15	1
Rock Springs	10	78	2	1	12	0

*Ages 6 weeks-12 years Sources: Wyoming Department of Children and Families, October 2022

Child Care Centers

In Sweetwater County, there are:

- 13 Child Care Centers serving children between ages 0-5;
- 7 centers (58.3%) accepting child care subsidy;
- 5 centers (33.3%) serving infants;
- 8 centers (58.3%) serving toddlers; and
- 13 centers (100%) serving preschoolers.¹⁹

Child Care Capacity of Centers serving Ages 0-5, Sweetwater County

Location	Centers Serving Ages 0-5	Capacity*	Centers Accepting Child Care Subsidy	# of Centers Serving the Following Age Groups		
				Infants (under age 1)	Toddlers	Preschool-Aged Children
Sweetwater County	13	705	7	5	8	13
Green River	5	334	2	1	3	5
Rock Springs	8	371	5	4	5	8

Cost of Child Care

According to the Economic Policy Institute:²⁰

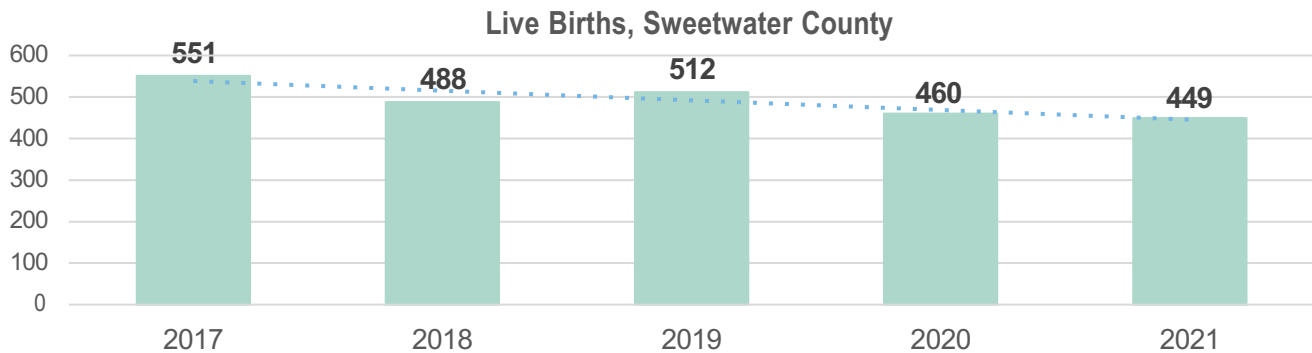
- The average annual cost of infant care in Wyoming is \$10,647, or \$887 per month.
- Child care for a 4-year-old costs \$9,009, or \$751 each month.
- Infant care for one child would take up 14.9% of a median family's income in Wyoming. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, child care is affordable if it costs no more than 7% of a family's income. By this standard, only 8% of WY families can afford infant care.
- Child care for two children—an infant and a 4-year-old—costs \$19,657. That's 48.2% more than average rent in Wyoming. A typical family would have to spend 27.4% of its income on child care for an infant and a 4-year-old.
- A minimum wage worker in Wyoming would need to work full time for 37 weeks, or from January to September, just to pay for child care for one infant.

Child Care Subsidy

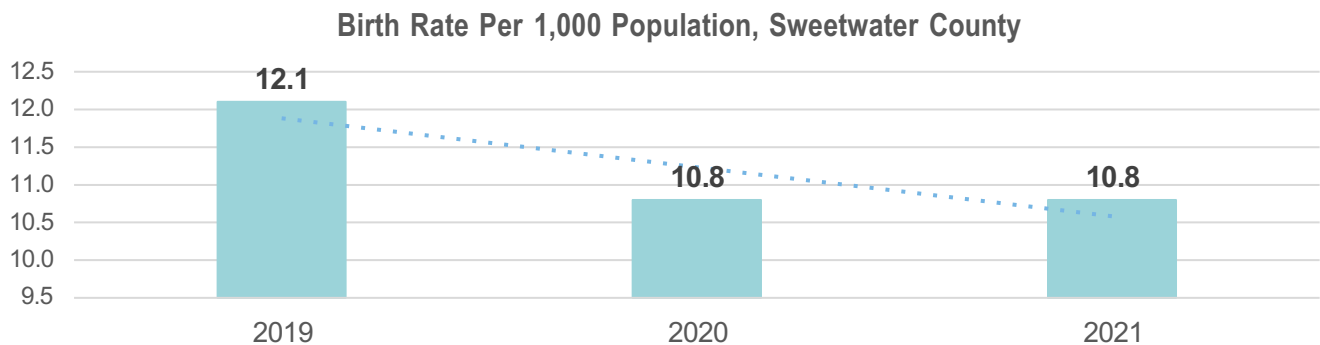
The Child Care Subsidy Program helps low-income families pay for the cost of care when the parent(s) are working or in school or training. Based on the family's income, the parents may be responsible for paying for part of the cost of care. The Department of Family Services' (DFS) Child Care Subsidy Program uses a combination of state and federal funds to assist eligible families in paying for the cost of child care while the parent(s) is working or attending an approved educational activity. If the family meets the eligibility criteria, the Department of Family Services pays a portion of the cost of care. Parents are free to choose a child care arrangement that best fits their needs as long as the chosen provider meets certain health and safety requirements. DFS bases its maximum reimbursement rates for licensed facilities on a Market Survey which is conducted at least once every three years. The most recent survey is the 2022 Market Survey.

BIRTH OUTCOMES AND PREGNANT WOMEN

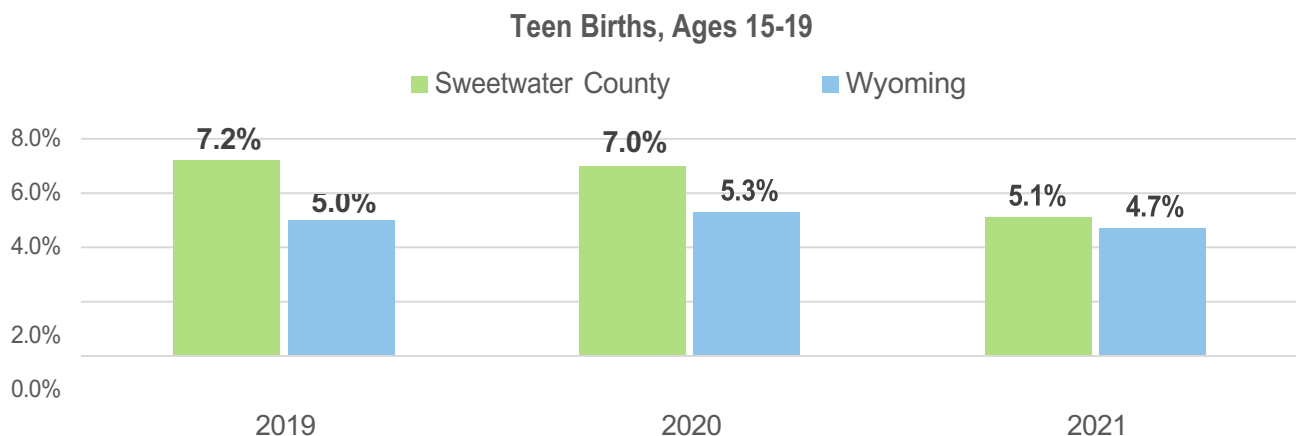
In 2021, there were 449 babies born in Sweetwater County, a decrease from 512 babies born in 2019 (pre-pandemic). Between 2017 and 2021, births decreased by -18.5%.²¹



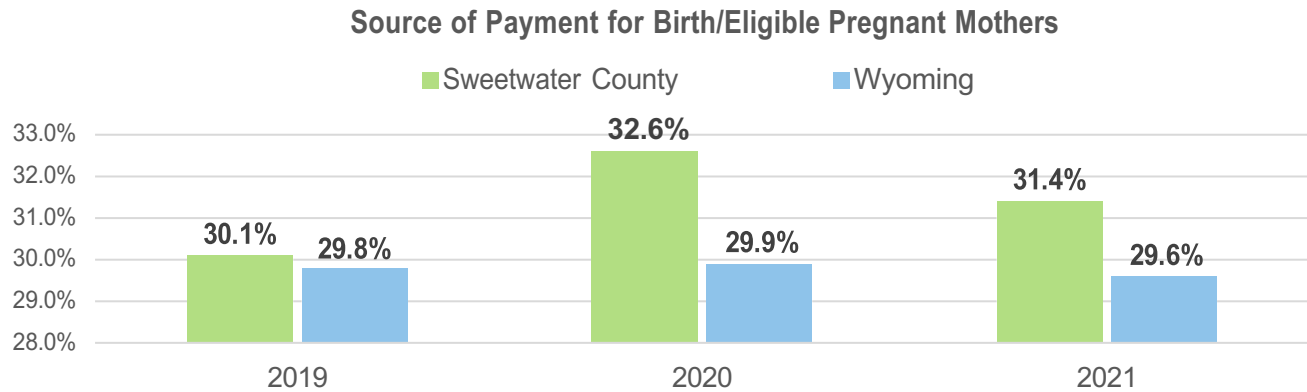
In 2021, the birth rate in Sweetwater County dropped slightly to 10.8 births per 1,000 population from 12.1 births per 1,000 in 2019. The Wyoming birth rate was also 10.8 per 1,000 population.²²



Of 2021 births in Sweetwater County, 5.1% or 23 were to teens ages 15-19, compared to 4.7% of births in Wyoming. The 2021 teen birth rate in Sweetwater County decreased to 15.2 per 1,000 teens from 25.3 per 1,000 teens in 2019. Sweetwater County's 2021 teen birth rate (15.2 per 1,000) was slightly less than Wyoming (16.1 per 1,000).²³



In 2021, 31.4% or 141 women in Sweetwater County utilized Medicaid as the principal source of payment for their babies' births, slightly higher than 29.6% of new mothers in Wyoming. These numbers represent pregnant women who would be eligible for Early Head Start services.²⁴



Maternal/Infant Characteristics, 2021

Indicators	Sweetwater County	Wyoming
Women receiving less than adequate prenatal care.	18.0%	23.5%
Births to unmarried mothers.	37.6%	32.9%
Mothers who smoked during pregnancy.	9.4%	9.4%
Births to mothers with less than a high school diploma.	16.0%	8.9%
Pre-term birth.	6.5%	10.8%
Infants with low birth weights.	7.1%	9.4%
Cesarean deliveries	24.7%	26.7%
Mother breastfed their infant upon hospital discharge.	52.3%	83.4%
Infant Mortality Rate per 1,000 Live Births (5-Year Average)	4.2 per 1,000	5.4 per 1,000

Source: Wyoming Dept. of Health Services

DISABILITIES

Early Intervention and Education Program (EIEP)

Wyoming's early intervention program is the Part C system of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), designed to meet the needs of infants and toddlers with disabilities and developmental delays. The Sweetwater County Child Developmental Center (SCCDC) is a non-profit organization that is mandated by the state of Wyoming to provide early intervention services to children birth through age five with a variety of delays and disabilities. The SCCDC is the only organization in Sweetwater County to serve children ages birth through three. During FFY 2020, 114 children in Sweetwater County were served in Early Intervention.²⁵

Children Ages 3-5

In Wyoming, special education for children ages 3-5 is provided by regional programs across Wyoming, under the direction of the Department of Health's Early Intervention and Education Program. These programs offer a full continuum of educational services for children with disabilities, aged birth through 5, as part of an Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) program. This continuum may include speech, occupational and/or physical therapy, outreach and consultation support with families. Services are provided through regional preschool programs, private and community early childhood settings, district preschools, and/or Head Start programs. ECSE services are available to all eligible children within the district, at no cost to families. During 2019-2020, 191 children were served.²⁶

During PY 2022-23, 9.6% or 11 of Sweetwater County HS children had diagnosed disabilities, compared to 29.2% of HS children in Wyoming and 13.2% of HS children nationwide. Of enrolled Sweetwater County HS children, 12.6% or 14 were diagnosed with non-categorical/developmental delays and 7.2% or 8 were diagnosed with speech/language impairments.²⁷

Students K-12

In 2021-2022, Sweetwater County District #1 enrolled 17.1% of students with disabilities and Sweetwater County District #2 enrolled 16.7% of students with disabilities. Learning disabilities, speech/language disabilities, and other health impairments were the most common types of disabilities.²⁸

ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

LABOR FORCE AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Labor Force

The labor force is the sum of employed and unemployed persons. Between September 2019 (pre-pandemic) and September 2022, the labor force decreased by 9.4% (-1,963 people) in Sweetwater County.²⁹

Civilian Labor Force, Sweetwater County

September 2019	September 2020	September 2021	September 2022
20,947	20,158	19,169	18,984

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Unemployment

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, “People are classified as unemployed if they do not have a job, have actively looked for work in the prior 4 weeks, and are currently available for work. The remainder—those who have no job and are not looking for one—are counted as ‘not in the labor force.’ Many who are not in the labor force are going to school or are retired. Family responsibilities keep others out of the labor force.”³⁰

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and temporary and/or permanent closures of businesses, unemployment claims in Sweetwater County peaked at 10% in May 2022. As of September 2022, Sweetwater County’s unemployment rate had dropped to 3.8%, compared to the state of Wyoming at 3.1% and the United States at 3.3%.³¹

Monthly Unemployment (Not Seasonally Adjusted)

Location	Sep. 2021	Oct. 2021	Nov. 2021	Dec. 2021	Jan. 2022	Feb. 2022	Mar. 2022	Apr. 2022	May 2022	Jun. 2022	Jul. 2022	Aug. 2022	Sept. 2022
Sweetwater Co.	4.3%	4.4%	4.1%	3.9%	5.1%	5.0%	4.5%	4.1%	3.6%	4.1%	3.8%	3.8%	3.8%
Wyoming	3.4%	3.5%	3.5%	3.2%	4.0%	4.0%	3.7%	3.5%	3.1%	3.3%	3.0%	3.1%	3.1%
United States	4.6%	4.3%	3.9%	3.7%	4.4%	4.2%	3.8%	3.4%	3.4%	3.9%	3.8%	3.8%	3.3%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Average Annual Unemployment Rate, 2011-2021

Location	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Sweetwater Co.	5.6%	4.9%	4.4%	4.2%	4.6%	6.1%	4.7%	4.2%	4.0%	7.3%	5.6%
Wyoming	6.2%	5.5%	4.8%	4.3%	4.2%	5.4%	4.3%	4.1%	3.7%	5.8%	4.5%
United States	9.0%	8.1%	7.4%	6.2%	5.3%	4.9%	4.4%	3.9%	3.7%	8.1%	5.4%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

WAGES

Minimum Wage

Wyoming's 2023 state minimum wage rate remains at \$7.25 per hour. A full time (2,080 hours) minimum wage worker earns \$15,080 per year (gross pay). The 2023 Federal Poverty Level (FPL) for a family unit of two people is \$19,720 per year; therefore, a single parent with one child who is working full time at minimum wage (\$15,080) falls below the FPL.³²

Living Wage

Living wage is the hourly rate that a full-time (2,080 hours annually) working individual must earn to adequately support the family and cover day-to-day expenses. The living wage needed to support one adult and one child is \$31.95 in Sweetwater County. A full-time working adult with one child who is making minimum wage (\$7.25/hour) earns just 24.1% of the living wage. A full-time working adult with a family of four who is making minimum wage earns just 21.6% of the living wage (\$33.54).³³

2023 Federal Poverty Guidelines

Persons in Family/Household	Poverty Guideline
1	\$14,580
2	\$19,720
3	\$24,860
4	\$30,000
5	\$35,140
6	\$40,280

* For families/households with more than 6 persons, add \$5,140 for each additional person

INCOME

The median household income in Sweetwater County is estimated at \$73,384, higher than the state of Wyoming (\$65,304) and the U.S. (\$64,994). Of Sweetwater County households, 16.4% earn under \$25,000. The median incomes of Native American (\$66,063) and Hispanic/Latino households (\$61,224) in Sweetwater County are \$11,000-\$16,000 lower than non-Hispanic, White households (\$77,281).³⁴

Mean/Median Household Income

	Total Households	Average (Mean) Household Income	Median Household Income
Sweetwater County	15,726	\$87,817	\$73,384
Wyoming	233,231	\$83,583	\$65,304
United States	122,354,219	\$91,547	\$64,994

Median Household Income by Race / Ethnicity of Householder

Location	Non-Hispanic White	Black	Asian	Native American Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander	Other Race	Multiple Races	Hispanic/Latino
Sweetwater	\$77,281	No data	\$81,000	\$66,063	No data	No data	\$57,700	\$61,224
Wyoming	\$66,731	\$53,354	\$69,917	\$50,458	\$45,625	\$59,587	\$61,115	\$56,981
U.S.	\$70,843	\$43,674	\$91,775	\$45,877	\$65,804	\$51,900	\$61,870	\$54,632

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community, 2020 Five-Year Estimates

Household Income Levels

Location	Under \$25,000	\$25,000 - \$49,999	\$50,000 - \$99,999	\$100,000 - \$199,999	\$200,000+
Sweetwater Co.	16.4%	16.5%	31.9%	30.8%	4.4%
Wyoming	17.0%	21.1%	33.2%	23.7%	5.1%
United States	18.4%	20.6%	30.0%	22.7%	8.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2020 Five-Year Estimates

INFLATION

The U.S. inflation rate was 3.24% for the 12 months ended October 2023 after rising 8.2% in September 2022—a nearly 40-year high. In contrast, inflation was 7.7% in Oct. 2022 and 6.2% in Oct. 2021.³⁵

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) measures the average change in prices paid by consumers for goods and services needed for daily living (e.g., food, clothing, shelter, gas). Prices are collected monthly in 75 urban areas nationwide from approximately 6,000 housing units and 22,000 retail establishments (e.g., department stores, supermarkets, gas stations).³⁶ The annual inflation rate was 3.24% for the 12 months ended October 2023. Between September and October 2023, there was a .4% increase in “all items.”³⁷

Consumer Price Index-October 2023

	1-Month Percent Change (from September 2023)	12 Month Percent Change (from October 2023)
All Items	0.4	3.2
Food	0.2	3.3
Food at home	0.1	2.1
Food away from home	0.4	5.4
Energy	1.5	-4.5
Gasoline (all types)	2.1	-5.3
Fuel oil	8.5	-21.4
Electricity	1.3	2.4
Utility (piped) gas service	1.9	-15.8
All Items Less Food and Energy	0.3	4.0
New vehicles	0.3	1.9
Used cars and trucks	-2.5	-7.1
Apparel	-0.8	2.6
Shelter	0.6	6.7
Transportation services	0.7	9.2
Medical care services	0.3	-2.0

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

POVERTY

Sweetwater County's poverty rate for the general population is 10.5% (4,396 people), compared to Wyoming at 11.4% and the U.S. at 12.8%. Of Sweetwater County's population, 9% of the non-Hispanic White population (2,967 people), 19.6% of the Black population (95 people), 18.5% of the Asian population (89 people), 16.1% of Native Americans (81 people), and 6.6% (188 people) of the Multi-Racial population are living in poverty. Of the Hispanic/Latino population, 17.1% (1,161 people) are in poverty.³⁸

Population in Poverty by Race/Ethnicity

	Non-Hispanic White	Black	Asian	Native American Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander	Other Race	Multiple Races	Hispanic/Latino
Sweetwater County	9%	19.6%	18.5%	16.1%	0.0%	0%	6.6%	17.1%
Wyoming	10.1%	20.6%	15.0%	24.6%	13.4%	17.1%	12.1%	18.2%
U.S.	10.6%	22.1%	10.6%	24.1%	16.8%	19.7%	15.1%	18.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community, 2020 Five-Year Estimates

The poverty rate for children under 5 years old in Sweetwater County is 20.9%, higher than WY (15.4%) and the U.S. (19.1%). An estimated 2,613 children under age 5 reside in the county, with 491 children (295 infants/toddlers and 196 preschool-aged children) living in poverty.³⁹

Children under Age Five in Poverty, Sweetwater County

Children under Age 5 in Poverty, Sweetwater County					
Children under Age 5		Infants and Toddlers		3- and 4-Year Old's	
Count	In Poverty	Count*	In Poverty	Count*	In Poverty
2613	491 (18.8%)	1568	295	1045	196

*Estimated infants/toddlers (60%) and 3-&4- Year-olds (40%) Source: American Community, 2021 5-Year Estimates

Locations with the highest numbers and percentages of poverty for children under age 5 are as follows: Rock Springs (318 children, 19.2% poverty), North Rock Springs (76 children, 35% poverty), and Green River (52 children, 7.9%).⁴⁰

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in [Wyoming](#) enables low-income families to buy nutritious food with electronic debit cards called ebtEDGE cards. Wyoming SNAP EBT cards can now be used at Walmart and Amazon.

Of Sweetwater County's population in 2020, 6.4% was receiving SNAP, compared to Wyoming at 5.9%. Between 2016 and 2020, the number of SNAP recipients in Sweetwater County increased by 1.7%.⁴¹

In the 2022-2023 school year, 19.2% of Sweetwater County Head Start families were receiving SNAP upon enrollment, lower than HS families across Wyoming (28.2%) and HS families nationwide (47.7%). Sweetwater County HS families receiving SNAP decreased by 15.8% between 2019 and 2022.⁴²

SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INSURANCE (SSI)

SSI pays monthly benefits to people with limited income and resources, including those who are disabled, blind, or age 65 or older. Children who are disabled may also get SSI. The 2022 monthly maximum federal amounts are \$841 for an eligible individual, \$1,261 for an eligible individual with an eligible spouse, and \$421 for an essential person; this represents a 5.9% increase from 2021.⁴³

During PY 2022-2022, 6.2% of Sweetwater County Head Start families were receiving SSI upon enrollment, compared to 3.6% of Wyoming HS families and 5.9% of HS families nationwide.⁴⁴

TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF)

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) provides temporary cash assistance for families in need. There are two forms of TANF in Wyoming:⁴⁵

- The POWER Work program helps individuals find employment or other forms of financial stability based specifically on their needs. The program provides free Child Support assistance. POWER Work Program for a family of three, with no income, could receive monthly TANF/POWER cash assistance in the amount of \$781.
- The POWER Caretaker Relative program provides cash assistance to family members, such as grandparents, aunts or uncles, who are the primary caregiver to children whose parents are not in the same home and are responsible for the daily care and control of the children. The program provides free Child Support assistance. The monthly benefit for the POWER Caretaker Relative Program for one child with no income or resources is estimate at \$259.

In the 2022-2023 school year, 2.6% of Sweetwater County HS families were receiving TANF upon enrollment, compared to HS families in Wyoming (3.3%) and HS families nationwide (5.8%).⁴⁶

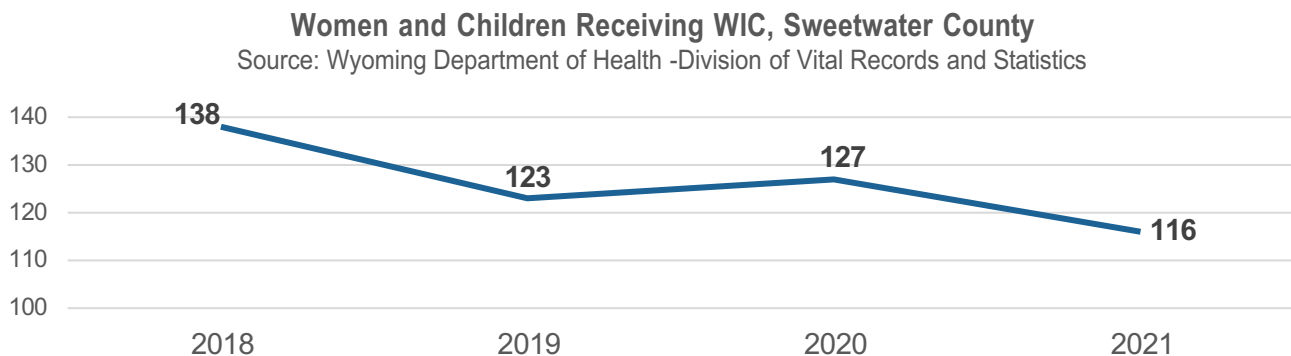
WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN (WIC)

WIC is a supplemental nutrition program funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and administered locally by the Wyoming Department of Health. WIC offices are located in Rock Springs and at Best Care Family Practice in Green River.

WIC provides nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and an eWIC card to purchase approved foods at authorized grocery stores (i.e., Smiths in Green River & Albertsons, Smiths, and Walmart SuperCenter in Rock Springs). Eligible recipients must be WY residents (not required to be a U.S. citizen), be pregnant or breastfeeding, and/or have a child younger than age 5 and a gross household income meeting eligibility guideline.

The average monthly 2022 WIC benefit per person in Wyoming was \$2,096.⁴⁷

Between 2018 and 2021, the number of children receiving WIC in Sweetwater County declined from 138 to 116 (-10.7%).⁴⁸



In 2022, 41.2% of Sweetwater County Head Start families were receiving WIC upon enrollment, more than HS families in Wyoming (31.2%) and HS families nationwide (43.8%). Sweetwater County HS families receiving WIC increased by 4.8% between 2019 (pre-pandemic) and 2022.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The estimated rate of adults aged 25 and older without a high school diploma is 7.4% in Sweetwater County, compared to 6.4% in Wyoming and 11.5% in the United States.⁴⁹ Of the Hispanic population in Sweetwater County, 17.2% (634 people) do not have a high school diploma. The rate of those with a Bachelor's Degree in Sweetwater County is 21.2%, less than WY at 28.2% and the U.S. at 32.9%.⁵⁰

Education Levels

Location	Population Age 25+	No High School Diploma		High School Only	Associates Degree	Bachelor's Degree+
		Count	Percent			
Sweetwater Co.	28,236	2,098	7.4%	32.3%	13.5%	21.2%
Wyoming	392,819	25,201	6.4%	28.6%	11.4%	28.2%
United States	222,836,834	25,562,680	11.5%	26.7%	8.6%	32.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community, 2020 Five Year Estimates

Population with No High School Diploma by Race/Ethnicity

Location	Non-Hispanic						Multiple Races	Hispanic
	White	Black	Asian	Native American	Native Hawaiian	Other Race		
Sweetwater County	7.3% 1,921	2.6% 8	21.4% 53	1.4% 5	0.0% 0	16.5% 58	7.1% 53	17.2% 634
Wyoming	5.8%	3.8%	12.5%	10.6%	17.5%	29.5%	9.3%	21.6%
U.S.	9.3%	13.3%	12.7%	19.4%	13.2%	36.1%	15.0%	29.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community, 2020 5-Year Estimates

In PY 2022-23, 59.6% of Sweetwater County Head Start families had a high school diploma or higher degree, less than Wyoming HS families (90.9%) and HS families nationwide (89.5%).⁵¹

- Sweetwater County School District #1's 2021-2022 four-year cohort high school graduation rate was 76.3%. At-risk populations in the district experienced significantly lower graduation rates, as follows: students with disabilities (49.1%); English Language Learners (75%); economically disadvantaged students (61.3%); and those experiencing homelessness (53.8%).
- Sweetwater County School District #2's 2021-2022 four-year cohort high school graduation rate was 84.5%. Economically disadvantaged students experienced a lower graduation rate (68.3%).⁵²

FOSTER CARE

During PY 2022-2023, 3.5% of Sweetwater County Head Start children were in foster care, compared to 8.6% of Wyoming HS children and 3.3% of HS children nationally.⁵³

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

COUNTY HEALTH RANKINGS

Of Wyoming's 23 counties in 2022:

- Sweetwater County is ranked 18th—among the least healthy counties—for Health Outcomes (length of life, quality of life).
- Sweetwater County is ranked 15th—in the lower middle range—for Health Factors (health behaviors, clinical care, social & economic factors, environment).

Low poverty rates, higher graduation rates, low rates of physical inactivity (25%), and low percentages of excessive drinking (18%) are areas that positively affect the health of people in Sweetwater County.

Adult obesity (34%), adult smoking (17%), and a high uninsured population (14%) are areas that most negatively affect the health of people in Sweetwater County.⁵⁴

2022 County Health Rankings

Health Indicators	Sweetwater County	Wyoming
Health Outcomes Ranking	18	
• Length of Life	17	
• Quality of Life	18	
Health Factors Ranking	15	
• Health Behaviors	10	
• Clinical Care	11	
• Social & Economic Factors	21	
• Physical Environment	6	
Poor or Fair Health	16%	16%
Adult Smoking	17%	18%
Adult Obesity	34%	31%
Physical Inactivity	25%	24%
Access to Exercise Opportunities	83%	73%
Excessive Drinking	18%	20%
Children in Single-Parent Homes	16%	18%

Income Inequality	4.2	4.3
Uninsured	14%	15%
Flu Vaccinations	40%	43%
Primary Care Physicians	2,230:1	1,400:1
Dentists	1,710:1	1,210:1
Mental Health Providers	410:1	270:1
Severe Housing Problems	10%	12%
Long commute—Driving alone	19%	15%

Source: countyhealthrankings.org

MEDICALLY UNDERSERVED AREA/HEALTH PROFESSIONAL SHORTAGE AREA

According to the federal Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), “Medically Underserved Areas (MUAs) are areas or populations designated by HRSA as having too few primary care providers, high infant mortality, high poverty or a high elderly population.” Medically Underserved Populations are known as MUPs.⁵⁵

Some geographic areas (county or service area), populations (e.g., low income or Medicaid eligible), and facilities (e.g., federally qualified health center—FQHC or other state or federal prison) have too few primary care, dental, and mental health providers and services. HRSA works with state partners to determine which of these should have shortage designations known as Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs), and are, therefore, eligible to receive certain federal resources.⁵⁶

Medically Underserved Area/Population in Sweetwater County

Discipline	Designation Type	Service Area Name	Medical Underservice Score*
Primary Care	Medically Underserved Area	Southeast Rock Springs	59.4

*Represents the Index of Medical Underservice (IMU) score. The lowest score (highest need) is 0; the highest score (lowest need) is 100. In order to qualify for designation, the IMU score must be less than or equal to 62.0, except for a Governor designation, which does not receive an IMU score. The score applies to the MUA or MUP as a whole, and not to individual portions of it. Source: Bureau of Health Workforce

Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA) in Sweetwater County

Discipline	Designation Type	HPSA Name	HPSA Score*
Primary Care	Geographic HPSA	Sweetwater County	13
Primary Care	Rural Health Clinic	Castle Rock Hospital	17
Dental Health		District	9
Mental Health			16
Mental Health	High Needs Geographic HPSA	Southwest Wyoming	11

* HPSA Score developed by the National Health Service Corps in determining priorities for assignment of clinicians. Scores range from 0 to 26 where the higher the score, the greater the priority. Source: Bureau of Health Workforce

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Following are data from the Wyoming Department of Health, as of December 5, 2022:⁵⁷

Deaths Attributed to COVID-19

- There have been 1,938 COVID-related fatalities reported in Wyoming since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020 (318 deaths in 2022). Comorbidity data is unavailable. Of deaths, 85% were people over age 60. There have 0 reported deaths of Wyoming children due to COVID-19.
- In Sweetwater County, there have been 134 deaths among patients with confirmed cases of COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020.
- Of deaths, 91% were to the non-Hispanic White population, 8.4% to the Hispanic population, 5% to the Native American population, and 4% to Other or Unknown.

COVID-19 Vaccinations

- There have been 9,289 First Pediatric Doses and 7,805 Second Pediatric Doses administered to children ages under 5 in Wyoming.
- Of Sweetwater County's population, 45.5% have received the primary vaccine series, slightly lower than 47.2% in Wyoming. This includes 13.2% of children ages 5-11, 34.8% of adolescents ages 12-17, adults 18+, and 76.1% of seniors over age 65.

MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

"In addition to recording the greatest number of drug overdoses in a decade, Wyoming also reported the highest suicide rate since 2004—the year that the state health department started publishing data. In 2021, the state recorded 189 suicides—or 32.8 suicides per 100,000 individuals. The state's suicide rate is more than double the nationwide rate of 13.5 suicides per 100,000 people. The 2021 suicide rate is up from the 30.6 rate recorded by the health department for 2020."⁵⁸

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) found that 88,000 adults in Wyoming have a mental health condition, while about 40% of adults reported symptoms of anxiety or depression. According to data available in Feb. 2021, 19.3% of adults were unable to access essential counseling or therapy services and 561,187 people in Wyoming live in a community that lacks enough mental health professionals. The U.S. Census Bureau reported a population of 576,851 for Wyoming in 2020, meaning that about 97% of residents live in an area with a shortage of mental health professionals.⁵⁹

OBESITY

According to the Centers for Disease Control, “Body Mass Index (BMI) is commonly used to determine childhood weight status. BMI is calculated by dividing a person’s weight in kilograms by the square of height in meters. For children and teens, BMI is age- and sex-specific and is often referred to as BMI-for-age. A child’s weight status is different from adult BMI categories. Children’s body composition varies as they age and varies between genders. Therefore, BMI levels among children and teens need to be expressed relative to other children of the same age and sex.”⁶⁰

Child-Weight Status Category	Child-Percentile Range
Underweight	Less than the 5th percentile
Healthy Weight	5th percentile to less than the 85th percentile
Overweight	85th to less than the 95th percentile
Obesity	95th percentile or greater

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Wyoming is currently ranked 33rd in the nation with a 30.7% adult obesity rate. The adult obesity rate rose from 25.4% in 2010.⁶¹ The 2020 adult obesity rate was estimated at 34% in Sweetwater County, higher than Wyoming at 30.7%.⁶²

Nationally, 16.2% of youth ages 10 to 17 have obesity. Of youth from families in the lowest-income group, 23.1% have obesity, compared to 8.1% of those in families from the highest-income group. Of Wyoming youth ages 10 to 17, 11% have obesity, giving the state a ranking of 47.⁶³ Of Wyoming children ages 2 to 4 in the WIC program, 10.6% have obesity; this is a decrease from 11.8% in 2010.⁶⁴

During PY 2022-2023, 52.6% of Sweetwater County Head Start children were at a healthy weight. In contrast, 20% of Sweetwater County Head Start children had obesity, less than Wyoming HS children (14.1%) and HS children nationwide (18.2%). Further, 12.2% of Sweetwater County Head Start children were underweight and 8.7% were overweight.⁶⁵

HEALTH INSURANCE

Of children ages birth to five in Sweetwater County, 12.3% or 448 children were without insurance in 2020, a slight improvement from the 13.8% or 513 uninsured children in 2019. As of 2020, the percentage of uninsured children under age 5 in Sweetwater County (12.3 percent) is 4.5% higher than Wyoming (7.8%).⁶

HOMELESSNESS

Every January, states nationwide conduct the annual Point in Time (PIT) Count to identify all sheltered and unsheltered individuals in their state. In Wyoming, the next count is January 2024. The survey is a count of all people experiencing homelessness for a snapshot or a point-in-time count. This count is planned, coordinated, and carried out locally but reported to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Congress every year. Because of HUD federal rules, the count does not include people who do not have a home of their own but were “doubled up,” staying with friends or family due to financial constraints. In 2022, 29 Wyoming agencies counted 584 homeless men, women, and children in shelters and 64 individuals representing 57 households in unsheltered conditions. Of the total of sheltered and unsheltered individuals, 106 of them were under the age of 18. When looking at unaccompanied youth in the count, nine children under the age 18 were identified.⁶⁷

During 2022-2023, Sweetwater County District #1 enrolled 5,052 students; of these, .50% were reported as homeless. Sweetwater County District #2 enrolled 2,406; of these, .50% were reported as homeless.⁶⁸

During PY 2022-2023, 2.6% of enrolled Head Start children in Sweetwater County were experiencing homelessness, compared to 8.3% of Wyoming HS children and 5.6% of HS children nationwide.⁶⁹

HOUSING

Cost Burdened Households

Cost burdened households are those with costs exceeding 30% of total household income. Of housing units in Sweetwater County, an estimated 18.2% (2,869 households) are cost burdened, lower than Wyoming (23.4%).⁷⁰ Cost-burdened rental households in Sweetwater County are higher (33.4%) than owner-occupied households with mortgages (16.2%) in Sweetwater County.⁷¹

Cost Burdened Households

	Cost Burdened Households	Cost Burdened Rental Households	Cost Burdened Owner Occupied Households w/ Mortgages	Cost Burdened Owner Occupied Households w/o Mortgages
Sweetwater County	18.2%	33.4%	16.2%	10.1%
Wyoming	23.4%	36.4%	23.7%	10.2%
U.S.	30.4%	45.7%	27.3%	13.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community, 2020 Five-Year Estimates

Fair Market Rent

The Fair Market Rent rate (FMR) established by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is used as a basis for paying federal housing assistance programs like the Housing Choice Voucher Program (often called “Section 8”). Fair Market Rent is determined by conducting a nationwide survey each year. FMR prices are gross rent prices, meaning they include utilities.

The 2022 monthly FMR for a modest two-bedroom rental in Sweetwater County is \$802.⁷² The 2022 housing wage for a 2-bedroom rental is \$16.12/hour and the 2023 housing wage will be \$17.14/hour.⁷³ For rent to be affordable for an adult earning minimum wage (\$7.25/hour), monthly rent must be \$377 or less.⁷⁴

2022 Fair Market Rent (FMR), Sweetwater County

Efficiency	One-Bedroom	Two-Bedroom	Three-Bedroom	Housing Wage for 2-Bedroom
2022				
\$692	\$704	\$802	\$1,139	\$16.12
2023				
\$772	\$789	\$891	\$1,216	\$17.14

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Office of Policy Development and Research

FOOD INSECURITY

Food insecurity refers to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s measure of lack of access to a sufficient amount of food for an active, healthy life for household members, and limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods. Food insecurity may reflect a household’s need to make trade-offs between basic needs, such as housing or medical bills, and purchasing nutritionally adequate foods.

The 2020 *child* food insecurity rate was 15.4% in Sweetwater County, higher than Wyoming (12.9%) and the U.S. (16.1%). The 2020 *overall* food insecurity rate was 11.5% in Sweetwater County. While the overall food insecurity rate among the White, non-Hispanic population was 10%, the food insecurity rate was 14% for the Hispanic/Latino population. Data is not available for other races.⁷⁵

Food Insecurity			
Age*	2018	2019	2020
Sweetwater County			
Child (<18 years)	15.4%	14.7%	15.4%
Overall	11.7%	11.3%	11.5%
Wyoming			
Child (<18 years)	15.9%	14.6%	12.9%
Overall	12.2%	11.7%	10.2%
United States			
Child (<18 years)	15.2%	14.6%	16.1%
Overall	11.5%	10.9%	11.8%

Note: "Overall" refers to all individuals, including children, regardless of race or ethnicity

Source: Feeding America

In June 2022, Congress passed the Keep Kids Fed Act (S. 2089), a bipartisan and bicameral bill to help mitigate the impact of the loss of the child nutrition waivers which were due to expire on June 30, 2022. This bill increases reimbursements to schools and child care centers, support access to summer meals, and streamlines access to healthy meals for children in family child care.

Following are the provisions of the Keep Kids Fed Act:⁷⁶

- Increases Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Reimbursements by 10 cents for each meal and snack for childcare providers and afterschool programs to stem participation declines, support good nutrition, and provide relief for struggling child care to cope with supply chain and cost issues.
- Extends the area eligibility waiver allowing family child care homes to receive the higher Tier 1 reimbursements through the (CACFP). Streamlines access to healthy meals for children in family child care homes by extending the area eligibility test waiver. This year, one of the most pressing problems is that schools do not have the income data needed to establish area eligibility. In addition, this test is not an effective mechanism; it misses many providers serving children from low income households, especially in rural and suburban areas.
- Extends non-cost nationwide waivers through school year 2022–2023.
- Increases school breakfast reimbursement by 15 cents and school lunch reimbursement by 40 cents.

OPIOID ABUSE

One hundred thousand (100,000) Americans died from a drug overdose between April 2020 and April 2021, a 30% increase from the prior one-year period (April 2019 – April 2020).⁷⁷ In 2021, more than 107,000 Americans died of drug overdoses, setting another tragic record in the nation's escalating overdose epidemic, according to the Centers for Disease Control. The provisional 2021 total translates to roughly one U.S. overdose death every 5 minutes, a 15% increase from the previous record in 2020.⁷⁸

In 2021, overdoses involving fentanyl and other synthetic opioids surpassed 71,000, up 23% from 2020. There also was a 23% increase in deaths involving cocaine and a 34% increase in deaths involving methamphetamine and other stimulants. Experts say the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the problem as lockdowns and other restrictions isolated those with addictions and made treatment harder to get. Further, there has been an increased presence of the synthetic opioid fentanyl in the country.⁷⁹

State health data shows that 108 Wyoming residents died from drug overdoses in 2021 — 65 involved opioids, 44 involved methamphetamine, and 43 involved fentanyl. The second-highest number of drug overdoses recorded since 2012 was in 2014, when the Wyoming Department of Health reported 107 deaths. In 2020, 100 residents died from drug overdoses, data shows. Wyoming's suicide rate also hit a record high in 2021.⁸⁰

TRANSPORTATION

Of households, just 1.9% in Sweetwater County are estimated to not have a vehicle, compared to 3.8% in Wyoming and 8.5% in the United States. Of renter-occupied households in Sweetwater County, 3.9% are without a motor vehicle, compared to 1.3% of owner-occupied households.⁸¹

Households with No Motor Vehicle

	Total Occupied Households	Households with No Motor Vehicle (Count)	Households with No Motor Vehicle (Percent)
Sweetwater County	15,726	301	1.9%
Wyoming	233,231	8,857	3.8%
United States	122,354,219	10,344,521	8.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2020 Five-Year Estimates

Households with No Motor Vehicle by Tenure

Location	Owner-Occupied Households		Renter-Occupied Households	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Sweetwater County	150	1.3%	151	3.9%
Wyoming	2,842	1.7%	6,015	8.9%
United States	2,457,633	3.1%	7,886,888	18.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2020 Five-Year Estimates

Public transportation is limited in Sweetwater County. STAR – Sweetwater Transit Authority is public transportation serving Sweetwater County. There is a fixed route service with door-to-door service. STAR offers Deviated Fixed Route service on all of its regular routes. A deviated – fixed route service is a hybrid of fixed route and demand response services. With this type of service, a bus stops at fixed points and keeps to a timetable but can deviate its course between two stops to go to a specific location for a pre-scheduled request. After deviating from the route buses return to the same point to continue their run. Deviated Fixed Route service requires one hour advance reservation. Deviated service is offered within one-quarter mile of all regular routes. For those that live outside the one-quarter of a mile, STAR provides para-transit door-to-door service. Demand Response rides are still available to those outside the fixed route service area on a first come first serve basis, by appointment with 24-hour notice. This includes all areas outside the City of Rock Springs.

SURVEYS

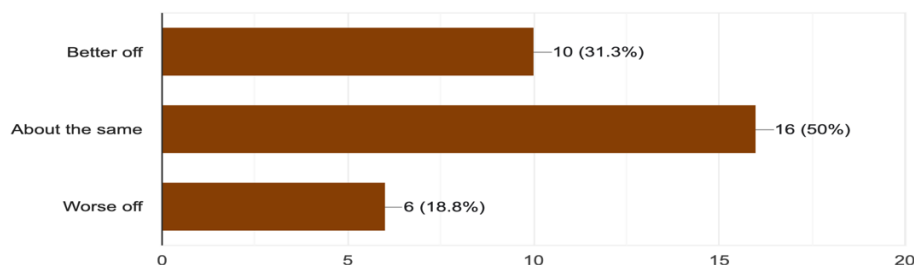
FAMILY SURVEY

As part of the Community Assessment process, a survey was given to Head Start families. Thirty-two families responded.

Has your family recently experienced any challenges with the following (within last 12 months)?

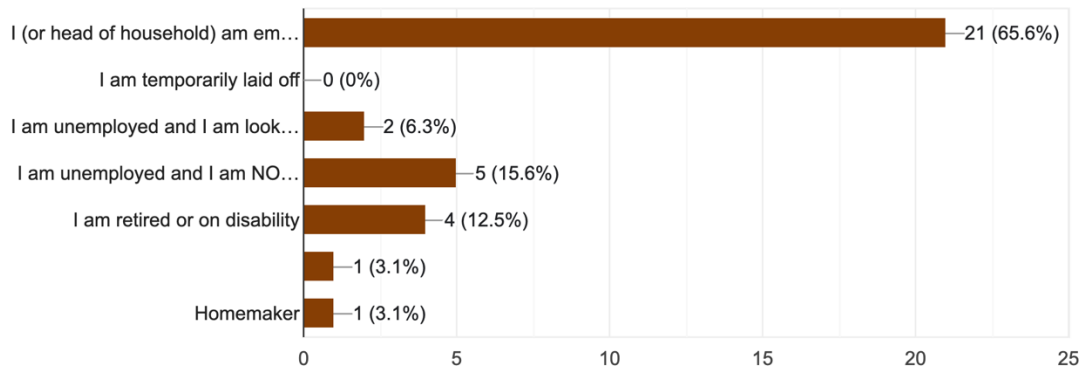
Indicators	Never or Rarely	Sometimes	Always or Often	Not Applicable
Having or Finding Affordable and Safe Housing	62.5%	15.6%	18.7%	6.2%
Having or Finding a Job with a Wage to Support my Family	46.8%	31.2%	18.7%	3.1%
Paying for Utilities (electricity, water, heat)	37.5%	37.5%	18.7%	6.2%
Access to Affordable Mental Health/Behavioral Health Services	46.8%	34.3%	12.5%	9.3%
Support for My Child with Disabilities	62.5%	15.6%	3.1%	21.8%
Immigration Concerns	62.5%	12.5%	0.0%	25%
Access to Quality, Affordable Child Care for my Infant/Toddler	53.1%	18.7%	12.5%	12.5%
Access to Quality, Affordable Child Care for my Preschooler	56%	21.8%	15.6%	9.3%
Dealing with my Child's Behaviors	37.5%	50.0%	6.2%	6.2%
Access to Adult Education Options (e.g., GED, college)	59.3%	21.8%	6.2%	12.5%
Family Member in Jail/Prison	56.2%	18.7%	9.3%	15.6%
Lack of Language Translation Services	68.7%	15.6%	3.1%	15.6%

Compared with one year ago, is your family financially:
32 responses



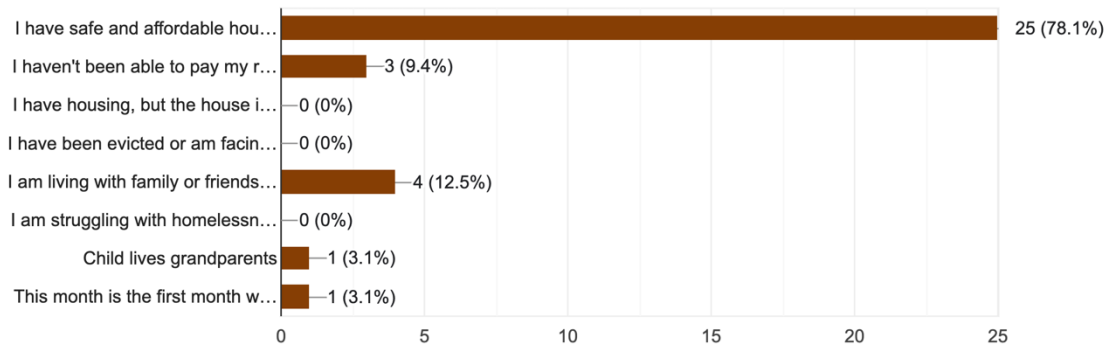
Which of the following best describes your employment? (Please choose only 1 answer)

32 responses



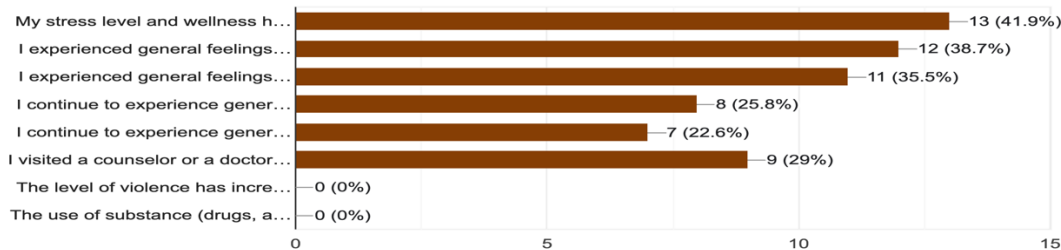
Which of the following best describes your current housing situation? (Please choose 1 answer only)

32 responses



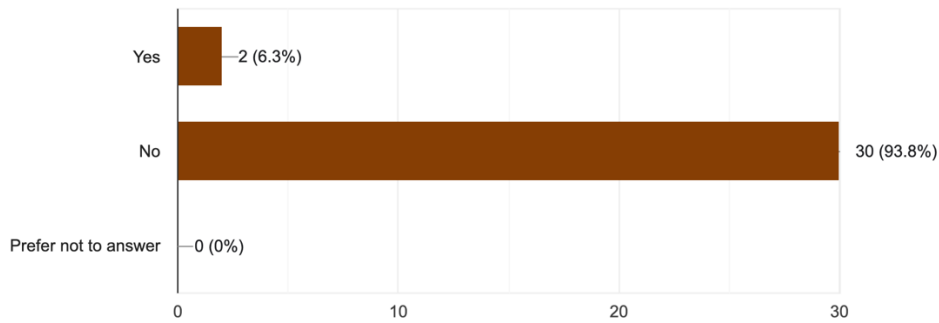
To what extent has your stress level and/or wellness been affected in the past 2 years? (Choose ALL that apply)

31 responses



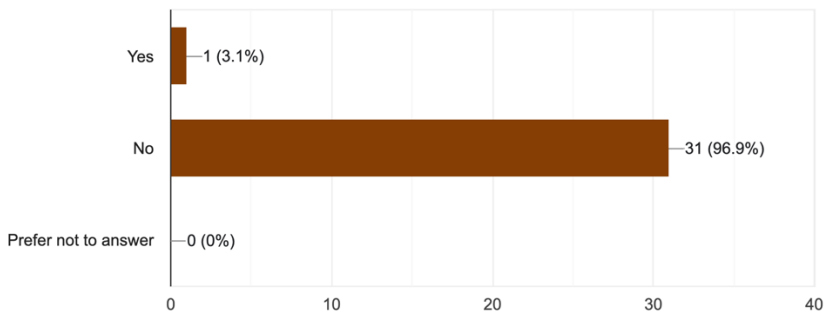
Within the past year, has your family received different treatment due to your race, language, and/or religion? (treated differently than others, treated unfairly, or excluded from activities)

32 responses



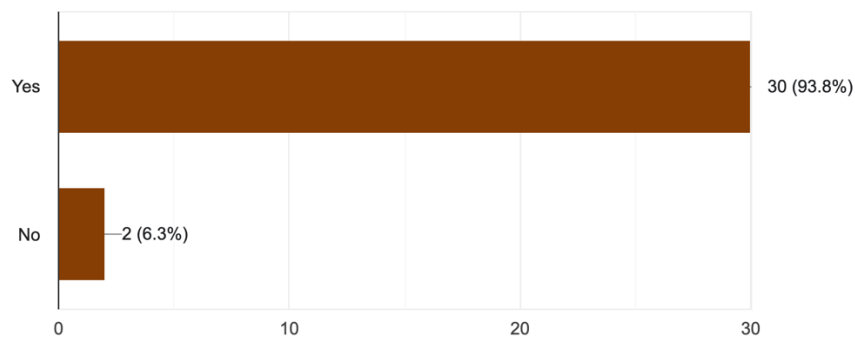
Within the past year, has your family been afraid or concerned about your safety due to your race, language and/or religion?

32 responses



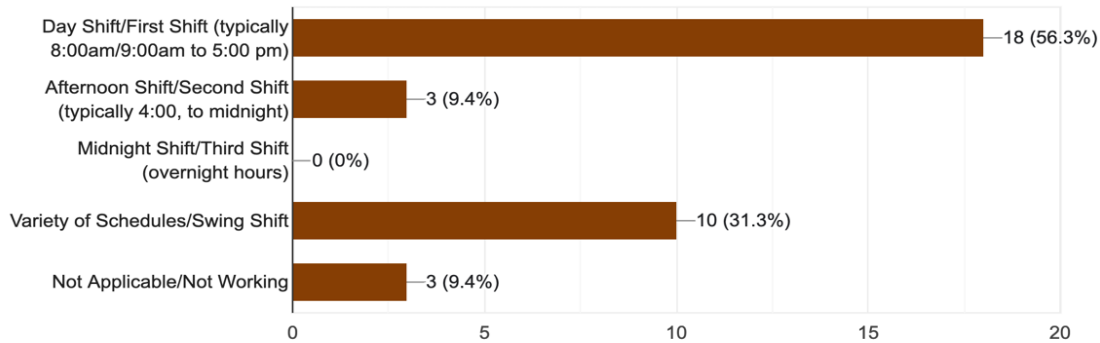
Do the hours of our Head Start program meet your family's needs?

32 responses



What hours does the head of the household work? (Choose only one answer)

32 responses

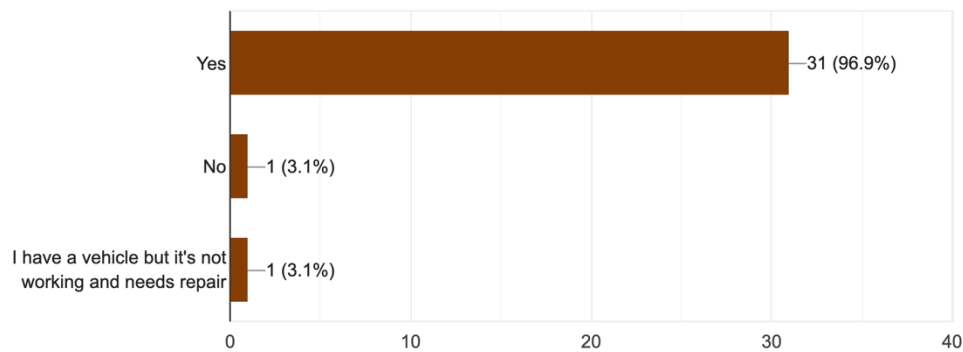


Has your family recently experienced any challenges with the following (within last 12 months)?

	Never or Rarely	Sometimes	Always or Often
Managing and Budgeting Money	34%	46.8%	18.7%
Access to Banking Services	81.2%	15.6%	3.1%
Access to Affordable Medical Care/Insurance	65.6%	21.8%	12.5 %
Access to Affordable Dental Care	56.0%	34.3%	12.5%
Drug Abuse or Alcoholism in my Home	96.0%	0.0%	3.1%
Feelings of Anxiety and/or Depression (sadness, loneliness, worry, and/or fear)	46.8%	43.7%	9.3%
Violence in my Neighborhood	96.8%	3.1%	0.0%
Verbal or Emotional Abuse in your Home (excessive control, insults, threats)	100%	0.0%	0.0%
Having Enough Food to Feed My Family	62.5%	25.0%	12.5%
Access to Affordable Food/Produce	56.2%	37.5%	9.3%
Access to Phone Service	68.7%	25.0%	6.2%
Access to Computer/Internet	62.5%	28.1%	9.3%
Fear of Violence in your Home (hitting, threats, fighting)	100%	18.7%	0.0%
Lack of Reliable Transportation	81.2%	18.7%	0.0%

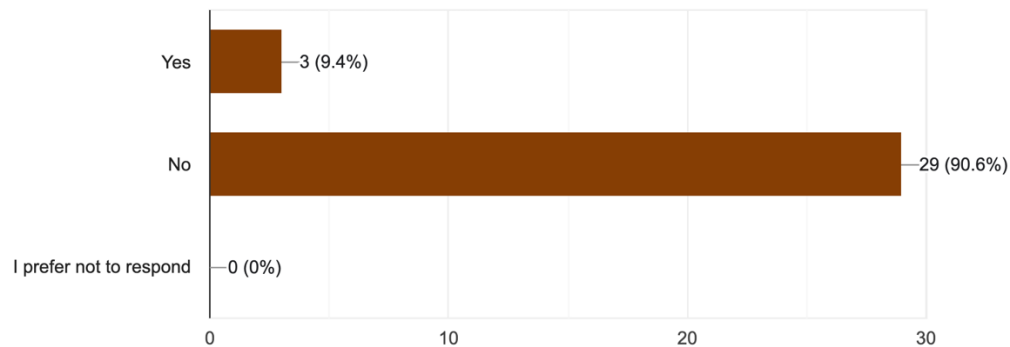
Do you have a vehicle?

32 responses



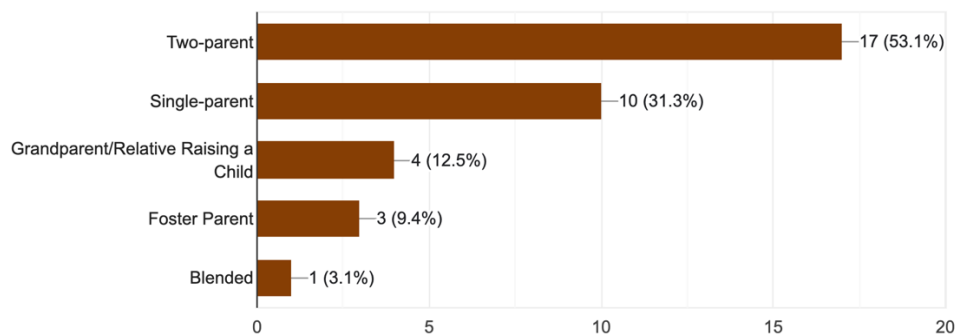
Has your family been directly affected (past or present) by a drug problem in the community?

32 responses



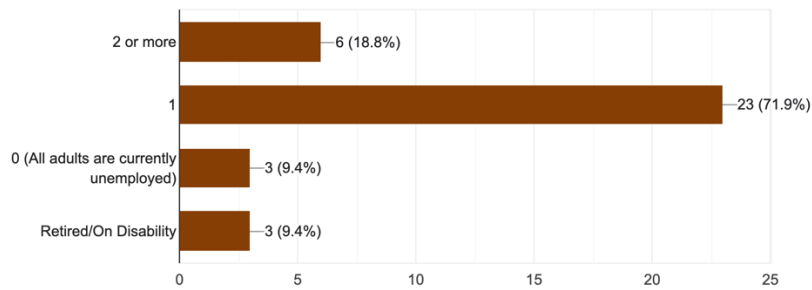
Which best describes your family? (Choose only one answer.)

32 responses



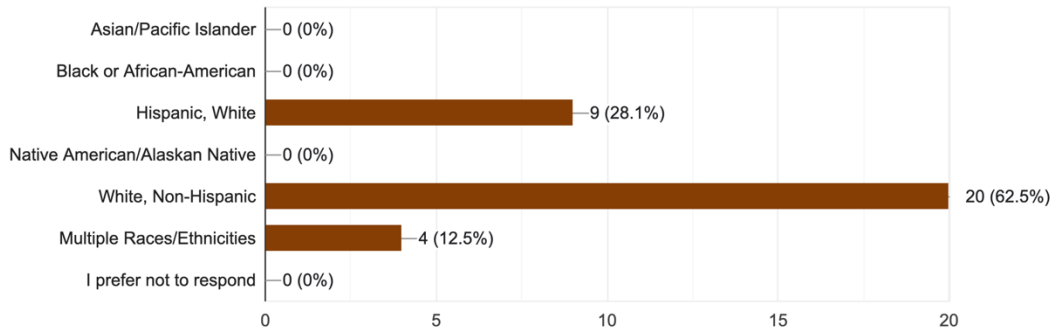
Including yourself, how many adults in your home are currently employed

32 responses



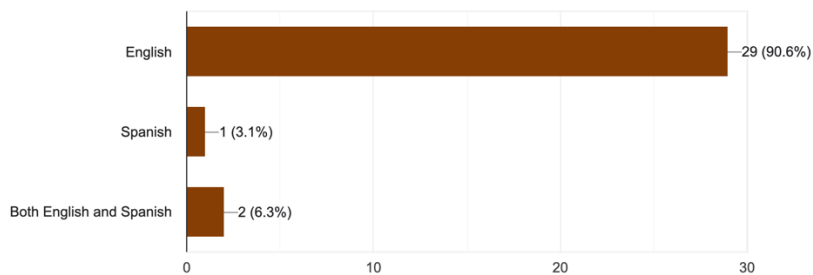
Which race/ethnicity best describes you?

32 responses



In what language do you most often speak?

32 responses



What do you like MOST about your neighborhood/community?

Comments:

- Lack of a lot of people.
- Somewhat safe.
- Always willing to help
- We have good people here.
- They are helpful
- It's on the smaller side
- Quiet
- Support
- Safe street love our neighbors.

Family

- It's quiet and safe for our kids
- They help to all those in need
- Quiet and clean
- It's nice and clean and quiet
- How quiet and friendly it is.
- My neighborhood is very quiet, and all the individuals we associate with in our neighborhood are always friendly. I enjoy that as a whole our community is great at coming together for families going through tough times.
- Eagerness to help out.
- Great friends
- It is safe and affordable
- It's very quiet and my kids have friends
- Comfort and safety.
- It's quiet and peaceful
- The parks and our neighbors

Is there anything else you'd like to share about your family's needs?

Comments:

There were no comments

COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

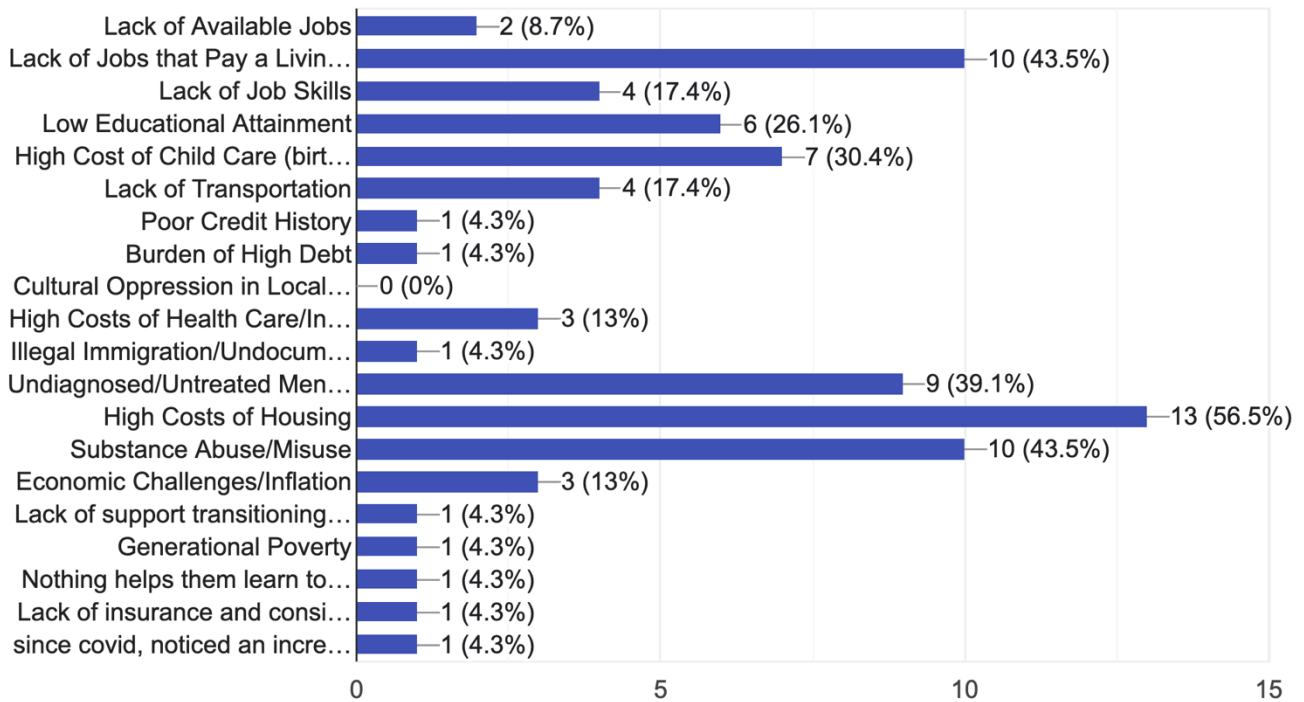
A survey was distributed to community organizations across Sweetwater County. Special thanks to the 23 organizations and agencies that participated in the Community Assessment process.

Consider families living in poverty in your community, including those to whom you provide direct services. Select the response that best describes to what extent each item is, or is not, CURRENTLY a challenge for families in poverty.

Indicator	Never or Seldom	Sometimes	Often or Consistently	No Opinion or Unsure
Access to Affordable Housing	0.0%	13.0%	78.2%	8.6%
Housing Eviction Concerns	0.0%	34.7%	47.8%	17.4%
Unemployment Resulting from COVID Shutdowns	43.4%	26.0%	4.3%	30.4%
Availability of Jobs which Pay a Living Wage	0.0%	52.1%	39.1%	8.6%
Access to Public Transportation	4.3%	39.1%	47.8%	8.6%
Access to Adult Education (e.g., GED, college)	17.3%	43.4%	17.3%	21.7%
Access to Job Training	8.6%	43.4%	21.7%	26.0%
Access to Affordable Medical Care/Insurance	0.0%	52.0%	43.4%	4.3%
Depression/Anxiety	4.3%	13.0%	73.9%	8.6%
Access to Mental Health Services	0.0%	21.7%	65.2%	13.0%
Access to Affordable Dental Services	4.3%	30.4%	52.1%	13.0%
Illegal or Prescription Drug Abuse	0.0%	34.7%	52.1%	13.0%
Immigration Concerns/Needs	13.0%	56.0%	17.3%	13.0%
Cultural Oppression (race, ethnicity, religion)	26.0%	43.4%	4.3%	26.0%
Access to Healthy Foods	8.6%	39.1%	43.4%	8.6%
Access to Services for Children with Disabilities	13%	34.7%	39.1%	17.4%
Access to Affordable Child Care (Infants/Toddlers)	0.0%	26.0%	65.2%	8.6%
Access to Affordable Preschool/Child Care (3-5)	4.3%	47.8%	39.1%	8.6%
Community Violence	21.7%	39%	8.6%	30.4%

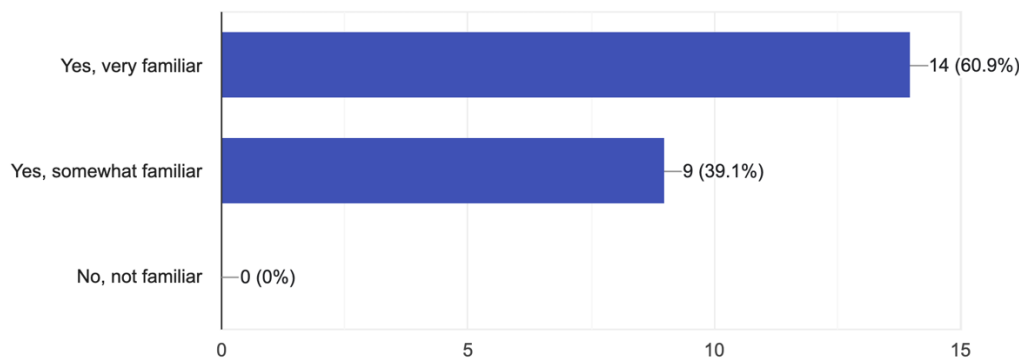
Barriers to Self-Sufficiency: In your opinion, what are the top three (3) community conditions that most often prevent families from moving from poverty to self-sufficiency in your community? Please select 3.

23 responses



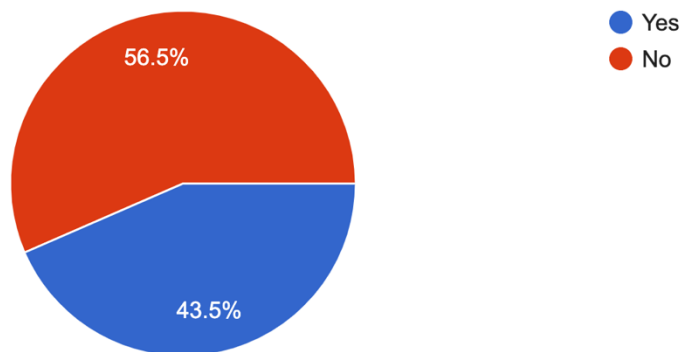
Are you familiar with the Head Start program in Sweetwater County School District #1?

23 responses



Have you referred a parent and/or family to our Head Start program within the past year?

23 responses



Please choose the response that BEST describes your current relationship with our organization.

23 responses



COMMUNITY RESOURCES

For community resource information in Sweetwater County, visit <https://wy211.communityos.org/>

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- ⁷³ Formula: FMR multiplied by 12 (months), divided by 30% (cost burdened rate), divided by 2,080 (full time hrs.)
- ⁷⁴ Formula: Min. wage multiplied by 2,080 (full time hours), divided by 12 months, multiplied by 30% (cost burdened rate).
- ⁷⁵ Feeding America. (2020) Retrieved September 2022 from www.FeedingAmerica.com
- ⁷⁶ Sutton, Colleen Barton. "Congress Passes Bipartisan, Bicameral Keep Kids Fed Act." *Food Research & Action Center*, 25 June 2022, <https://frac.org/blog/congress-passes-keep-kids-fed-act#:~:text=%20Here%20are%20the%20provisions%20of%20the%20Keep,care%20homes%20to%20receive%20the%20higher...%20More%20>.
- ⁷⁷ Brynes, H. (2021, July 22). *This is Where NY Ranks In Drug Overdose Deaths in 2020*. The Record. Retrieved Feb 2022, from <https://www.troyrecord.com/2021/07/22/this-is-where-new-york-ranks-in-drug-overdose-deaths-in-2020/>
- ⁷⁸ Associated Press. (2022, May 11). *US Overdose Deaths Hit Record Last Year, with 923 in Oklahoma Alone, CDC says*. The Oklahoman. Retrieved October 2022, from <https://www.oklahoman.com/story/news/2022/05/11/fentanyl-overdose-symptoms-deaths-rise-oklahoma-nationwide-cdc-review-says/9735437002/>
- ⁷⁹ Associated Press. (2022, May 11). *US Overdose Deaths Hit Record Last Year, with 923 in Oklahoma Alone, CDC says*. The Oklahoman.
- ⁸⁰ <https://wyomingtruth.org/blog-other-news/wyoming-records-most-drug-overdoses-in-years-as-community-leaders-discuss-mental-health-issues>
- ⁸¹ U.S. Census Bureau. (March 2022). *American Community Survey 2020 5-Year Estimates*, Chart S2504. Retrieved from <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>