



COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

2017-18

Abstract

A report conducted by Early Learning and Family Services of the strengths, needs, and experiences of low-income families with young children in Whatcom County



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Executive Summary

The 2017-18 Community Assessment reflects the most recent data available, including the 2012-16 American Community Survey conducted by the US Census Bureau. Other sources include data from the Office of Financial Management, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Whatcom County funded reports, where appropriate. In addition, two surveys of services and experiences of low-income families with age-eligible children were conducted.

Key Findings

Demographic Make-up of Eligible Children & Families

- Since the last community assessment Whatcom County has continued its upward population growth. Most population is from net in-migration from other areas. Though the largest population change has occurred in Downtown Bellingham (37%), Census Tracts in Ferndale (8%), northeast of Bellingham (8%), and North Bellingham – Marietta Alderwood (6%) have made up the largest percentage of the growth.
- Whatcom Household Median Income has regained ground to where it stood in the 1980's and 1990's, but is still lower than the high in 1999.
- Residents under 18 years of age continue to see poverty levels higher than those 65 and older.
- Racial and ethnic diversity continues to increase, with areas in Bellingham, Ferndale, Lynden, Sumas, Everson, and Nooksack seeing the most growth.

Other Programs Serving Head Start/ECEAP-Eligible Children

- The population of families enrolling in public school offerings is more racially and ethnically diverse than the county at large.
- The cost of childcare continues to increase. Childcare for a family with an infant and a preschool child would cost 34-38% of median income.
- Part-day State-funded preschool slots have been added by two peer agencies since 2016.

Young Children with Disabilities and Related Services

- The 2012-2016 American Community Survey indicates that two of five categorical types of disabilities for children and youth ages 5-17 have increased since 2012.
- The volume of students in Whatcom County districts classified as special education has continued to increase since the 2014 Community Assessment.
- Early Support for Infants and Toddlers has seen an increase in the number of infants/toddlers in need of special services as well.
- In calendar year 2017, the Single-Entry Access to Services hotline and service navigation system, an OC-ELAFS-staffed community resource to identify children with known or suspected special needs, served more than 1,000 unduplicated customers for the first time in its history.

The Education, Health, Nutrition and Social Service Needs of Head Start-eligible Children and Families

- The 2012-16 American Community Survey reported that 91% of Whatcom County citizens over the age of 25 had either a high school diploma or GED. 32.6% had a Bachelor's degree or higher.
- In Whatcom County 4.3% of children under the age of 18 had no health insurance coverage
- In 2016, 12% of expectant mothers in Whatcom County did not get prenatal care until in their fifth month of the pregnancy or later; 1% waited until the last trimester (the official definition of "late" prenatal care). Statewide in 2016 the comparable percentages were 11% and 1%, respectively.
- In two of the seven local districts, over 50% of students relied on free and reduced meal programs

Education, Health, Nutrition and Social Service Needs of Head Start-eligible Children & their Families as Defined by Families of Head Start-eligible Children and by Institutions / Community Resources

- One quarter of Prosperity Project respondents (a decade-long benchmarked report of the experiences of local families of low income) who had age eligible children who were not enrolled in Head Start/ECEAP or EHS, had either a high school diploma or a GED. A little over a third had attended some college or vocational school.
- 58% respondents reported that getting or keeping a good job had been a problem for someone in their household. The lack of jobs in the area was the highest reported barrier.
- 41% percent of respondents reported that, in the past 12 months, there was a time when they needed medical, dental, mental health care, or prescriptions and did not receive it.
- 72% said that in the past twelve months they had skipped meals because they could not get enough food, and 39% said that someone at home had gone hungry. In addition, 92% of the households reported using some form of food assistance.
- Social Services perceived most frequently as having an extreme service gap are living wage jobs (27%), housing help (26%), affordable childcare (23%), and affordable dental (22%).

Overview of the State of the Grantee

Opportunity Council is a private nonprofit community action agency. Our mission is to help people improve their lives through education, support, and direct assistance while advocating for just and equitable communities. The Opportunity Council provides services such as basic needs, emergency housing, home improvement, and information and referral, as well as early learning and other prevention or capacity building programming.

In support of the Opportunity Council's mission, the Early Learning and Family Services Department (ELAFS) ensures that all children and families have the knowledge, skills, and support for success in school and all future opportunities. With an estimated population over 212,284, and its largest population center encompassing some 85,250 inhabitants, Whatcom County has at any one time over 11,570 pre-school aged lives in need of nurturing development and support. ELAFS is the primary publicly funded social development and educational readiness programming provider for low-income families with children in this age group and for other early learning service providers who also serve the population.

The ELAFS Department consists of four main program areas, all with the ultimate focus on the development of young children in our service areas.

Birth to Three Services

Programs: Early Head Start, Early Support for Infant and Toddlers, and Single Entry Access to Services (SEAS).

Service Area: Whatcom County

Preschool Services

Programs: Head Start, Early Childhood Education Assistance Program (ECEAP)

Service Area: Whatcom County

Quality Child Care

Programs: Child Care Aware of Northwest Washington, Early Achievers, Child Nutrition Programs, Emergency and Homeless Child Care Subsidies, and Collaboration for Child Care Training

Service Area: Island, San Juan, Snohomish, Skagit, Whatcom

East Whatcom Regional Center

The East Whatcom Regional Resource Center (EWRRC) is located in Maple Falls, Washington. A Whatcom County Parks facility, it is managed by the Opportunity Council. The facility opened in September 2011, and provides space for a preschool program, youth and teen programming, community meetings, neighborhood events, private events, as well as a variety of information and resource events and programming throughout the year for residents in Eastern Whatcom County.

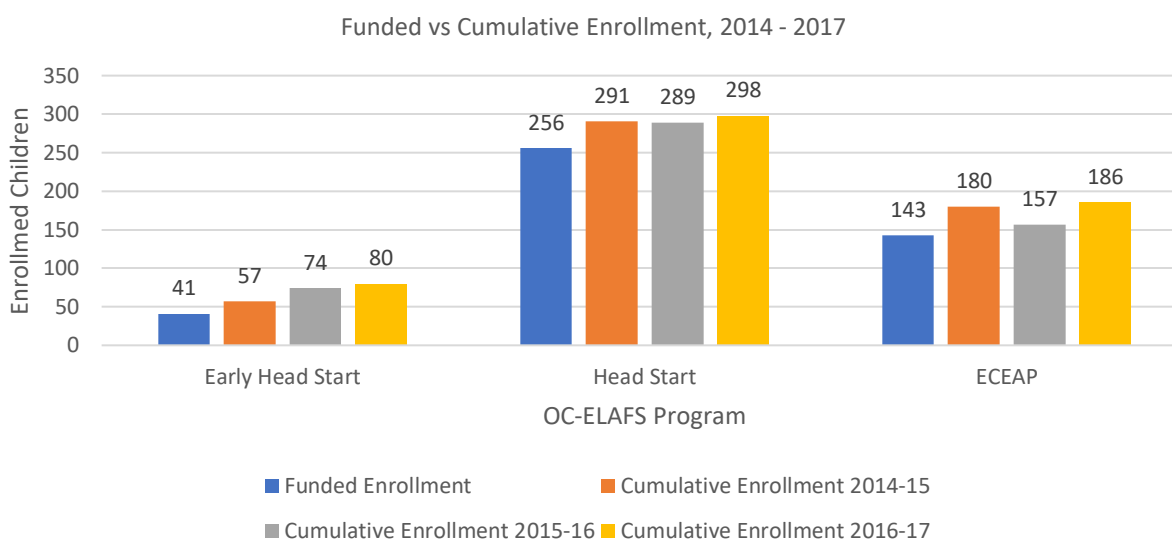
Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility for ELAFS programs depends on funder requirements. This report will focus primarily on the eligibility for the Head Start/ECEAP and Early Head Start programs. From the Head Start Knowledge and Learning Center, “Children from birth to age five who are from families with incomes below the poverty guidelines are eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start services. Children from homeless families, and families receiving public assistance such as TANF or SSI are also eligible. Foster children are eligible regardless of their foster family’s income.” Washington’s ECEAP preschool program runs very parallel to these national criteria. The ELAFS program follows these guidelines, therefore, when determining eligibility for these programs.

Number of Eligible Children Served and Cumulative Enrollment

Figure 1 compares the funded enrollments for the Head Start (256 slots), ECEAP (143 slots), and Early Head Start (41 slots) programs, and PIR reported cumulative enrollment for the past three program years. Any pending expansion proposals are not reflected.

Figure 1. Funded vs. Cumulative Enrollment



Cultural and Linguistic Features of Enrolled Children and Families

Table 1 details the racial and ethnic background of enrolled children, and Table 2 the primary language spoken at home, based on PIR data during the 2016-17 Program Year.

Table 1. Race/Ethnicity of Enrolled Children

Race/Ethnicity	Early Head Start	Head Start	ECEAP	Total
Asian	2	6	13	21
Black	0	6	7	13
Hispanic/Latino	25	89	48	162
Indian/Alaskan Native	2	8	5	15
Multi/Bi-Racial	13	38	28	79
Other	9	25	9	43
Pacific Islander	2	0	2	4
Unspecified	5	33	16	54
White	46	174	98	318

Table 2. Primary Language Spoken by Enrolled Families

Language	Number of Families
Arabic	2
Armenian	1
Chinese	1
English	421
Ethiopian	1
Farsi	1
Hindi	2
Punjabi	14
Russian	4
Sign Language	1
Spanish	81
Ukrainian	1

Program Options

Early Learning and Family Services' preschool and program options are designed to meet the needs of families in our service area. Preschool programs are located throughout Whatcom county with coverage in the major centers of population as seen in Figure 2 and Figure 3.

Table 3. Head Start and ECEAP Program Options

Program	Part Day (3-4.5 Hours)	Full Day (6 Hours)	Extended Day (8-12 Hours)
ECEAP	72	36	35
Head Start	256		

Table 4. Early Head Start Program Options

Program	Center Based Combination	Home Based
Early Head Start	10	31

Figure 2. Opportunity Council Head Start/ECEAP and Early Head Start Service Area - Whatcom County

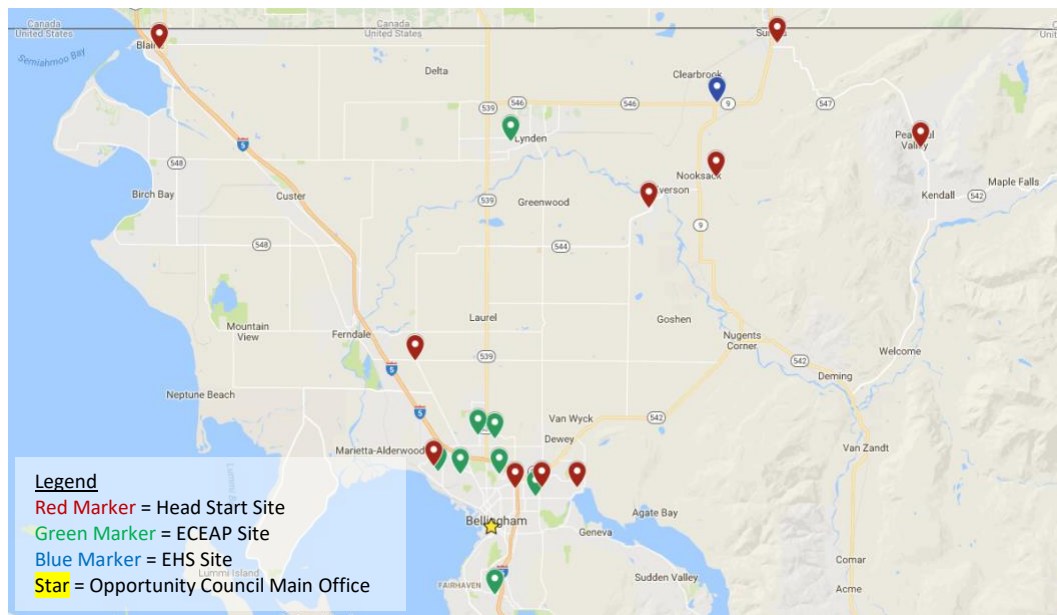
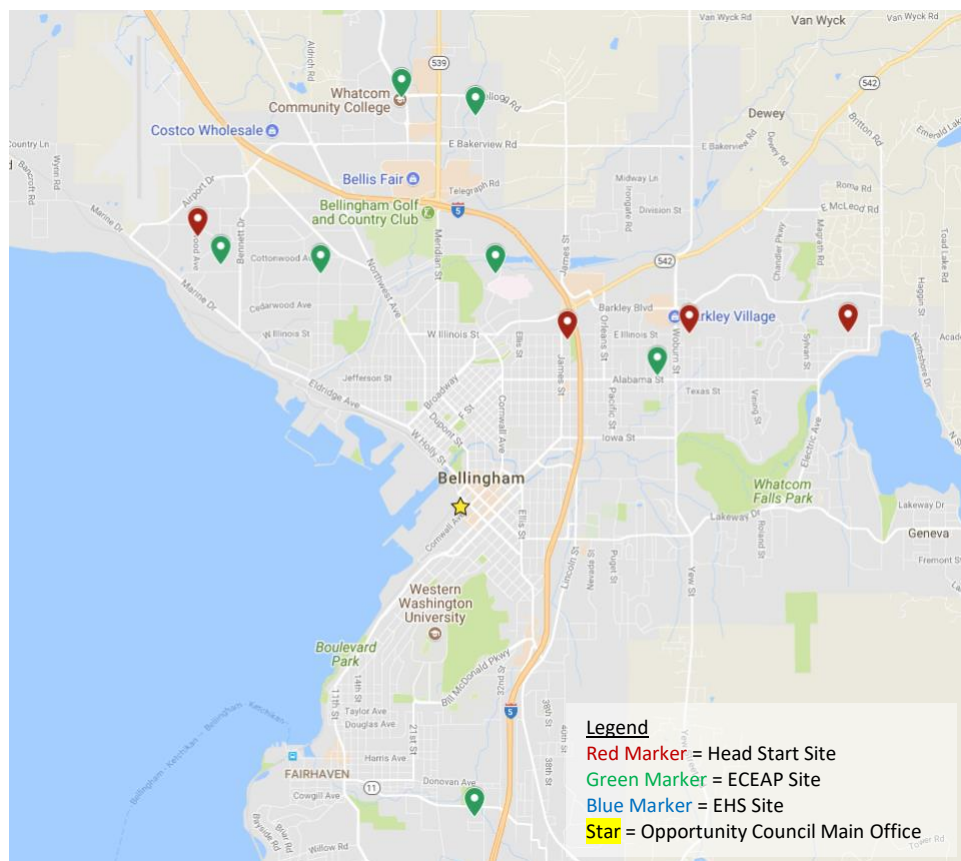


Figure 3. Opportunity Council Service Area - Bellingham WA



Methodology

It is the expectation of the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Washington State Department of Early Learning that all grantees conduct periodic assessments of their communities to ensure maximum access to services and well-designed, quality programs.

Community Needs Assessment (CNA) Process

For the 2017-18 CNA update, data from the prior surveys was referenced for update, and new data was identified through a cross departmental team. The team members represented the three main divisions of the Early Learning and Family Services department, including Birth-to-Three, Preschool Services, and Quality Child Care. Team members served as a data quality check, and as sources of data outside of those traditionally collected.

Sources for the CA Information

This assessment uses a variety of data collection methodologies to increase the probability that the information gathered on families and communities in Whatcom County is valid. These include:

- Local, state, and national government demographic databases and reports, including any updated data tables from the U.S. Census.
- Review of professional association and other reports and studies relevant to ELAFS service populations or the local communities that form the context for those populations.
- Review of ELAFS existing participant families' feedback on service needs.
- Data from the Whatcom Prosperity Project, sub-sample report of families with young children.

Report Format

The 2017-18 CNA uses the six assessment area guidelines outlined in the Head Start standards (1305.3) for its structure. In that the Washington ECEAP assessment guidelines specifically state that their assessment should "align with Head Start," and the ECEAP specific standards generally encompass Head Start standards, this report organizes around Head Start standards, listed in the table below.

In addition, baselines and comparison data from past assessments provide emphasis of any trends of relevance. In some important demographic or other specialized data sets, there was no new information since the prior assessment at the time of this writing. In those instances, the data from the prior assessment is the most recent information available. These, then, are the best available findings describing the communities targeted for service by Early Learning and Family Services.

Table 5 Community Assessment Guidelines

Head Start/Early Head Start	Washington ECEAP
1. Demographic make-up of Head Start eligible children and families, including their estimated number, geographic location, and racial and ethnic composition;	1. Identify the demographics and location of eligible children and their families;
2. Other child development and child care programs that are serving Head Start-eligible children, including publicly funded state and local preschool programs, and the approximate number of Head Start eligible children served by each;	2. Identify available local services and resources;
3. The estimated number of children with disabilities four years old or younger, including types of disabilities and relevant services and resources provided to these children by community agencies	3. Identify the services and program design(s) that best meet individual and community needs;
4. Data regarding the education, health, nutrition and social service needs of Head Start-eligible children and their families	4. Prioritize the comprehensive service needs of eligible children and families;
5. The education, health, nutrition and social service needs of Head Start eligible children and their families as defined by families of Head Start-eligible children and by institutions in the community that serve young children;	5. Prioritize the geographic areas where services are needed;
6. Resources in the community that could be used to address the needs of Head Start-eligible children and their families, including assessments of their availability and accessibility	6. Identify opportunities for coordination and collaboration with other community agencies;

Data Collected and Findings

Overview of Service Area and Recruitment Areas

Employment

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), as of September 2017, the unemployment rate in Whatcom County was 4.5%. For comparison, the Washington State rate at that same time was reported as 4.6%. The BLS data shows a downward trend in unemployment, since a high of 11.1% in February, 2010.

In October 2017, industry employment was as follows:¹

Table 6. Whatcom County Industry Employment

Industry Title	October 2017
Total Private	76,200
Total Nonfarm	95,100
Mining, Logging, and Construction	8,500
Manufacturing	10,300
Private Service Providing	57,400
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	16,700
Financial Activities	3,500
Professional and Business Services	8,600
Leisure and Hospitality	10,400
Government	18,900

Further BLS data lists the major occupational groups and accompanying wages compared to the United States average, as of May 2016, as the following:

¹ Washington State Employment Security Department, Labor Area Summaries

Table 7. Whatcom County Major Occupational Groups and Wages

Occupation	Percent of Total Employment		Mean Hourly Wage	
	United States	Bellingham MSA	United States	Bellingham MSA
Office and administrative support	15.7%	14.9%	\$17.91	\$18.03
Sales and related	10.4%	11.2%	\$19.50	\$18.00
Food preparation and serving related	9.2%	10.8%	\$11.47	\$12.76
Production	6.5%	7.8%	\$17.88	\$20.72
Education, training, and library	6.2%	7.1%	\$26.21	\$25.48
Transportation and material moving	6.9%	6.4%	\$17.34	\$18.22
Construction and extraction	4.0%	5.3%	\$23.51	\$28.60
Healthcare practitioners and technical	5.9%	5.1%	\$38.06	\$41.30
Business and financial operations	5.2%	4.6%	\$36.09	\$32.72
Management	5.1%	4.2%	\$56.74	\$49.83
Installation, maintenance, and repair	3.9%	4.0%	\$22.45	\$23.49
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance	3.2%	3.5%	\$13.47	\$14.46
Personal care and service	3.2%	3.0%	\$12.74	\$13.99
Healthcare support	2.9%	2.8%	\$14.65	\$17.67
Protective service	2.4%	1.8%	\$22.03	\$31.92
Computer and mathematical	3.0%	1.6%	\$42.25	\$34.20
Architecture and engineering	1.8%	1.6%	\$40.53	\$41.06
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media	1.4%	1.5%	\$28.07	\$21.88
Community and social service	1.4%	1.4%	\$22.69	\$23.47
Life, physical, and social science	0.8%	0.7%	\$35.06	\$29.23
Legal	0.8%	0.5%	\$50.95	\$35.29
Farming, fishing, and forestry	0.3%	0.4%	\$13.37	\$19.50
Total			\$26.50	\$25.99

In 2016, the five largest employers in Whatcom County were:²

Table 8. Whatcom County Five Largest Employers

Rank	Company	Number of Full Time Employment Positions
1.	St. Joseph's Hospital	2,126
2.	Lummi Nation	1,780
3.	Western Washington University	1,499
4.	Bellingham Public Schools	987
5.	Whatcom County	881

Housing

According to the Washington Center for Real Estate Research, the median cost to purchase a home in Whatcom County in Q1 2017 was \$329,500. Compared to 2016 prices, in 2017 the median price increased by 8.4%.

The American Community Survey, 2012-2016 5-Year Estimates provide further detail into the housing stock and costs in Whatcom County over the last three years.

Table 9. Housing Characteristics - Whatcom County

Housing Characteristics - Whatcom County	2016	2015	2014
Total Housing Units	92,586	91,911	91,447
Occupied Housing Units	81,019	79,767	79,837
Vacant Housing Units	11,567	12,114	11,610
Homeowner Vacancy Rate	1.4%	1.6%	1.4%
Rental Vacancy Rate	3.6%	4.2%	4.5%
Units that lack complete plumbing facilities	367	376	397
Units that lack complete kitchen facilities	1,037	846	873
Median Mortgage	\$1,619	\$1,612	\$1,628
Median Rent	\$938	\$925	\$919
Monthly owner costs > 30% of household income	34%	36.7%	39.3%
Gross rent as a > 30% of household income	56.9%	56.6%	56.5%

Information on the 81,019 Housing Units sheds light on the types of households most commonly found in Whatcom county. Sixty percent were family households, with 47.6% of these a married household, male-householders with no wife present made up 3.9%, and female

² Center for Economic and Business Research of Western Washington University

householders with no husband present made up 9%. Twenty-six percent were households with related children, and 5.4% of those had children under 6 years old.

Public School Patterns

As of academic year 2016-17, the seven public school districts in the county had a cumulative enrollment of 27,362 students.³ In 2016, there were 11,535 additional children under five in Whatcom County according to the American Community Survey. ELAFS has just 399 Head Start/ECEAP slots available to serve the qualifying low-income children in that total who were not being served by public schools, private care providers or other government-funded services.

Table 10. Selected Characteristics - Whatcom County School Districts

School District	Enrollment	Free or Reduced Meals	Special Education	Migrant
Bellingham	11,654	35%	14%	1%
Blaine	2,282	47%	17%	1%
Ferndale	4,810	45%	17%	1%
Lynden	3,258	33%	16%	2%
Meridian	1,741	36%	12%	3%
Mt. Baker	1,886	51%	19%	1%
Nooksack	1,731	52%	18%	5%

The families taking advantage of public school offerings continue to be more diverse. In academic year 2016-17, 66% of public school Pre-K and kindergarten families self-identified as white, compared to 67% in 2013-14. Those identifying as Black/African-American (1%), Asian (3%), Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander (0%), were comparable to past data as well. Those identifying as American Indian/Alaskan Native decreased from 8% to 4%. The percentage of Hispanic/Latino or two or more races identified users of the public-school services stayed the same at 16% and 7%, respectively.

³ Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Washington State Report Card

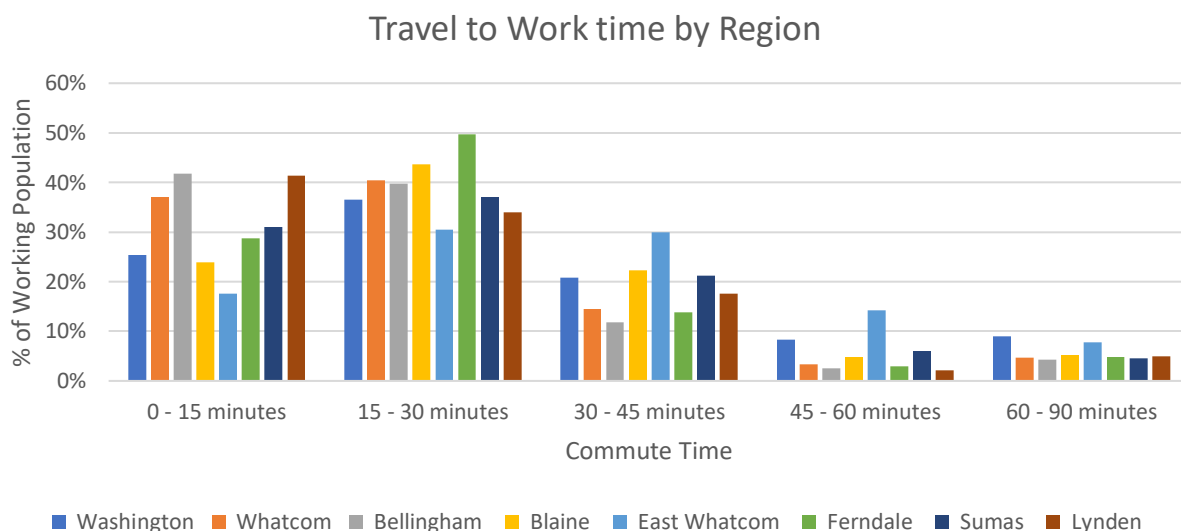
Table 11 Whatcom County Public School 2017-18 Pre-K & Kindergarten Combined Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity⁴

Race/Ethnicity	Bellingham	Blaine	Ferndale	Lynden	Meridian	Mt. Baker	Nooksack
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0%	1%	7%	1%	1%	2%	1%
Asian	2%	4%	1%	1%	3%	0%	1%
Black/African American	1%	2%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Hispanic/Latino of any race(s)	7%	17%	9%	11%	11%	7%	18%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Not Provided	4%	0%	4%	2%	0%	4%	2%
Two or More Races	35%	8%	28%	35%	35%	36%	27%
White	50%	69%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%

Transportation Patterns

Residents of Whatcom County enjoy a shorter commute compared to those in the state, with residents more frequently reporting commute times less than 30 minutes. When looking at specific county regions, residents of Bellingham (42%) and Lynden (41%) most frequently reported commute times of less than 15 minutes, while residents of East Whatcom (52%) reported commutes of greater than 45 minutes.⁵

Figure 4. Travel to Work time by Whatcom Region

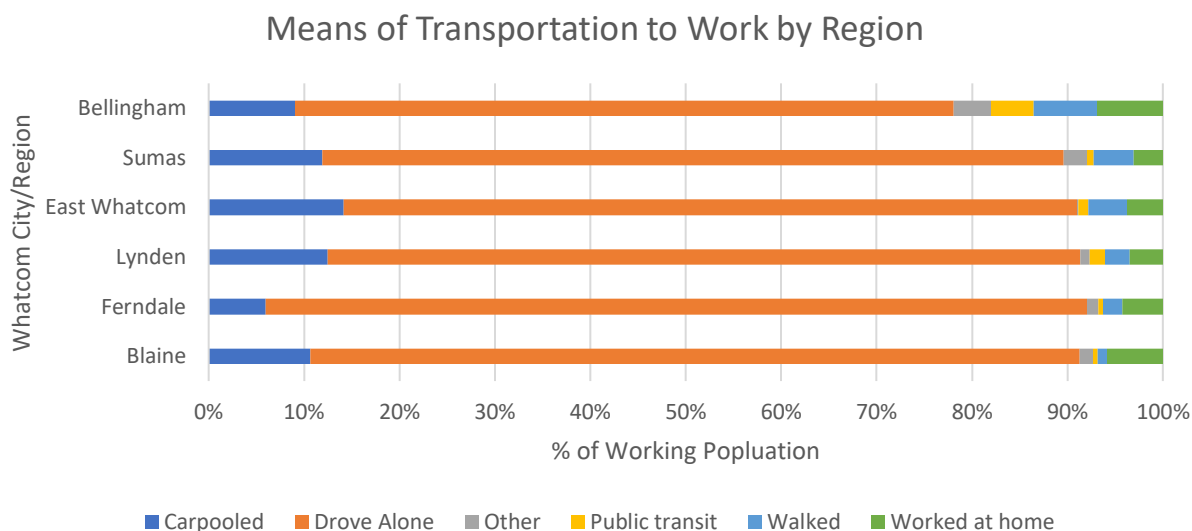


⁴ WA Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, "Public School Enrollment by Grade, October 2013"

⁵ US Census 2012-16 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

When looking at primary means of transportation to work, the county generally matches patterns seen across the state, with a slightly higher rate of driving alone (Washington 72% vs Whatcom 74%) and a lower rate of Public Transit use (Washington 6% vs Whatcom 3%). When looking at specific county regions, commuters from Ferndale reported the highest rates of driving alone (86%), East Whatcom commuters are more likely to carpool (14%), and residents of Bellingham walked to work (7%), used public transit (4%), or another means such as bicycling, taxi or motorcycle (4%) more frequently than other areas.⁶

Figure 5. Means of Transportation to Work by Region



Medical and Environmental Health Issues

According to CountyHealthRanks.org, a project of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, in 2016 Whatcom County exhibited the following Quality of Life Health Outcomes compared to Washington state as a whole.

Table 12. Health Outcomes – Quality of Life - Whatcom County vs Washington State 2016

Quality of Life Indicator	Whatcom County	Washington State
Population reporting poor or fair health	14%	16%
Poor physical health days per year	3.7	3.9
Poor mental health days per year	3.6	3.7
Uninsured	19%	16%

The physical and mental health of both children and family members can be chronic and acute impediments to educational success and family stability. Vaccinations, access to all forms of

⁶ ibid

health care, including good prenatal care, and strong wellness skills can all be important buffers against disease and injury. For Whatcom County families without employer-provided health coverage or enrollment in supportive programs such as those ELAFS operates, these items have become increasingly difficult to obtain.

- Of the 2,279 births in the county in 2016, 12% of expectant mothers did not get prenatal care until in their fifth month of the pregnancy or later; 1% waited until the last trimester (the official definition of “late” prenatal care). Statewide in 2016 the comparable percentages were 11% and 1%, respectively. One percent (13 births) of the county’s births had no prenatal care prior to delivery, comparable to the 1% of statewide births.⁷
- There were 19 fetal deaths in 2015.⁸
- Of the 14 cases of infant mortality in Whatcom County in 2015, congenital malformations attributed to four deaths, two to sudden infant death syndrome, and two to “external causes,” three to other perinatal conditions, one to hypoxia & respiratory conditions, and two to maternal factors.⁹
- In 2016, maternal smoking occurred in 8% of Whatcom pregnancies.¹⁰

Among common and communicable childhood/family diseases or illnesses in recent years, Whatcom had the following rates contrasted to the state figures.¹¹

Table 13 Rates of Common/Communicable Diseases¹²

Disease	2010 Rate	2012 Rate	2016 Rates	State Rate 2016
Campylobacteriosis	36.8	37.8	26.3	26.6
E. Coli	5	6.9	8.0	4.7
Hepatitis A	*	*	*	0.4
Hepatitis B (Acute)	*	0.0	0	0.6
Hepatitis C	*	9.3	*	1.3
HIV/AIDS	*	2.5	*	172.7
Measles	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Meningococcal disease	0.0	*	0.0	0.2
Pertussis	12.4	163.6	24.5	8.6
Tuberculosis	3.0	*	*	2.9

⁷ WA Department of Vital Statistics

⁸ Mortality table G2, WA State DOH Vital Statistics

⁹ Mortality table F5, WA State DOH Vital Statistics

¹⁰ WA State DOH Vital Stats, Table B4

¹¹ WA State Communicable Disease Report 2016

¹² *All rates are cases per 100,000 population. Incidence rates not calculated for <5 cases.

Vaccination rates in Washington for all children ages 19 to 35-months, with low-income children as a subset, remained generally strong through 2016. However, Whatcom county immunization rates were consistently lower than the state and national levels. Table 10 captures the Whatcom, and Washington state rates and contrasts them to the national averages.¹³

Table 14 Immunization Rates 2016, Whatcom, Washington and National

Immunization Regimen	Whatcom- All	WA- All	WA-Low-Income	Nation- All	Nat. Low-Income
4+DTaP	70%	86%	80%	83%	79%
3+Polio	81%	93%	93%	92%	91%
1+MMR	82%	91%	86%	91%	89%
3+Hib	84%	93%	94%	92%	89%
3+Hep B	76%	90%	94%	91%	91%

Social and Economic Status

Educational attainment level is often a predictor of social status. In 2016, Whatcom County 91% of residents had a high school degree or higher, and 32.6% had a bachelor's degree or higher.¹⁴ In inflation adjusted dollars the mean earnings for residents of Whatcom County by educational attainment level were as follows:¹⁵

Table 15. Mean Earnings by Educational Attainment Level

Educational Attainment Level	Mean Earnings 2016
Less than high school graduate	\$23,908
High School Graduate (includes equivalency)	\$31,461
Some college or associates degree	\$31,522
Bachelor's degree	\$41,807
Graduate or professional degree	\$57,111

When adjusted for inflation, for all families, the Whatcom 2016 median household income is comparable to where it stood at the end of the 80s and 90s. In 2012, the median household income was \$54,207. In 2009, it was \$51,779 and in 1999, it stood at \$55,411.¹⁶

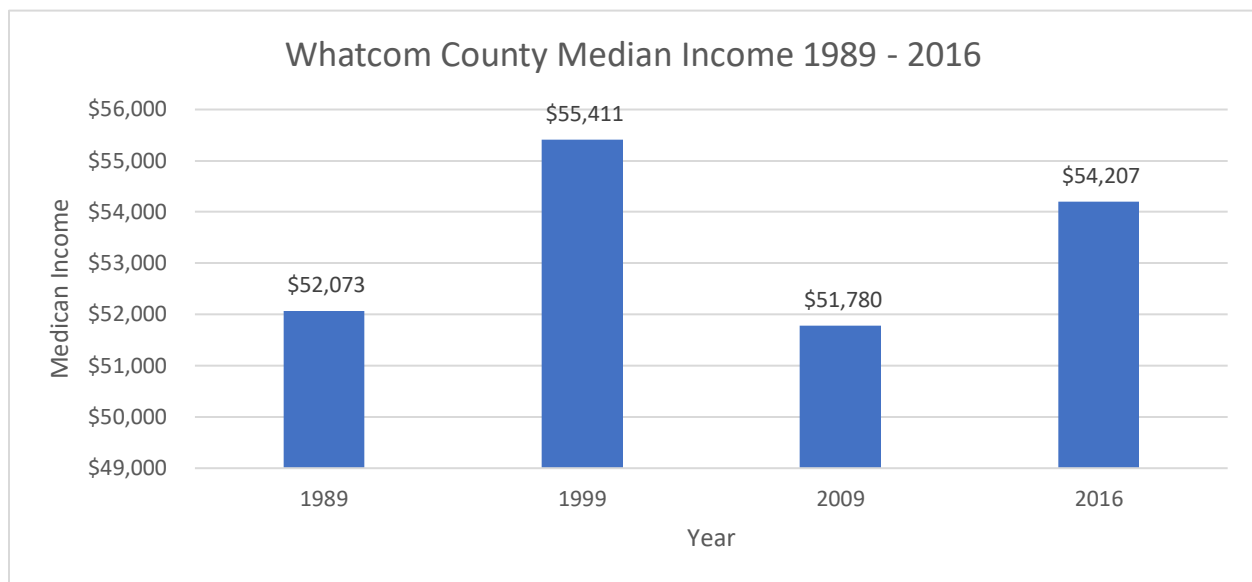
¹³ U.S. CDC NIS 2016 Data Table & Washington State Immunization Information System

¹⁴ U.S. Census Bureau – American Factfinder

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ U.S. Census Bureau – American FactFinder

Figure 6. Median Income - Whatcom County



The Census Bureau estimated that in 2016, 16% of Whatcom County residents lived at or below the poverty level, an increase from the 14% recorded at the time of the 2010 Census.

Language and Cultural Base

Though English remains the language spoken at home by the majority of residents, as Whatcom county continues to diversify, the languages and cultural bases of the residents and families do so as well. Of Whatcom county residents, 87.6% speak English only at home, 12.4% speak a language other than English. Thirty eight percent of those that speak a language other than English at home report that they speak English less than “very well.”¹⁷ Table 16 lists the languages spoken at home other than English.

Despite the growth in diversity, OC-ELAFS has already seen some reductions in enrollment by Spanish-speaking families due to real and rumored immigration enforcement issues under the current federal administration.

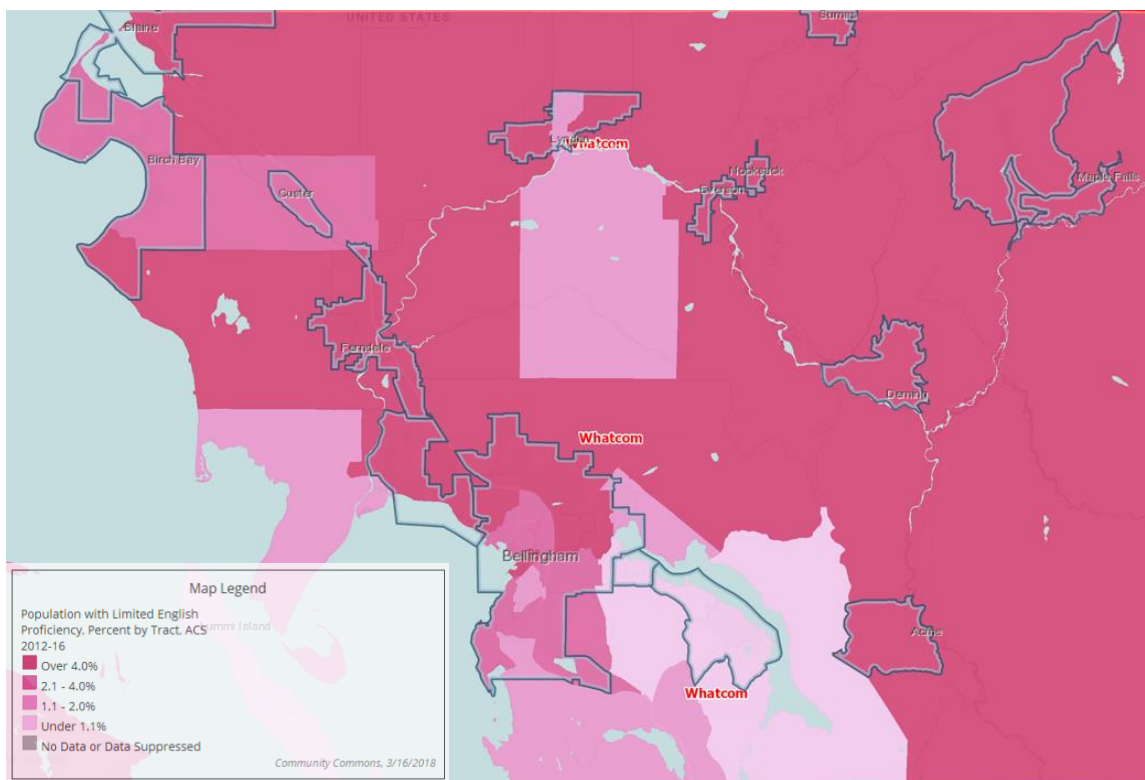
Table 16. Languages spoken at home other than English, and English proficiency

Language	% of population	% Speak English “very well”	% Speak English less than “very well”
Spanish	5.9%	60.6%	39.4%
Other Indo-European languages	4.1%	67.9%	32.1%
Asian and Pacific Island languages	2.2%	55.2%	44.8%
Other languages	0.2%	46.4%	53.6%

¹⁷ US. Census – American Fact Finder

With the exception of North Bellingham, census tracts with the highest concentration of limited English proficiency could be found in Ferndale, Sumas, Everson, Nooksack, Maple Falls, Lynden and Blaine.¹⁸

Figure 7. Population with Limited English Proficiency, Percent by Tract



Cultural base refers to the cultural place of origin for residents in Whatcom County. In 2016, 89% of residents were native to the United States, some 22,500 (11%) were foreign born. Of those, 48% were not U.S. citizens. Table 17 lists the world region of birth of those residents born outside of the United States.

Table 17. World Region of Birth of Foreign Born Whatcom Residents¹⁹

World Region of Birth of Foreign Born	Percent of Foreign born Population
Europe	22.7%
Asia	25.1%
Africa	1.8%
Oceania	0.8%
Latin America	25.1%
Northern America	24.6%

¹⁸ Community Commons, and American Community Survey 2011-15

¹⁹ American Community Survey 2012-2016

Racial and Ethnic characteristics

Relative to other parts of the U.S. and even to other parts of Washington, Whatcom County's population remains primarily white. Table 18 lists the racial/ethnic demographics of Whatcom County according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Demographic and Housing Estimates 2016 update.

Table 18. Race/Ethnicity of Whatcom Residents

Race/Ethnicity	Estimate	Percent
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	5,754	3%
Asian alone	8,365	4%
Black or African American alone	1,958	1%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	18,517	9%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	579	0%
Some other race alone	170	0%
Two or more races	6,326	3%
White alone	168,060	80%

Using Census 2010 data, Table 19 shows the racial and ethnic diversity in Whatcom County Subdivision and Place. Outside of Lummi Tribal lands, Everson, Nooksack, Sumas, Ferndale and the Marietta-Alderwood catchment areas represent the most racial and ethnic diverse population areas in the county. East county areas such as Glacier, Deming, Maple Falls, and Acme, and Lummi Island and Point Roberts represent the least.

Table 19. Racial/Ethnic Diversity in Whatcom County Subdivision and Place

Geographic area	White	Black or African American	American Indian & Alaska Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander	Some Other Race	Two or More Races	Hispanic or Latino (of any race)
Acme CDP	92%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	7%	3%
Bellingham CCD	86%	1%	1%	5%	0%	3%	4%	7%
Bellingham city	85%	1%	1%	5%	0%	3%	4%	7%
Birch Bay CDP	89%	1%	1%	3%	0%	2%	4%	6%
Blaine CCD	89%	1%	1%	3%	1%	2%	3%	6%
Blaine city	87%	1%	1%	5%	1%	1%	4%	5%
Custer CDP	89%	1%	0%	2%	0%	6%	2%	9%
Deming CDP	93%	1%	2%	1%	0%	1%	2%	3%
E. Whatcom CCD	88%	1%	4%	1%	0%	3%	4%	5%
Everson city	75%	0%	3%	1%	0%	17%	5%	29%
Ferndale CCD	84%	1%	3%	3%	0%	6%	4%	12%
Ferndale city	83%	1%	3%	4%	0%	5%	4%	12%
Geneva CDP	93%	1%	1%	2%	0%	1%	2%	4%
Glacier CDP	96%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	3%	2%
Kendall CDP	94%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	4%	6%
Lummi Island CCD	94%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	3%	3%
Lummi Reservation CCD	41%	1%	52%	1%	0%	1%	5%	5%
Lynden CCD	89%	1%	1%	2%	0%	5%	2%	11%
Lynden city	90%	1%	1%	3%	0%	4%	2%	9%
Maple Falls CDP	94%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	3%	4%
Marietta-Alderwood CDP	82%	1%	4%	4%	0%	5%	5%	10%
Nooksack city	81%	0%	2%	2%	0%	9%	5%	18%
Peaceful Valley CDP	88%	1%	2%	1%	0%	4%	4%	8%
Point Roberts CCD	92%	1%	1%	5%	0%	0%	2%	2%
Point Roberts CDP	92%	1%	1%	5%	0%	0%	2%	2%
Sudden Valley CDP	91%	1%	1%	2%	0%	1%	4%	5%
Sumas CCD	86%	1%	2%	1%	0%	7%	3%	14%
Sumas city	84%	2%	2%	2%	0%	7%	4%	16%

Recent population changes including immigration, new or emerging populations.

The Office of Financial Management, Small Area Estimate Program tracks population changes from 2010 - 2017 for the county's census tracts. Table 20 captures those changes. Though the largest population change has occurred in Downtown Bellingham (37%), Census Tracts in

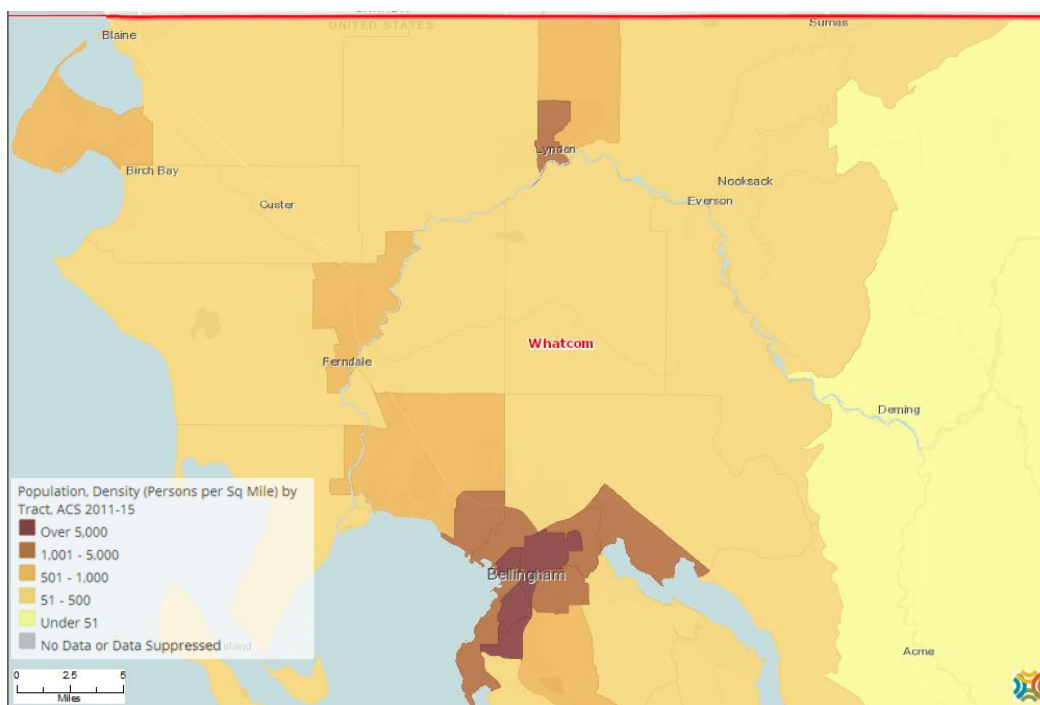
Ferndale (8%), northeast of Bellingham (8%), and North Bellingham – Marietta Alderwood (6%) have made up the largest percentage of the growth.

Table 20. Whatcom County Population Change and Growth 2010 - 2017

2010 Census Tract and Reference Location	2010 Pop.	Est. Pop. 2017	% Change	% of Growth
1. NE of Bellingham Limits	8,998	10,182	13%	8%
2. N Bellingham, Marietta-Alderwood	9,737	10,686	10%	6%
3. NW of the Guide to Bakerview and Bennett	7,430	7,875	6%	3%
4. Eldridge/Cornwall Park	6,349	6,465	2%	1%
5.01 Sunnyland/York	5,189	5,327	3%	1%
5.02 Lettered Streets	2,668	2,864	7%	1%
6. Downtown Bellingham	1,638	2,245	37%	4%
7. Roosevelt	6,489	6,619	2%	1%
8.03 Alabama Hill	6,275	6,591	5%	2%
8.04 Barkley/Silver Beach	6,642	6,900	4%	2%
8.05 Whatcom Falls/Geneva	4,966	5,184	4%	1%
8.06 Sudden Valley	7,983	8,137	2%	1%
9.01 Puget	6,638	7,262	9%	4%
9.02 Samish/Lake Padden	5,833	6,158	6%	2%
10. WWU	7,138	7,519	5%	3%
11. Edgemoor, Fairhaven, South Hill	6,637	6,821	3%	1%
12.01 Happy Valley	6,489	6,729	4%	2%
12.02 South/Chuckanut/Lake Samish	3,515	3,712	6%	1%
101. East Whatcom Region	7,895	8,451	7%	4%
102. Sumas/Nooksack	8,079	8,835	9%	5%
103.01 Lynden	6,792	7,240	7%	3%
103.02 Central Lynden	4,483	5,161	15%	4%
103.03 Eastern Lynden	5,103	5,738	12%	4%
104.01 North Blaine	8,049	8,723	8%	4%
104.03 Semiahmoo to Blaine Rd	5,130	5,588	9%	3%
104.04 Birch Bay/Custer	6,252	6,675	7%	3%
105.01 Western Ferndale	7,274	8,546	17%	8%
105.02 Central & East Ferndale	7,426	8,304	12%	6%
106. North of Smith, West of Guide Meridian	6,480	6,967	8%	3%
107.01 North of Smith, East of Guide Meridian	6,197	6,486	5%	2%
107.02 East of Everson Goshen Rd	4,382	4,586	5%	1%
109. Lummi Island	964	1,032	7%	0%
11. Point Roberts	1,314	1,608	22%	2%
9400. Lummi Reservation	4,706	5,083	8%	2%

Though not as current, using American Community Survey 2011-2015 data, we can visualize recent population density on a map.

Figure 8: Population Density by Tract, ACS 2011-15



As part of Whatcom County’s update to its comprehensive plan, it retained a Seattle-based consulting firm to forecast population growth in population centers. In addition to deducing that the county will grow by nearly 3,000 persons annually in the decades ahead, the study found that Birch Bay, Nooksack and Blaine would likely lead the way when based on a growth percentage of existing population. Bellingham will absorb some 41% of the new growth, but because of its size, a percentage-based calculation brings it in last behind the smaller urban growth areas. The following table captures the growth projections as both percentage and total persons as of 2013 and projected population in 2036. Rows in **bold** indicate where ELAFS operates a Head Start or State funded Early Childhood Education and Assistance (ECEAP) program.

Table 21 Whatcom County Population Projections for Urban Growth Areas²⁰

Urban Growth Area	2013 Population	2036 Population Projection	Percent Change
Bellingham	93,107	121,505	31%
Birch Bay	7,737	14,515	83%
Blaine	5,177	7,875	52%
Columbia Valley	3,204	4,549	42%
Everson	2,670	3,568	34%
Ferndale	12,778	18,180	42%
Lynden	12,879	17,942	39%
Nooksack	1,436	2,366	65%
Sumas	1,449	2,093	44%
Locations not in Urban Growth Areas	65,318	81,637	25%
Total Whatcom County	205,800	273,911	33%

Whatcom County's population continues to grow, with at least 15,600 new residents since April 1, 2010. Of these, 4,680 were due to natural increase (Births minus deaths), and 10,462 were from net in-migration (international and domestic).

The U.S. Census sheds light on the residents that have migrated to Whatcom County during the latest American Community Survey measurement period. About 4% of residents moved to Whatcom from another Washington county, 2% from another state, and 1% from abroad. When looking at those moving to Whatcom from a different state or from abroad, insights can be gained on these new Whatcom residents.

Table 22. Whatcom County net-in Migration, Race, and Origin

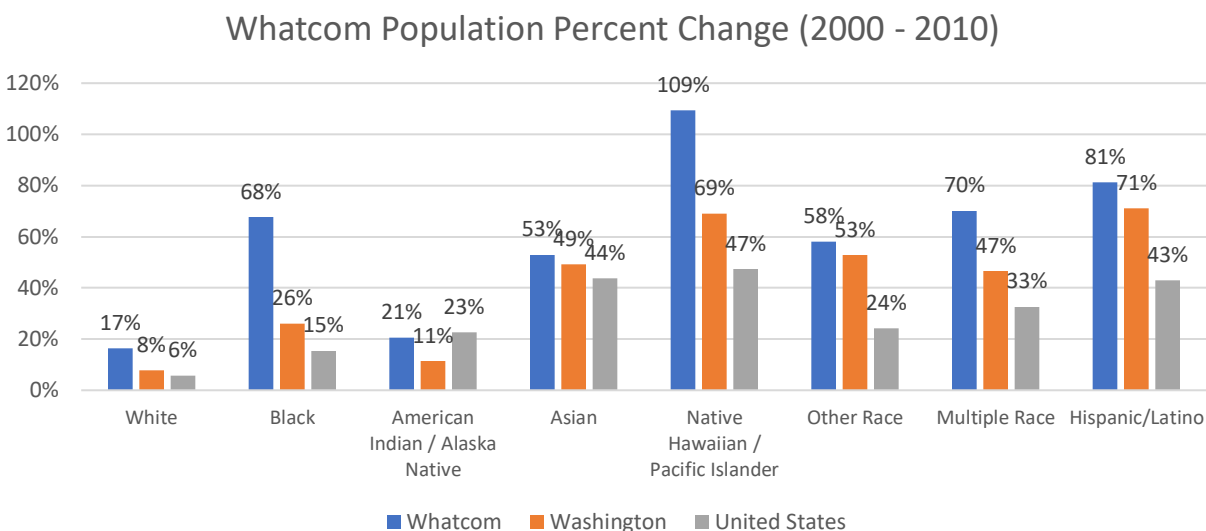
Race/Ethnicity	Total	Moved from different state	Moved from abroad
White	175,589	2%	1%
Black or African American	2,055	5%	1%
American Indian and Alaska Native	6,394	0%	0%
Asian	8,359	3%	3%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	608	1%	0%
Some other race	6,172	6%	1%
Two or more races	8,269	2%	0%
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	18,079	4%	0%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	66,433	2%	1%

When comparing data from the 2000 and 2010 Census, we can determine which racial/ethnic groups have seen the most growth during that time period. Those who identify as Native

²⁰ Whatcom County Population Projections for Select Jurisdictions

Hawaiian/Pacific Islander by 257 (109%), Two or more races by 3,114 (70%) Black or African American by 779 individuals (67%). Those who identify as Hispanic/Latino of any race increased by 7,069 individuals (81%). Figure 9 compares the growth of racial/ethnic groups in Whatcom County, to that of Washington State, and the United States.

Figure 9: Whatcom County Population Growth by Race/Ethnicity (2000 - 2010)



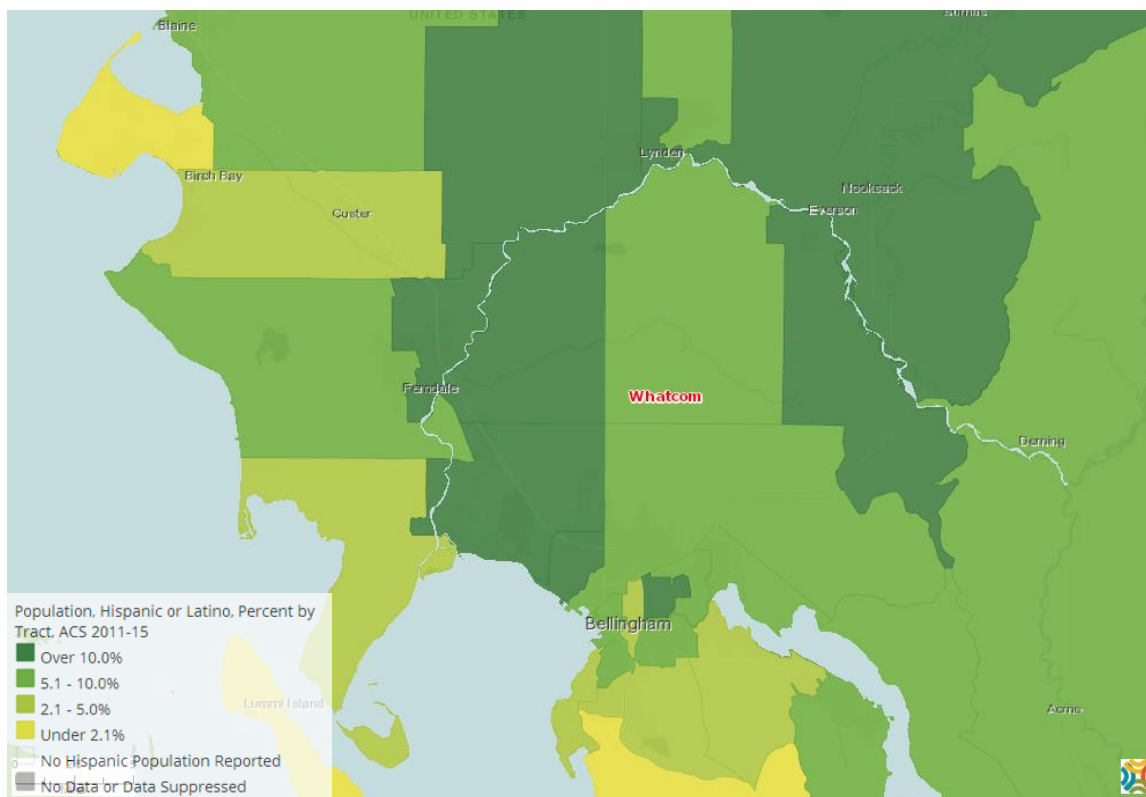
With an 81% increase of the Hispanic/Latino population since 2000, it is important to identify areas in which that population resides. As seen Figure 10, American Community Survey data shows the highest percentage of residents who identify as Hispanic/Latino in Census Tracts in Bellingham, Ferndale, Lynden, Sumas, Everson, and Nooksack.

In addition to ACS data, the OFM provides us with information on the number of Hispanic/Latino students by age and school district in 2017. When focusing on the students age 0-4, the largest percentage of Hispanic/Latino students can be found in the Nooksack (32%), Meridian (24%), and Lynden (22%) school districts.

Table 23. Hispanic/Latino 0-4 Year Olds Per School District 2017

School District	Total Population 0-4	Hispanic/Latino 0-4	% Hispanic/Latino 0-4
Bellingham School District	5,015	903	18%
Blaine School District	947	110	12%
Ferndale School District	1,968	376	19%
Lynden School District	1,393	310	22%
Meridian School District	600	142	24%
Mount Baker School District	845	97	11%
Nooksack Valley School District	868	275	32%

Figure 10: Population, Hispanic or Latino, by Census Tract, ACS 2011-15



Programs serving infants, toddlers, and preschoolers

For all families with working parents and a need for out-of-home care, affordability looms large. Countywide, the annual median household income in 2016 was \$54,207. The following tables indicate the annual median price of full-time care for one child by age group and type of care for that time. The median price indicates that half the providers in the area charge more and half charge less than the prices quoted. The subsequent column translates the annualized pricing into a percentage of the 2016 median household income. Many low-income families are at or below 50%, and some below 30%, of the area median income. (Figures included here do not factor in the use of public subsidies.)

Table 24 Child Care Center Cost as Percent of Household Income²¹

Child Care Center	2016 Median Annual Cost for one Child	% of Med. Household Income	50% of Med. Household Income	30% of Median Household Income
Infant	\$11,856	22%	44%	73%
Toddler	\$10,296	18%	38%	63%
Preschool	\$8,940	16%	33%	55%
School Age	\$7,800	14%	29%	48%

²¹ Childcare in Whatcom County, Child Care Aware of Northwest Washington, February 2014

Table 25. Family Child Care Cost as Percent of Household Income

Family Child Care	2016 Median Annual Cost for one Child	% of Med. Household Income	50% of Med. Household Income	30% of Median Household Income
Infant	\$10,272	19%	38%	63%
Toddler	\$9,096	17%	34%	56%
Preschool	\$8,064	15%	30%	50%
School Age	\$7,416	14%	27%	46%

The compound effect of more than one child, even though some providers offer a “volume or sibling discount” is enormous for all families, but particularly low and moderate-income households. Purchased care for an infant and a preschool child would cost a family 34-38% of median income.

[Programs serving infants, toddlers, and preschools with disabilities](#)

The 2012-16 American Community Survey estimates 1,771 individuals or 6% of young people in Whatcom County, 17 years and younger, had a disability. Some of those disabilities resulted from childhood or adolescent injuries.

If we apply that percentage to the 11,259 OFM quantified 0-4 year olds in the county as of April 2015, the community might expect that some 676 children in the age cohort have been or will be diagnosed with a disability during their developmental years. Sometimes that diagnosis does not occur until the child is in the classroom.

The 2012-16 American Community Survey updated data on categorical types of disabilities for children and youth ages 5-17. The table below compares data from 2016 to the 2012 baseline data. Some age brackets captured are too late for ELAFS population concerns, but they do indicate prevalence in our communities.

Table 26 Whatcom Children Ages 5-17 by Disability Type²²

Disability Characteristic	2012	2016	Percent Change
Hearing Difficulty	207	359	+73%
Vision Difficulty	179	171	-4%
Cognitive Difficulty	1,322	1,264	-4%
Ambulatory Difficulty	197	178	-10%
Self-Care Difficulty	372	386	+4%

²² U.S. Census Bureau – American Community Survey

As the data indicates, two categories saw an increase in the numbers since 2012, one of which is quite large. The ability to meet the changing needs of children with disabilities will be integral to ELAFS's future success.

There is no consensus among experts for the cause(s) of increased numbers of young people with disabilities. However, some life events do have considerable evidence pointing to their proclivity to cause special needs in children, such as premature births and resultant low birth weights. Whatcom County compares favorably to the 2016 state rate in keeping low birth weight deliveries low, (State 11%, Whatcom 9%). In 2016, 135 local births were so classified, up from 124 five years earlier.²³

Washington OSPI tracks data for all districts on the volume of both special needs students and those whom sought federal Medicaid reimbursements to offset the cost of providing special services. Whatcom County districts had 4,181 students classified as special education for academic year 2016-17. Put in perspective of the districts' total population, the special education numbers represent the following percentages of the student bodies as of May 2017. Included are totals from the 2000-01 and 2009-10 for comparison.²⁴

Table 27 Percent of Special Education Students per Whatcom School District, 2000 - 2017

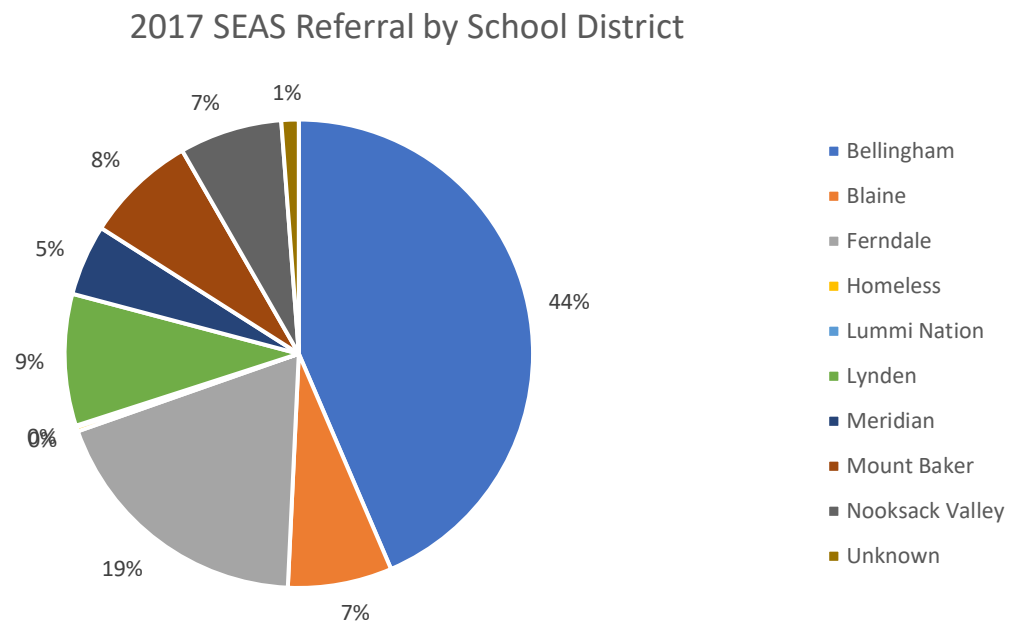
School District	2000	2010	2013	2017
Bellingham	12%	13%	14%	14%
Blaine	10%	13%	14%	17%
Ferndale	12%	15%	15%	17%
Lynden	10%	12%	14%	16%
Meridian	12%	8%	9%	12%
Mt. Baker	14%	16%	19%	19%
Nooksack	12%	19%	20%	18%

Locally, we can use data from the Opportunity Council's SEAS program to gain insight into the number of students with a disability Whatcom school districts may serve. In 2017, 1,001 referrals were made to local school districts by the SEAS program. The Bellingham School District received the largest amount of these referrals (44%), with Ferndale (19%) and Lynden (9%) receiving the next highest amounts. The full distribution can be seen in Figure 11.

²³ WA State Dept. of Health, Center for Health Statistics

²⁴ WA OSPI District Profiles, 20012-13; OSPI Website

Figure 11. 2017 SEAS Referrals by Whatcom County School District



Relevant to ELAFS’s potential supply of customers is the work that the WA Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) program undertakes with the youngest children already identified as having a special need. Table 170 captures ESIT’s caseload from July through June of 2017 and compares the data to prior caseloads. In general, the number of infants/toddlers in need of special services appears to have increased.

Table 28 Whatcom ESIT 12 Month Data²⁵

ESIT Reporting Measure	2010-11	2012-13	2016-17
Referrals received	145	162	166
Range of monthly referrals	2 - 17	14 - 32	16 - 38
Evaluations for eligibility conducted	139	257	200
Children found eligible	95	128	129
New IFSPs	136	127	101
Monthly average of active IFSPs	149	166	254
Children transitioned out to family self-care or other providers of service	122	182	151

²⁵ Whatcom Infant/Toddler Early Intervention Project Year-End Report, 2016-17

Information and demographics on Head Start eligible children and their families including new, emerging, and underserved populations

Families with incomes below the poverty guidelines are eligible for Head Start, ECEAP and Early Head Start services. In some instances, families with incomes above the poverty line can be enrolled as well. Children from homeless families, and families receiving public assistance such as TANF or SSI are also eligible. The following data will look at specific information on these populations.

Data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-16 American Community Survey estimates there are some 49,193 families in Whatcom County. Of those, 4,212 had children 5 years of age or younger. 14.2% of these younger families lived at or below the poverty level. Of the families with young children, 3.5% were married-couple families and 41.4% were female householder, with no husband present.

Of all families, 4% were at 50% the poverty level, 13% at 100% of the poverty level, and 16% at 150% of the poverty level.

Employment

Nationally, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) tracks the status of individuals classified as “working poor.” These are people who spent at least 27 weeks in the labor force (that is, working or looking for work) but whose incomes still fell below the official poverty level. In 2014, the working-poor rate—the ratio of the working poor to all individuals in the labor force for at least 27 weeks—was 6.3 percent.

Continuing from the BLS, “...individuals employed in occupations that typically do not require high levels of education and are characterized by relatively low earnings were more likely to be among the working poor. For example, 12.8 percent of service workers who were in the labor force for at least 27 weeks were classified as working poor in 2014. Indeed, service occupations, with 3.2 million working poor, accounted for 37 percent of all those classified as working poor. Among those employed in natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations, 7.9 percent of workers were classified as working poor. Within this occupation group, 16.8 percent of workers employed in farming, fishing, and forestry occupations were among the working poor.” With service occupations being some of the most frequent type of jobs available in Whatcom County, we can expect many of ELAFS families to be amongst those so employed.

On a local level, Census data seen in Table 29 also provides insight into the employment characteristics of families at or below the poverty level in Whatcom County.

Table 29. Employment Characteristics of Whatcom Families at or Below the Poverty Level

Characteristic	All Families		Married Couples		Female Householder, no husband present	
	Est.	Below Poverty Level	Est.	Below Poverty Level	Est.	Below Poverty Level
Householder worked	35,066	7.00%	27,635	2.80%	4,766	24.90%
Householder worked full-time, year-round in the past 12 months	22,655	2.30%	18,346	1.10%	2,625	6.50%

Department of Social and Health Services' WorkFirst Program is the work readiness and employment arm of TANF. The goal of this program is to help low-income families stabilize their lives, so they can go to work and take better care of their families.

Families participating in WorkFirst receive services in a variety of areas, including job search, removing barriers to employment, training, and community job opportunities. In the last quarter of 2016, 49.4% of participants exited the program with employment. 68.5% of the parents who received job search services from WorkFirst ended up finding employment. 65.5% of parents who received job training from WorkFirst found employment, and 66.5% of parents who participated in community jobs found employment.²⁶

For the year 2016, the median wage of WorkFirst job seekers who received job search strategies was \$12.25.²⁷ For a full-time worker, this wage would bring the family annual income of \$25,480, which just puts a family of three at 125% of the 2017 federal poverty line.

According to available DSHS reports, the local TANF caseloads have decreased in recent years. In 2016, there were 3,363 TANF cases in the county, down from 4,611 in 2014.²⁸ The majority of TANF cases were located in the Bellingham area (1,919), with Ferndale (436) and Blaine/Birch Bay (299) in second and third, respectively.²⁹

Housing

According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition's "Out of Reach, 2017" report, in Whatcom county a household needs the equivalent of 1.7 full-time jobs at minimum wage in order to afford a two-bedroom apartment at fair market rent.

"Out of Reach, 2017" also reports the median income of a renter household in Whatcom County is \$24,606, while the annual income needed to afford a two-bedroom apartment is \$38,702. The median renter income is just 45% of the overall median Whatcom income. Adding to the housing strain for families and individuals of low income is the fact that there are not many affordable housing opportunities available. The Whatcom County Growth Area found

²⁶ WorkFirst Performance Chartbook Including Program Counts and Performance Measures September 2017

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ WA DSHS Research and Analysis Division

²⁹ Ibid

that “Due to competition from higher income renters and the declining condition of affordable housing units, for every 100 extremely low-income renters, there are only 30 units of affordable and adequate housing available. In addition, the affordable housing inventory has been declining in recent years. Since 2001, 12.8% of low-cost rental inventory was permanently lost.”³⁰

Social and Economic Status

According to the 2016 US Census Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates for children under 5 years of age living in poverty, Whatcom County ranked 33rd out of Washington’s 39 counties. Of residents under 18 years, 15.3% were below the poverty level, compared with 9.2% of people 65 years old and over. Nine percent of all families, and 44% of families with a female householder (no husband present) and children under 18, had incomes below the poverty level³¹ Despite the potentially smaller percentage of the population being pre-school aged children, young families with limited financial means are abundant.

Education is often a determinant of income level. Of Whatcom families whose poverty status has been determined, the educational attainment levels were:

Table 30. Educational Attainment Level of Householder

Characteristic	All Families		Married Couples		Female Householder, no husband present	
	Est.	Below Poverty Level	Est.	Below Poverty Level	Est.	Below Poverty Level
Less than high school graduate	3,450	26.3%	2,112	16.5%	850	49.5%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	10,764	12.9%	8,094	4.3%	1,842	41.8%
Some college, associate's degree	17,005	10.6%	12,529	4.1%	3,239	33.8%
Bachelor's degree or higher	17,974	3.7%	16,058	3.3%	1,327	8.2%

Other Social – Economic Characteristics relevant to Head Start/ECEAP Eligible populations include:

- 14.74% of the population experienced food insecurity at some point in 2014. Food insecurity is defined as limited or uncertain access to adequate food.³²
- 3.83% of the households received public assistance, for an average amount of \$2,998³³
- 4.3% of the population age 0-18 lacked health insurance.³⁴

30 Whatcom County Urban Growth Area Review – BERK Consulting

31 U.S. Census Bureau – American Factfinder

32 Feeding America, 2014.

33 US Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2011-15.

34 US Census Bureau, Small Area Health Insurance Estimates. 2014

- 16.5% percentage of adults aged 18 and older self-reported that they receive insufficient social and emotional support all or most of the time. With the increased focus on Adverse Childhood Experiences, this is relevant because social and emotional support is critical for navigating the challenges of daily life as well as for good mental health and effective parenting. Social and emotional support is also linked to educational achievement and economic stability.³⁵

Often, households under financial strain must choose between food, especially nutritious foods, and other expensive items such as housing, transportation costs, debt relief and medical bills. For many families, community resources, such as those from private and government food programs, school meals and gleaning or gardening, augment their resources.

According to the U.S. Census American Community Survey 2012-16 Update, 15.3% of households in Whatcom County received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. For households at or below the poverty level, 51% were receiving SNAP benefits. Of households with children under 18, 15% of two-parent households, and 56% of single female households were receiving SNAP.

In addition to being able to afford food, a household must be able to access it as well. For residents living in areas designated as a food desert, this can lead to poor health outcomes. Community Commons defines a food desert as a low-income census tract, where a substantial number or share of residents has low access to a supermarket or large grocery store. In Whatcom County, 27.53% of residents and 21.5% of the low income population live in a food desert.³⁶ Using the Community Commons mapping tools, we are able to see areas of Bellingham and Whatcom County with limited food access and low income populations.

35 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System.

36 US Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, USDA - Food Access Research Atlas. 2015

Figure 12. Food Access, Low Income, Percent by Tract for Whatcom County

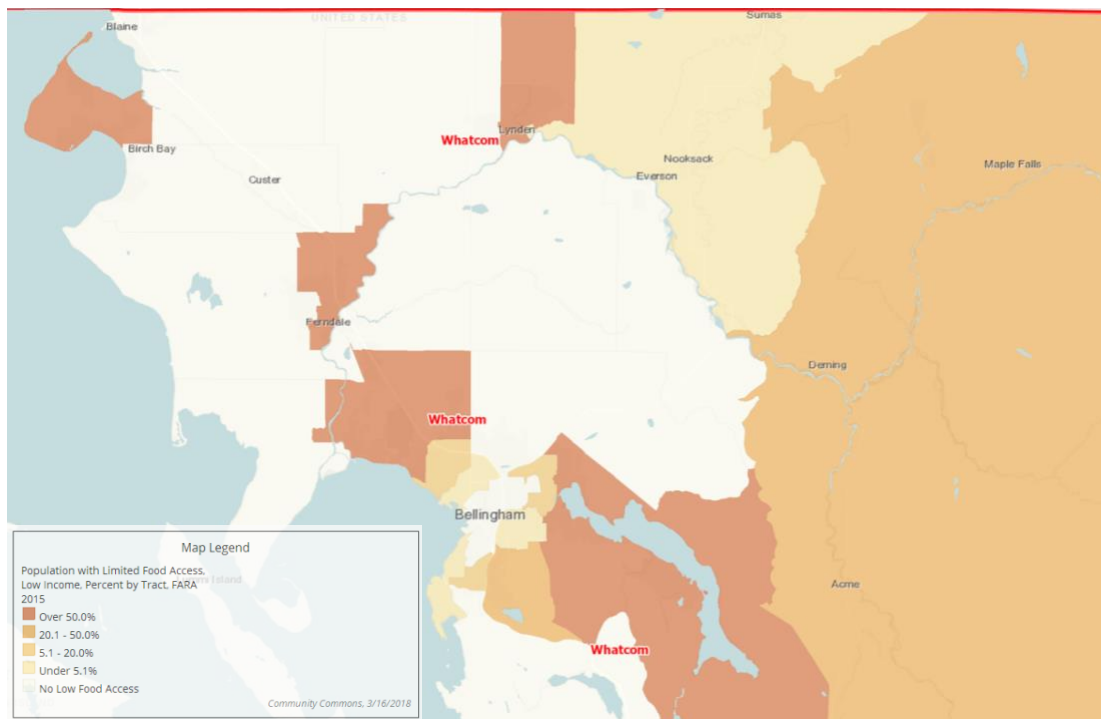
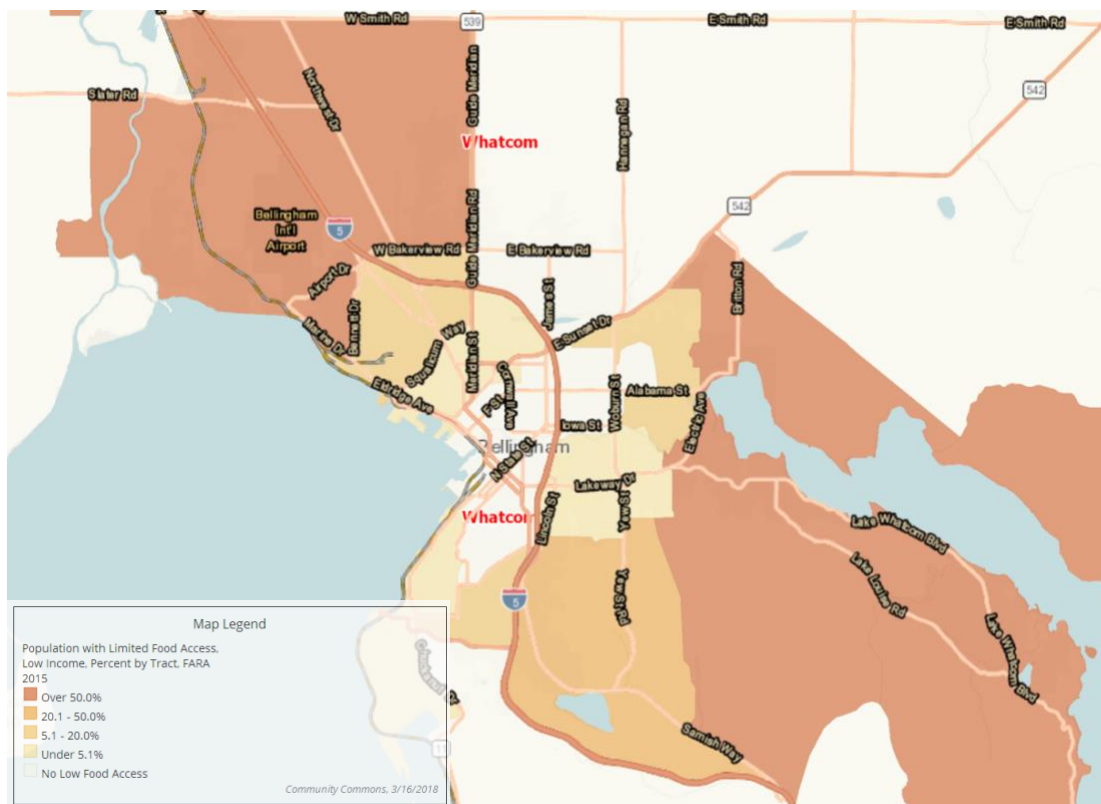


Figure 13 Food Access, Low Income, Percent by Tract for Bellingham



Languages and cultures

Language fluency can be a determinant of the number of barriers encountered by individuals when looking for work, housing, and during day-to-day social interactions. For youth 5-17, and adults 18 and over at or below the poverty level in Whatcom County, the primary language spoken at home was as follows :

Table 31 Primary Language Spoken at Home by Individuals at or Below the Poverty Level³⁷

Language Spoken at home:	5-17 years	18 years and over
Speak only English	74%	84%
Speak Spanish	17%	7%
Speak other Indo-European languages	5%	4%
Speak Asian and Pacific Island languages	3%	4%
Speak other languages	0%	1%

Due to smaller sample sizes, data sets are limited on the foreign born residents of Whatcom County who also fall below the poverty level. However, on a broad sense, we can determine some characteristics. In Whatcom County, foreign born families made up 14% of families at or below the poverty level, and of those 17.6% had children under 5 years of age. Further characteristics are listed the following tables

Table 32. Poverty Status of Foreign Born Residents, and families³⁸

Poverty status in the last 12 months	Total	Native	Foreign Born	Foreign Born; Naturalized Citizen	Foreign Born; Not a U.S. Citizen
Population for whom poverty status is determined	204,170	181,787	22,383	11,641	10,742
Below 100% of the poverty level	16.00%	16.00%	15.90%	12.40%	19.70%
100 to 199% of the poverty level	18.30%	17.80%	22.10%	18.30%	26.10%
At or above 200% of the poverty level	65.70%	66.20%	62.00%	69.20%	54.20%

³⁷ American Community Survey 2012-2016

³⁸ *ibid*

Table 33. Poverty Status of Foreign Born Residents by Family Type³⁹

Family Type	Total	Native	Foreign Born	Foreign Born; Naturalized Citizen	Foreign Born; Not a U.S. Citizen
All families with children under 5 years only	14.20%	13.80%	17.60%	5.00%	23.90%
Married-couple with children under 5 years only	3.50%	3.70%	2.20%	5.00%	0.00%
Female householder with children under 5 years only	41.40%	38.50%	65.90%	-	65.90%

Racial and ethnic characteristics

The U.S. Census American Community Survey can provide detailed information on the race/ethnicity of those residents of Whatcom County at or below the poverty level. The following tables detail the racial and ethnic characteristics of children under 17, individuals, and families experiencing poverty.

Table 34 Percent of Children 0-17 at or Below Poverty Level by Race/Ethnicity

Children Age 0-17, Race/Ethnicity	Percent of Below the Poverty Level
White	13%
Black or African American	27%
American Indian and Alaska Native	30%
Asian	22%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	2%
Some other race	27%
Two or more races	17%
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	30%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	14%

³⁹ *ibid*

Table 35 Race/Ethnicity of Individuals at Specific Poverty level Status

Individuals, Race/Ethnicity	Total	Less than 50% poverty level	Less than 100% poverty level	Less than 150% poverty level
White	172,571	6.70%	14.40%	18.10%
Black or African American	1,957	13.80%	27.50%	30.20%
American Indian and Alaska Native	6,277	17.80%	30.60%	38.60%
Asian	8,264	13.20%	20.10%	24.10%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	596	15.80%	23.30%	28.50%
Some other race	6,326	10.80%	25.60%	40.10%
Two or more races	8,179	14.30%	22.80%	27.80%
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	18,154	12.30%	24.50%	36.00%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	163,503	6.50%	13.90%	17.10%

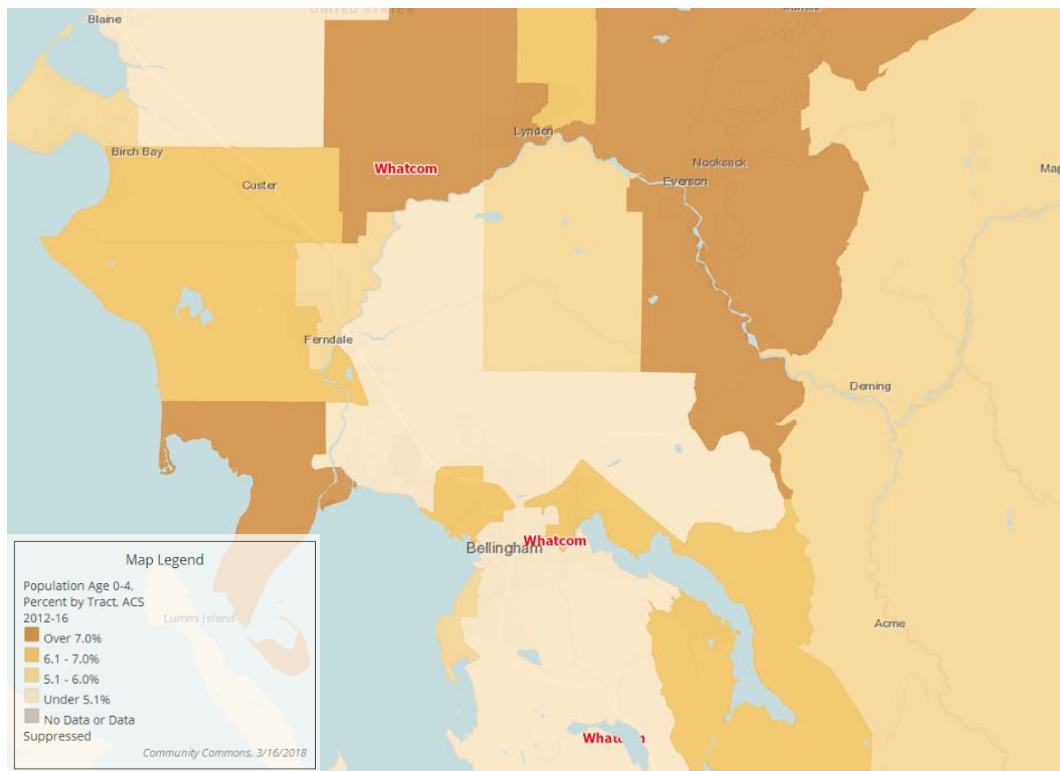
Table 36 Race/Ethnicity of Families Householders/Type at or Below Poverty Level

Families with a householder who is:	All Families		Married-Couples		Female householder, no husband present	
	Total	% Below Poverty Level	Total	% Below Poverty Level	Total	% Below Poverty Level
White	43,698	8%	35,303	4%	5,680	30%
Black or African American	300	36%	239	27%	55	78%
American Indian and Alaska Native	1,163	30%	489	19%	564	38%
Asian	1,717	9%	1,392	6%	279	17%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	94	16%	84	14%	10	30%
Some other race	1,321	27%	712	3%	376	62%
Two or more races	900	22%	574	5%	294	57%
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	3,384	25%	2,049	9%	993	49%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	41,933	8%	3,4147	4%	5,168	29%

Recent population changes including immigration, new or emerging populations.

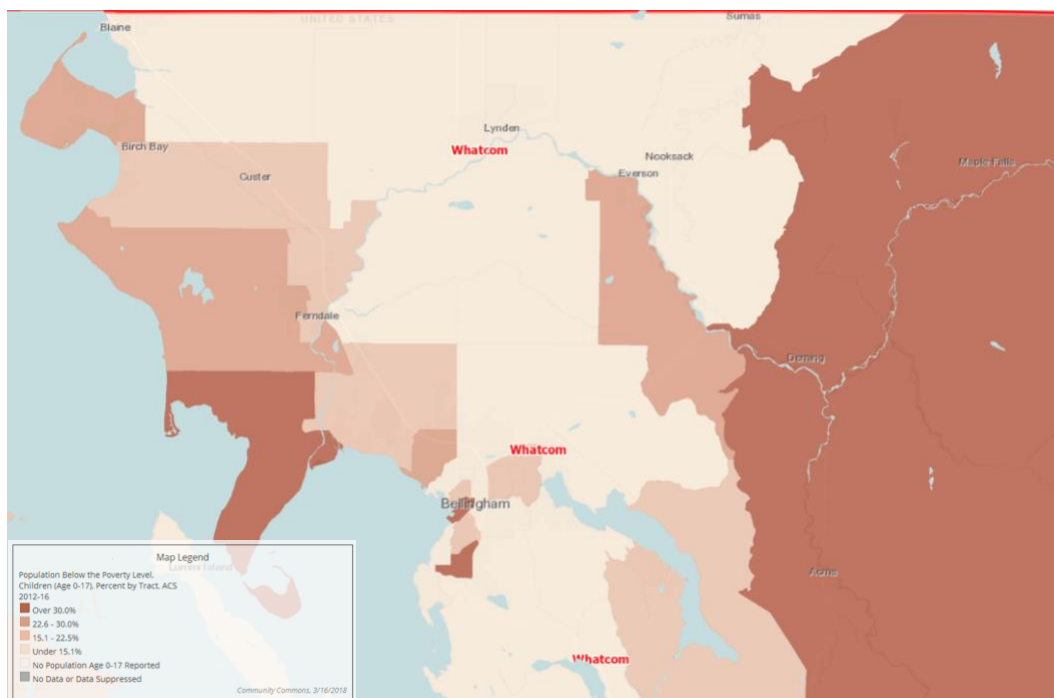
As reported earlier, the majority of population growth in Whatcom County occurred in areas of Bellingham and Ferndale. As seen in the map below, Census Tracts 4, 7, 106, 102, 103.02, 103.03, and 8.06 represent the areas with the largest percentage of children age 0-4 of any income level.

Figure 14: Population Age 0-4, Percent by Tract, ACS 2011-15



Children 0-17 who are at or below the federal poverty limit are found in Census Tracts 3, 6, 12.01, and 9400 (Lummi Reservation).

Figure 15: Population Below the Poverty Level, Children Age(0-17)



Of new residents who moved to Whatcom from outside of the area, 7% of those below 100% of the poverty level moved here from another Washington County, 3% from a different state, and 1% from abroad.

Table 37: Poverty Level by Point of Origin

Poverty Level	Total	Moved from another Washington county	Moved from different state	Moved from abroad
Below 100% of the poverty level	32,430	7%	3%	1%
100 to 149% of the poverty level	18,109	4%	3%	1%
At or above 150% of the poverty level	151,371	2%	2%	1%

Strengths and needs of Head Start eligible children and families as defined by the Head Start program

When comparing information from the Opportunity Councils' Early Head Start and Head Start Program Information Report (PIR) to national PIR data, local strengths and needs can be identified.

- Compared to national PIR, more children enrolled in local EHS (18%) and Head Start (8%) experienced homeless during enrollment than the national level (8% and 4%).
- More children were in foster care at any point in the program in the Opportunity Council's EHS (12%) and HS (6%) programs than the national level (4% and 3%)
- When looking at Disabilities Services more Opportunity Council EHS children were likely to have an Individualized Family Service Plan than the national level (36% vs 13%)

Enrollees of the Opportunity Council's Early Head Start program were more likely than the national statistics to identify needing services such as Health Education (100% of families vs 40%), Parenting Education (100% vs 46%), Emergency or Crisis Intervention (48% vs 19%), and Housing Assistance (31% vs 12%). These families were also more likely to report receiving services for those needs during the program year.

Similar trends also occurred for Head Start families. 61% of OC Head Start families identified needing Parenting Education compared to 38% nationally, 42% requested Health Education compared to 31%, and 16% requested Housing Assistance compared to 8% nationally. When looking at received services, 20% of OC Head Start families received Emergency or Crisis intervention compared to 16% nationally, 13% received Housing Assistance compared to 7%, and 89% reported receiving Parenting Education compared to 48% on the national level.

Figure 16 and Figure 17 visualize needs identified in the Early Head Start and Head Start programs compared to the national data.

Figure 16 PIR Specific Services OC-HS vs National

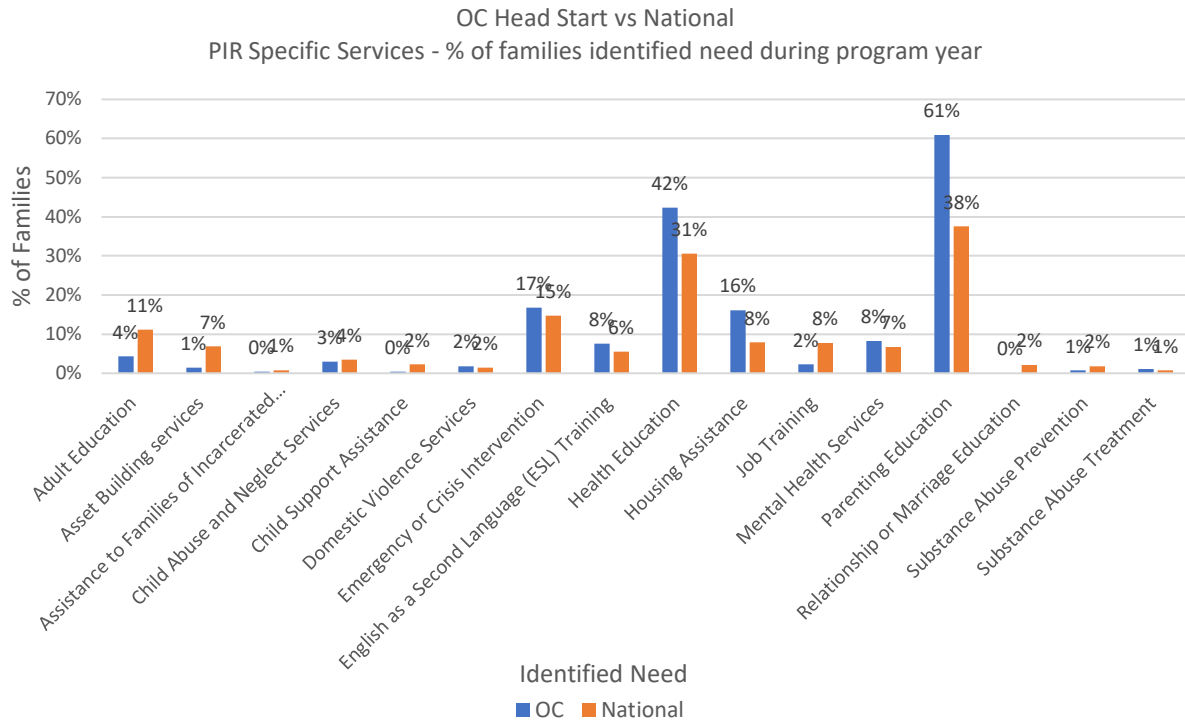
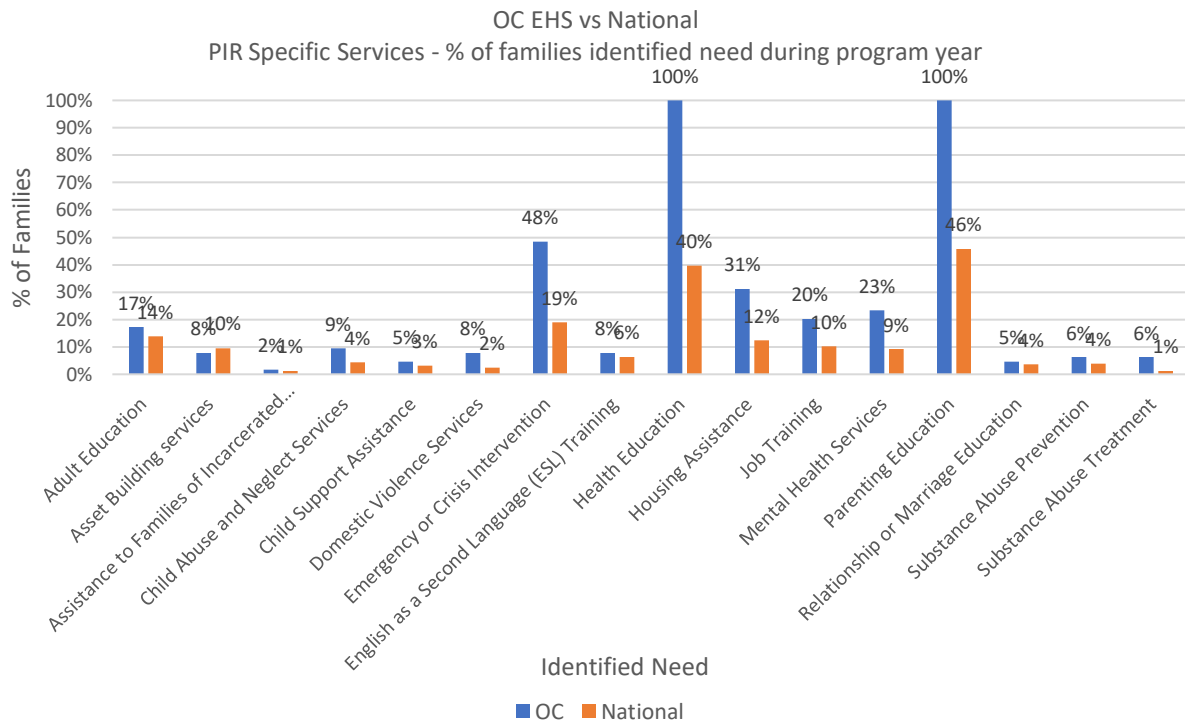


Figure 17. PIR Specific Services OC-EHS vs National



Comparison of strengths and needs of Head Start eligible children and families as defined by the families themselves and local institutions serving them

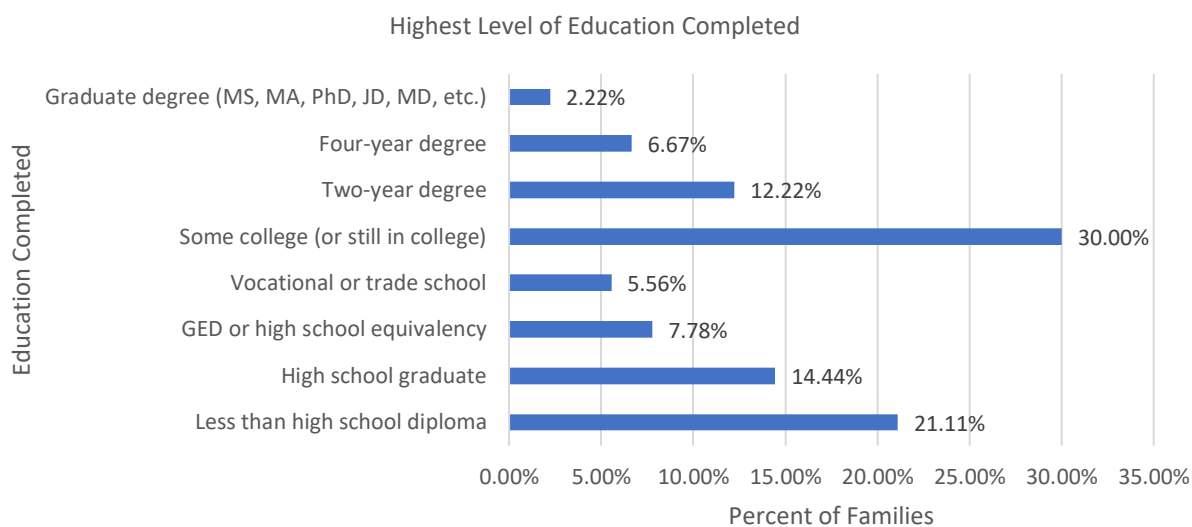
Information on the strengths and needs of Head Start eligible children and families can be gleaned from the recent update to the Opportunity Council's Community Need Assessment called the Whatcom Prosperity Project. This report is a client-intercept report of clients at different social services agencies. Data specifically from families with young children can be used for the purposes of the ELAFS CNA. Ninety-one non-ELAFS households with young children under age six provided data for this survey. Though not a large population sample, this can provide us with some insight into the strengths and needs of this population, our potential future customers.

The following data sets describe these 91 potential customer households:

Education

Respondents of the survey most frequently reported having either some college education (30%), or less than a high school diploma (21%).

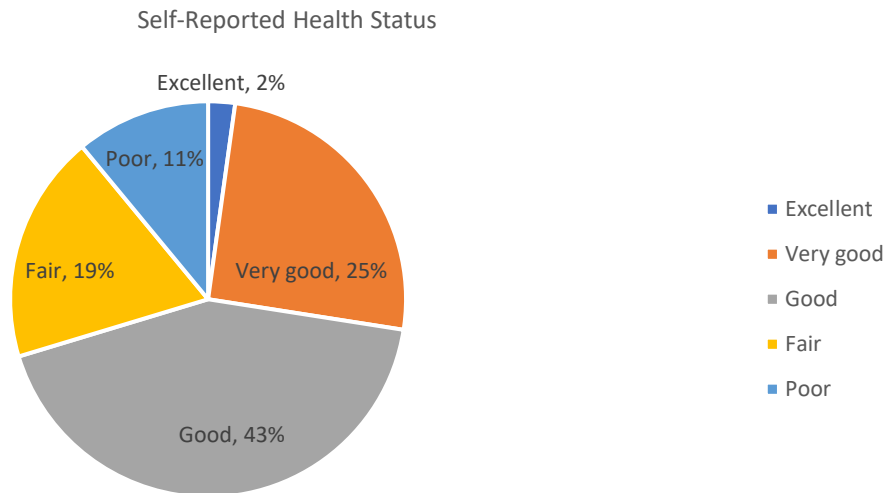
Figure 18. WPP Respondents with Young Children - Highest Level of Education Completed



Health and Mental Health

When asked to self-report health status, slightly more respondents reported fair or poor health (30%) than Very Good or Excellent Health (27%). However, 43% of respondents reported Good health.

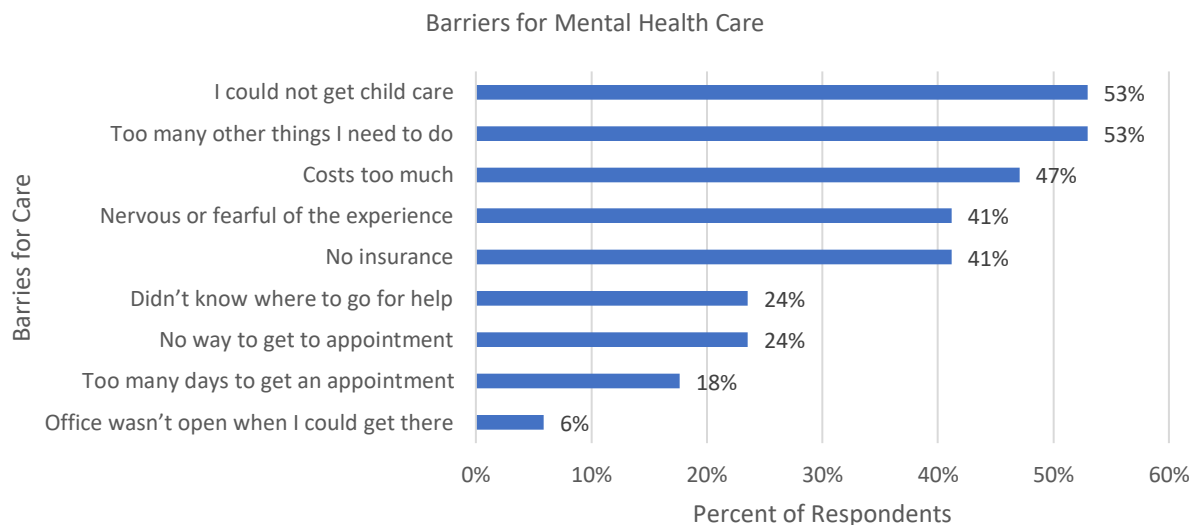
Figure 19. WPP Respondents with Young Children - Self-Reported Health Status



The majority of respondents obtained health information from a doctor or health professional (86%), family (31%) or the internet (31%). During the past 12 months, 41% of respondents reported that there was a time that they needed medical, dental, mental health care, or prescription medication and did not get it.

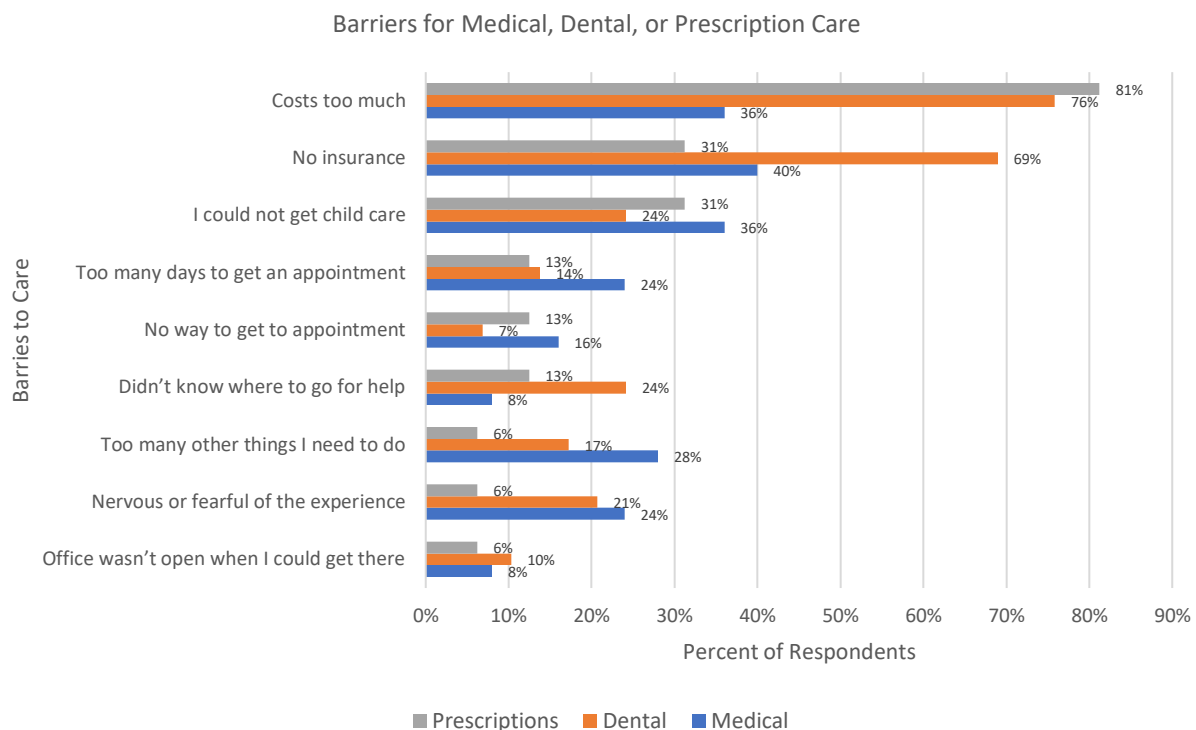
When focusing on barriers to mental health care, the most frequent reported barriers were having too many other things to do (53%), not having child care (53%), and prohibitive cost (47%). Figure 20 provides further details on barriers encountered for mental health care.

Figure 20. WPP Respondents with Young Children - Barriers for Mental Health Care



When looking at barriers across medical, dental, or prescription care, cost is the most frequently reported barrier for prescriptions (81%) and dental care (76%), while lack of insurance is the most frequent barrier for receiving medical care (40%). Figure 21. provides further details on barriers encountered across these service areas.

Figure 21. WPP Respondents with Young Children - Barriers for Medical, Dental, or Prescription Care



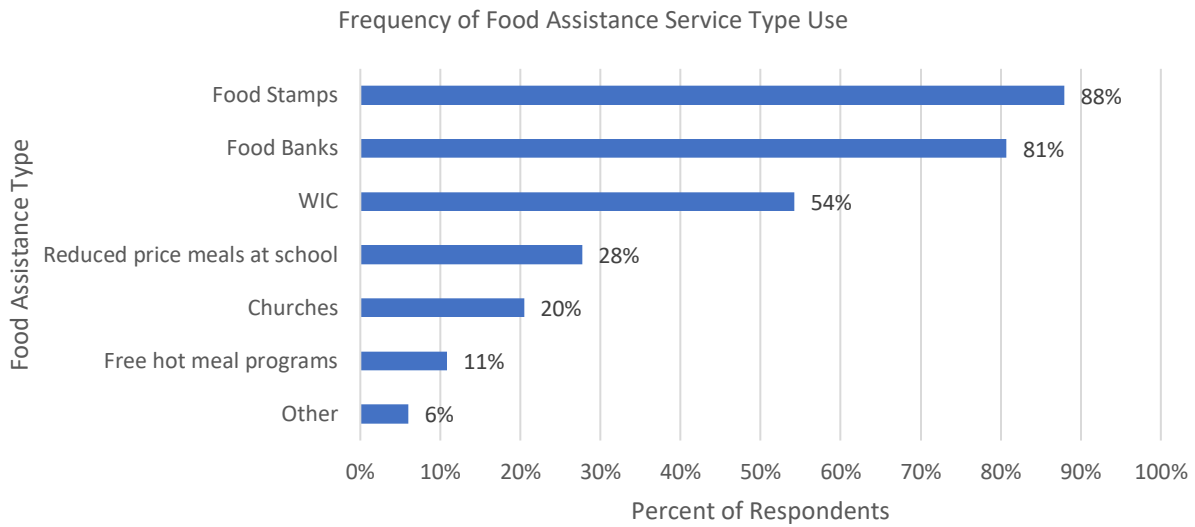
Nutrition

Information can be determined on the nutrition of these families as well. When asked about specific food access situations faced in the last twelve months, data showed:

- 39% of respondents reported that they or someone in their families had gone hungry because they were not able to get enough food.
- 72% of families reported that they skipped or cut the size of their meals because there wasn't enough money for food.
- 92% reported use of food assistance service such as food stamps, food banks, or any other program that helps with food or food costs

Food stamps and food banks were the most used food assistance service (88% and 81%), with WIC the third most used (54%). Figure 22. provides more detail on the frequency of public assistance use.

Figure 22. WPP Respondents with Young Children - Frequency of Food Assistance Service Type Use



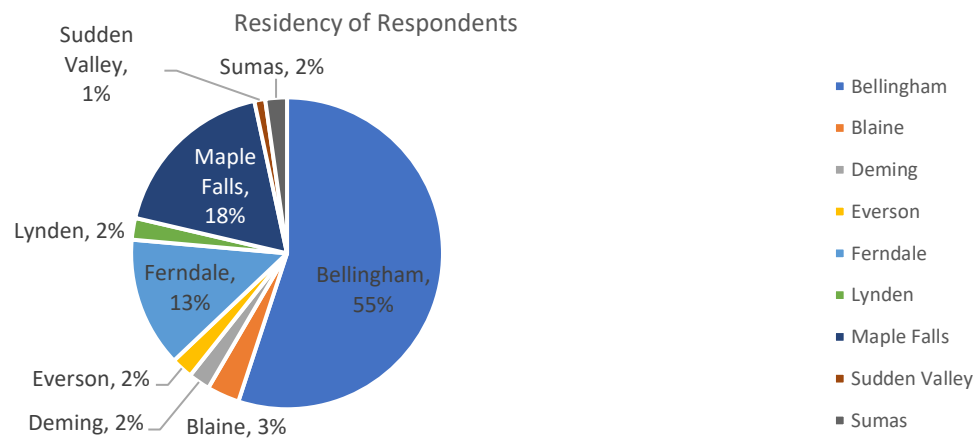
Household Demographics and Housing

The average household size for this population of respondents was four, the largest household reported contained 11 individuals. The mean age for the population was 34, the youngest respondent being 19 years of age, and the oldest 70.

Of housing types, Rental Housing and Owner-Occupied Housing were the most commonly reported (48% and 18%). Of note, 13% of these respondents reported that they were homeless at the time of the survey.

The majority of respondents lived in the Bellingham area (55%), followed by Maple Falls (18%) and Ferndale (13%). On average, respondents have lived in Whatcom County for 17 years, with a range of responses from less than one year to 56 years of residency.

Figure 23. WPP Respondents with Young Children - Residency of Respondents



The racial and ethnic diversity of this population of respondents is more diverse than that of Whatcom County as a whole, and comparable to that of our enrolled Head Start/ECEAP/EHS families. Table 25 provides detail on the racial and ethnic diversity of this subset of survey respondents compared to 2017-18 Head Start/ECEAP/EHS combined enrollment demographic information.

Table 38. WPP Respondents with Young Children - Race/Ethnicity of Survey Respondents vs. 2017-18 HS/ECEAP EHS Enrollees

Race/Ethnicity	Total Respondents	% of Respondents	Combined 2017-18 HS/ECEAP/EHS Racial & Ethnic Enrollment Demographics
African American or Black	5	5%	2%
Asian	4	4%	4%
Hispanic or Latino	18	20%	30%
Multi/Bi-Racial	-	-	16%
Native American or Alaskan Native	20	22%	4%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	3	3%	1%
Other	3	3%	7%
Unspecified	-	-	10%
White	55	60%	56%

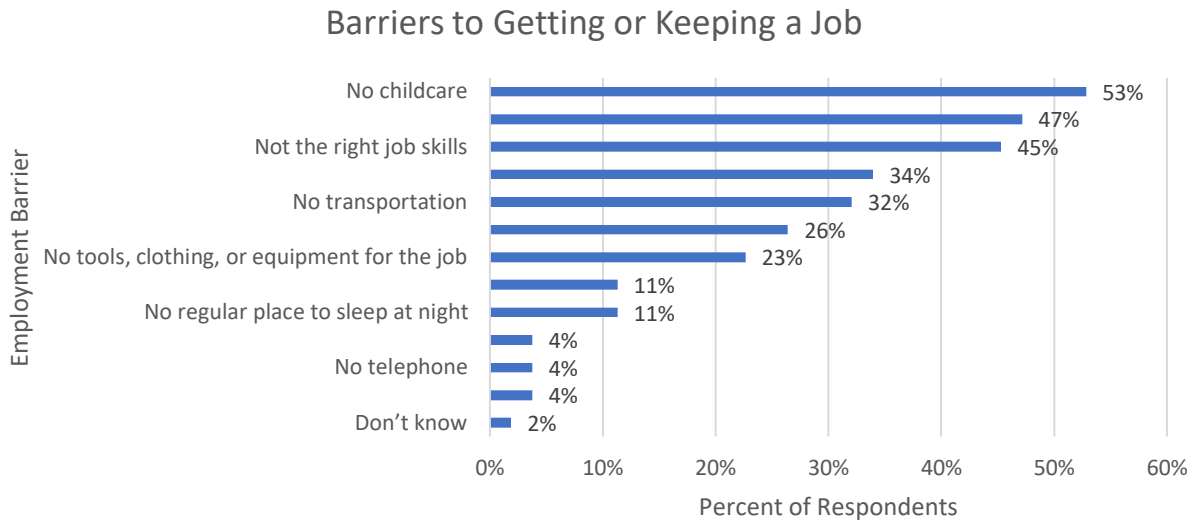
When looking at language fluency, of these respondents, 89% spoke English as their primary language at home, 8% Spanish, 1% Russian or Ukrainian, and 2% other.

Employment and Income

The mean monthly income for this sub-sample of survey respondents was \$1,332, with a minimum of income of zero, and a maximum of \$5,108. Fifty-eight percent of respondents reported that getting or keeping a good job had been hard for them or anyone in their home in the past 12 months.

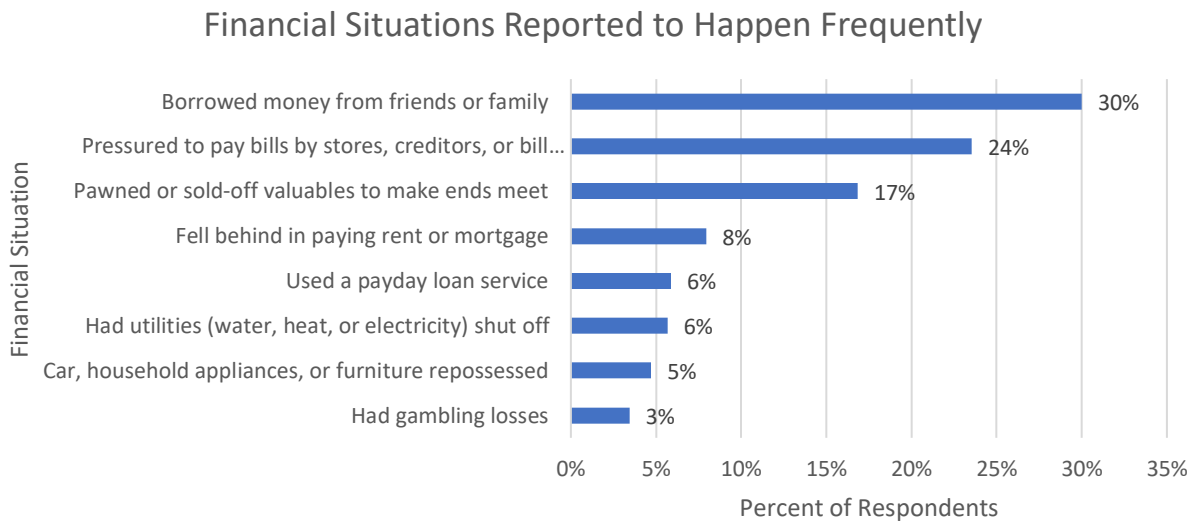
Of reported barriers to employment, the most frequently reported were lack of childcare (53%), not enough jobs available, (47%), and not having the right job skills (45%). Figure 24 provides further detail on barriers encountered by job seekers in this population.

Figure 24. WPP Respondents with Young Children - Barriers to Getting or Keeping a Job



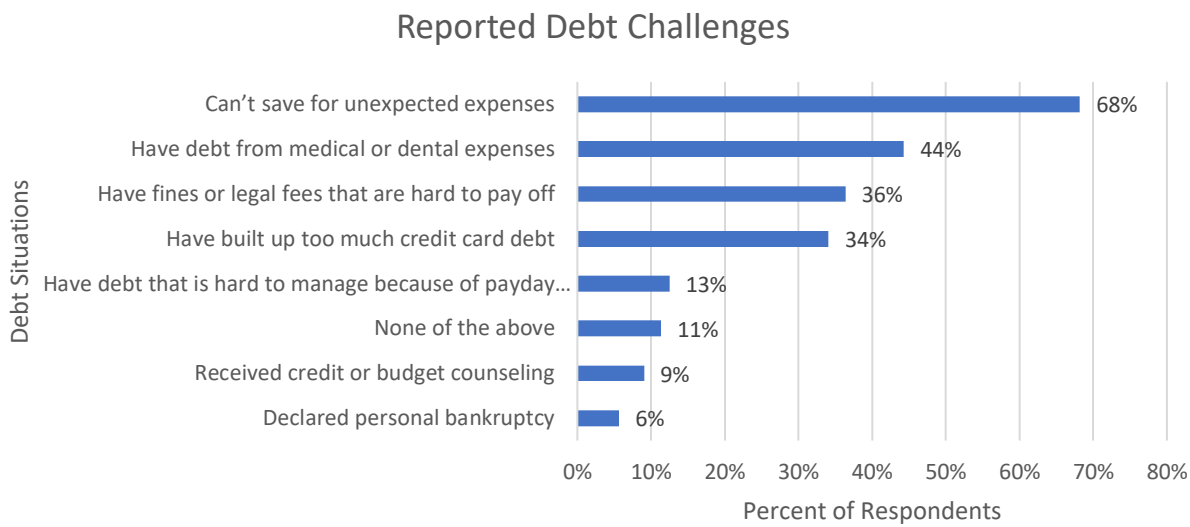
When looking at situations which may cause financial hardship or stress, respondents reported that borrowing money from friends or family (30%), and pressure to pay bills (24%), as the situations most likely to happen frequently.

Figure 25. WPP Respondents with Young Children - Financial Situations Reported to Happen Frequently



The situations detailed in Figure 25 can lead families to take on debt in order to make ends meet. The reported reasons for going into debt and challenges faced by families with debt can be found in Figure 26.

Figure 26. WPP Respondents with Young Children - Debt Challenges



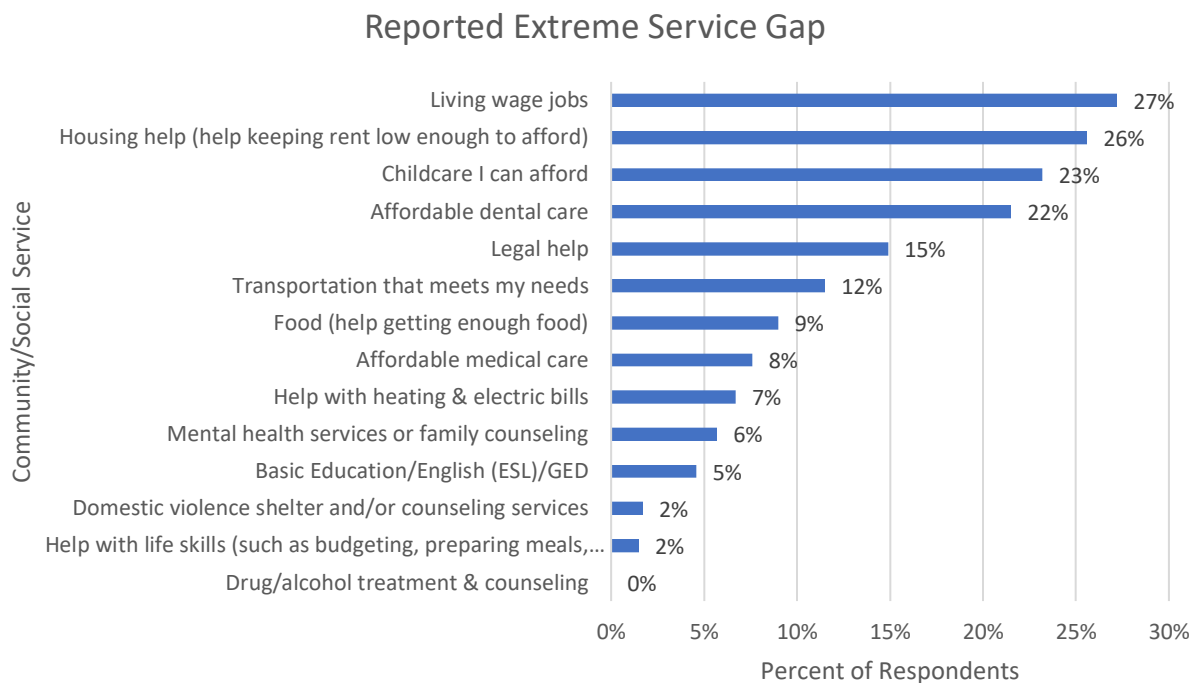
Access and availability of community resources

Survey respondents rated both the importance and the availability of 14 categories of services to their own household.⁴⁰ From an individual household's perspective, if a social or health service is both "extremely important" to their household and "very hard to get," there is a perceived extreme service gap for that particular service. Figure 27. WPP Respondents with Young Children - presents the proportion of survey respondents who perceive an extreme service gap for each of the 14 services.

Services perceived most frequently as having an extreme service gap are living wage jobs (27%), help with housing (26%), and childcare (23%). In addition, many survey respondents perceived as extremely important and very hard to get, dental care, legal help, and transportation.

⁴⁰ The importance scale ranged from 1, for "not important" to 5, for "extremely important"; the availability scale ranged from 1, for "very hard to get" to 5, for "very easy to get."

Figure 27. WPP Respondents with Young Children - Extreme Service Gaps



Though services such as drug and alcohol treatment and domestic violence shelter and counseling received low ratings in the service gap analysis, it does not mean that these services are not important to survey respondents. For example, 37% said domestic violence services were extremely important and 22% said that substance abuse treatment was extremely important. However, these same respondents did not rate these services as very hard to get.

Because survey respondents rated these services on five-point scales, another way to analyze these data is to calculate the average importance and availability scores for each service. These data form the basis of an “importance-availability” coordinate rating system. The average importance and availability ratings were calculated and plotted on a graph as seen in Figure 28. The lines making up the “crosshairs” of the graph represent the average importance score and the average availability score for each group of survey respondents.

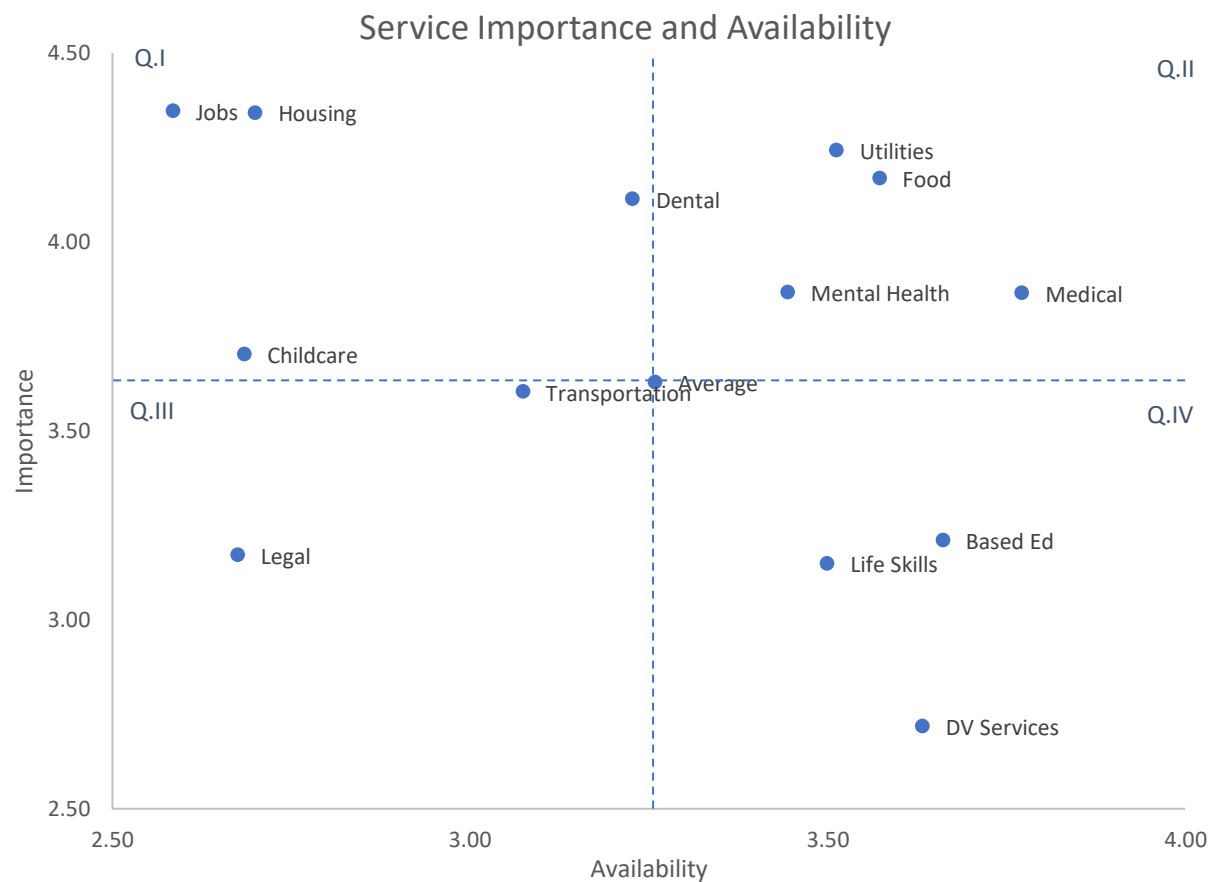
The importance-availability chart is divided into quadrants that rate the services as follows:

- Quadrant I: Above average in importance and below average in availability
- Quadrant II: Above average in importance and availability
- Quadrant III: Below average in importance and availability
- Quadrant IV: Below average in importance, and above average in availability

Services in Quadrant I are those that, on average, are extremely important to low-income households with young children, and very hard for them to access.

Technical note about these figures: Readers will note that the quadrants for each “importance-availability” chart are of different size. That’s because the “crosshairs” that delineate each chart’s quadrants are positioned at the average importance and availability scores for survey respondents.

Figure 28. WPP Respondents with Young Children – Service Importance/Availability



Recommendations and Priorities

Plan for Growth

As Whatcom County continues to grow, placement and evaluation of current ELAFS site locations will become a higher priority. New or expanded locations may be needed to accommodate the growing population.

According to the Washington State Office of Financial Management, the census tracts with the largest increases in population since the 2010 Census are in Ferndale and north Bellingham. Though ELAFS sites do serve these populations, they are not always geographically located near the high growth census tracts, such as the east of I-5 portion of Bellingham's urban growth area that stretches north toward Lynden.

General population growth does not always reflect the location of families with young children or those of limited means. For example, the WA DEL's Saturation Study describes the Ferndale School District as fairly well saturated in terms of preschool access for families of low income.

Plan for Diversity

As the County minority populations continue to grow, the need for bilingual teachers and cultural competency training will increase. The largest minority population in Whatcom County is the Latino/Hispanic community, and according to census data, growth of this community was focused in Bellingham, Ferndale, Lynden, Sumas, Everson, and Nooksack.

Housing First

With the cost of home or a rental continuing to increase, maintaining stable housing will become more and more of a challenge for ELAFS families and those eligible for our services. As the Opportunity Council moves further into the area of housing development, ELAFS can make sure we have a seat at the table to ensure the availability of units appropriate for families.

Focus on Financial Resiliency

As seen in the survey results, many families are struggling to make ends meet. With a lack of availability of living wage jobs, and affordable housing the chances of a financial hardship become a financial crisis will increase for our families. Through programs such as Project X-it and the implementation of Mobility Mentoring practices, ELAFS can help families build their financial resiliency in order to weather these crises.

Food Access

Families living in food deserts in our North Bellingham and East Whatcom Region face a lack of access to quality nutritious food. Though we can provide healthy meals for children while at our sites, their access to food at home may be lacking. ELAFS should look toward innovative solutions developed by other Head Start/ECEAP programming, and deepen the ties with the Opportunity Council's Food Access program to help close the gap for these families.

Child Care Access

The current inadequate supply of licensed child care throughout ELAFS's service area also imposes a burden on families of low-income, especially when the Head Start or ECEAP programming is part-day. The Department's survey of currently enrolled families showed a much stronger need and preference for full or extended day program models over part-day options.