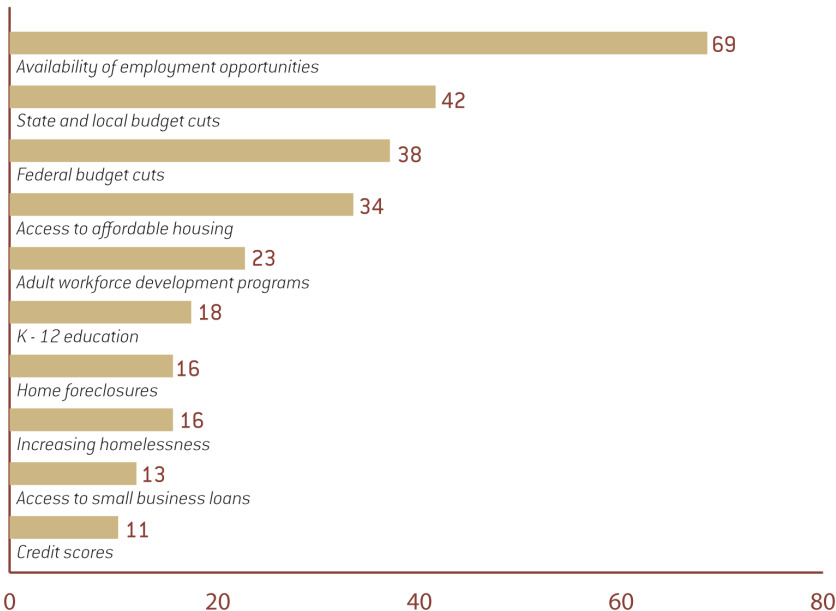


New England Community Outlook Survey

Third Quarter 2011 Highlights

TOP 10 CHALLENGES FACING LOW- AND MODERATE-INCOME COMMUNITIES

Percentage of respondents



Note: For this survey, respondents were able to select up to three choices (in previous surveys, respondents could select more choices)

Source: Community Outlook Survey (Q3 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 lower-income communities. As in the previous quarter, access to affordable housing came in fourth, but adult workforce development replaced home foreclosures as the fifth most frequently cited response in the third quarter. (Home foreclosures fell to seventh place, with K-12 education coming ahead of it in sixth place.)

New England Community Outlook Survey

Third Quarter 2011 Highlights

Lack of Jobs, Longer Unemployment, and Lower-Paying Jobs Continue to Top List of Concerns

Service providers reported a tighter job market in the third quarter for lower-income communities. Nearly 48 percent said job availability decreased; only 8 percent said it increased. Respondents shared that clients are experiencing much longer periods of unemployment and noted that many who do find jobs take lower-paying positions.

“RI has very high unemployment, and the Hispanic community is especially hard hit. The Hispanic populations in Pawtucket and Central Falls find it increasingly difficult to find jobs and pay for rental or homeownership housing.”

– Eastern Rhode Island

New England Community Outlook Survey

Third Quarter 2011 Highlights

Service Organizations Are Working Hard to Maintain Capacity as Demand for Services Rises

We asked respondents who have maintained capacity over the last 12 months in the midst of higher demand for services and cuts in funding to share their strategies. Their responses fell into four categories: Some organizations had identified alternative sources of private and/or public funding. Some had made staff changes (froze or cut salaries, reduced staff benefits, cut staff, did not replace staff, gave staff reduced hours or furlough, or saw staff work harder). Some had cut the range of services provided to clients. Finally, some had improved efficiency by implementing strategies that increased output and/or reduced expenses.

“Reductions in CDBG funding will negatively impact services we provide to LMI residents in the city.”

– Northern Vermont

New England Community Outlook Survey

Third Quarter 2011 Highlights

Household Financial Stability Continues to Decline

With high unemployment, long-term joblessness, and cuts in funding for safety-net programs taking their toll, respondents cited a continued decline in household financial stability. Over the last quarter, 65 percent of service providers saw the financial well-being of households decline, while only 3 percent saw it improve. Respondents also reported that financial instability was taking a psychological toll on clients and that while lower-income households are the most vulnerable, a much wider range of households is experiencing a decline in their financial well-being.

“Poverty rates have climbed to an all-time high. The number of people seeking community action services in central Mass has grown for each of the last 5 years.”

– Central Massachusetts

New England Community Outlook Survey

Third Quarter 2011 Highlights

Other Challenges

Affordable Housing - Service providers noted that declining credit scores brought on by job loss and foreclosures are forcing some families into lower-quality, lower-rent apartments. Some also reported cases of predatory landlords taking advantage of vulnerable families.

Rural Communities – Respondents reported that rural families continue to experience special challenges associated with rural living, including hidden homelessness, making ends meet with seasonal, natural-resource-based employment, and the lack of social and health services.

“Most of our northeastern counties are isolated areas with a significant lack of services, including health care, housing, mental health, and employment opportunities.”

– Central Maine