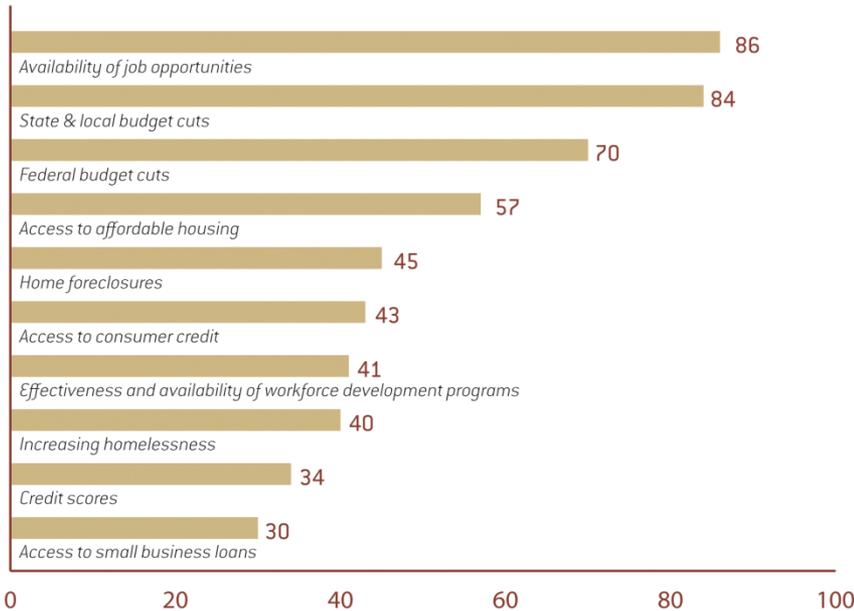


New England Community Outlook Survey

Second Quarter 2011 Highlights

TOP 10 CHALLENGES FACING LOW- AND MODERATE-INCOME COMMUNITIES

Percentage of respondents



Note: Respondents were able to choose more than one answer.

Source: Community Outlook Survey (Q2 2011)

Service providers chose availability of job opportunities, state and local budget cuts, and federal budget cuts as the top three most important challenges facing low- and moderate-income communities in New England. Access to affordable housing and home foreclosures rounded out the top five most frequently cited responses.

New England Community Outlook Survey

Second Quarter 2011 Highlights

Respondents Cited Fewer Job Opportunities

Service providers reported a tighter job market in the second quarter for low- and moderate-income communities in New England. Nearly 40 percent said that job availability decreased in the second quarter, while only 15 percent said that it increased. Expectations for job availability over the next quarter are more neutral, with an almost even split between those who expect job availability to increase and those who expect it to decrease.

“We need some employment opportunities.”
– Northern New Hampshire

New England Community Outlook Survey

Second Quarter 2011 Highlights

Strong Concern about Impact of Public Sector Budget Cuts on the Social Safety Net

Service providers cited concerns about the impact of budget cuts on a broad range of programs, such as transportation, workforce training, and health care, and were most concerned about the impact on social safety net programs, such as emergency food, health, and shelter assistance.

Budget cuts are coming at a time of strong increased demand for services from New England service providers. Sixty-one percent of respondents saw an increase in demand for their services over the last quarter versus the 6 percent that saw a decrease.

“Cuts in both public and private sector funding have stressed the entire system.”

– Eastern Massachusetts

New England Community Outlook Survey

Second Quarter 2011 Highlights

Grim Outlook for Households' Financial Well-Being

Service providers told a common story about the financial fragility of low- and moderate-income households in New England. Temporary or long-term job losses have decreased incomes, or wages have not kept up with increased costs of living. There are few mechanisms for lower-income families to generate a return on their savings, and many have lost wealth with the decline in home prices. Cuts in public programs result in fewer resources for those who need temporary assistance or would benefit from affordable housing or other community development programs.

“It is fine to talk about home ownership, asset development, and college education, but if a person is hungry, it’s unlikely to be very successful.”

– Central Rhode Island

New England Community Outlook Survey

Second Quarter 2011 Highlights

Emerging Issues

Many service providers cited problems with education as an emerging issue. More specifically, a triad of problems related to education was identified: poor educational attainment, a lack of adequate workforce training, and the need for additional financial literacy training.

Concern over cost-of-living increases was another frequently mentioned emerging issue for low- and moderate-income communities in New England. Increases in food and energy costs were cited most often, but respondents also indicated that the cost of clothing, health insurance, and other basic needs is also increasing.

“There is a mismatch between jobs available and qualified workers to fill them.”

– Western Vermont