

UK Extension Community Needs Assessment Summary of Respondents' Comments Mercer County

A statewide survey was conducted between August and December 2023 to understand Kentuckian's perceptions of the extent to which practical education and assistance is needed in their communities. More than 35,000 Kentuckians, representing all 120 counties of the Commonwealth, responded to the survey. The survey consisted of four scales targeting needs related to: Agricultural and Natural Resources, Youth Development, Family and Individual Development, and Community and Economic Development. State- and county-level survey results are available [here](#). The survey also included an open-ended question that asked respondents to describe other issues in their communities that need practical education and/or assistance. The table below summarizes responses to this question.

Summary of Respondents' Comments (N=76)

Category	Description	# of Respondents	% of Total
Civic, Public & Governance (Community Wellbeing and Governance)	Practical education targeting community cohesion, engagement, and involvement; governance and responsible use of public funds and taxes; civics education, election education, election processes, and protection of constitutional rights; diversity, inclusion, and cultural understanding; etc.	17	22.4
Substance Use Prevention & Recovery	Practical education targeting substance use prevention, recovery, and sober living; treatment centers and programs; smoking and vaping cessation; transportation and employment support for people in recovery; etc.	4	5.3
School System/ Education	Comments related to need for improvements in public school facilities and public-school programs; teacher pay and training; education of special needs students; tutoring and other supports for adult education; programs for home-schooled children; vocational/trades training; funding for college education; etc.	11	14.5
Support for Seniors the Elderly	Practical education to support seniors and elders in areas such as low-income housing, transportation, help with chores and home repairs; provision of senior centers, health care,	2	2.6



	nursing homes/assisted living; respite for caregivers; computer training for seniors; programs to enhance connection and reduce isolation; etc.		
Environmental Issues	Practical education on habitat protection/restoration, watershed (or stream) protection; dumping and littering; pesticide use and pollinator protection; recycling and sustainability; floodplain protection and drainage issues; etc.	5	6.6
Family Development	Practical education on topics related to parenting, discipline, and child wellbeing; training (and support) for relatives raising children; support for parents raising children with special needs; support and education on domestic, child, and sexual abuse; respite for caregivers; household money management and budgeting; affordable/accessible childcare; family time, activities for the family; etc.	6	7.9
Support for Local Agriculture, Farming, and Gardening	Practical education and support for small and family farms and new farmers; support for organic (or sustainable) and low chemical farming; training on farmland preservation; training on farm safety and food safety on farms, and farmers markets; market support for locally produced foods; education on off-grid living and home gardening; etc.	11	14.5
Food Access, Nutrition & Healthy Eating	Practical education and support on topics related to hunger and food insecurity; food banks and pantries; nutrition education and access to healthy food; education on growing, preserving, and canning food; etc.	11	14.5
Housing/Shelter	Need for support and education on homelessness and low income/ affordable housing; housing for domestic abuse survivors; teaching people how to take care of their property/homes; and housing for families.	5	6.6
Infrastructure	Comments related to need for (and improvements in) infrastructures including transportation, roads, sidewalks, public transit,	5	6.6



	intercounty transit, trails; utility infrastructure such as water, sewer, internet, and cell service.		
Workforce Preparation and Employment	Education on workforce preparation and job readiness; basic skills training; job training including vocational and trade schools; business recruitment and economic development; support for the working class (e.g., transportation to work and childcare); need for living wage; etc.	6	7.9
Youth Development	Need for youth development programs including recreation and physical activities, mental health support, prevention of bullying, youth violence and programs targeting youth life skills.	13	17.1
Land Use & Development	Comments related to land use planning and zoning; land preservation and historic preservation; sign ordinances, visual quality, and beautification of community facilities; availability and use of parks, open spaces, and conservation areas; need for (and improvements to) public facilities (e.g., sports and recreation centers and conference centers).	10	13.2
Health/Healthcare	Access to healthcare, cost of care, support for chronic illnesses; improvements to healthcare systems; programs (and advocacy) to promote holistic health, healthy choices (e.g., nutrition and physical activity) and healthy lifestyle advocacy.	6	7.9
Mental Health Issues	Education and support for mental health and wellbeing including the need for counseling and therapy services and suicide (hotline) awareness.	2	2.6
Public Assistance	Comments related to the need for public and community assistance to address poverty, disaster recovery, child nutrition, single parents, etc.	1	1.3
Recreation & Physical Activity	Need for public buildings for exercise or recreation; parks and outdoor recreation facilities (e.g., walking, hiking, and/or biking trails); entertainment and play areas for children,	10	13.2



	youth, and family; need for organizations like Boy Scouts.		
Public Safety	Comments related to need for (and improvements) in public safety including crime, internet safety, fraud prevention, night safety, and quality of law enforcement; safety training (e.g., gun safety, safe driving, and driver's education); first aid and disaster preparedness; need for additional first responders and ambulances; training and education on combatting misinformation; animal control, loose pets, and animal cruelty; jail and prison and re-entry issues; etc.	3	3.9
Special Needs	Practical education on support for disability or disabled; special education/ neuro divergent veterans and immigrants; etc.	1	1.3
Other	Other comments that did not relate to any of the categories above.	1	1.3

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For additional questions, contact Dr. Lola Adedokun at lola.adedokun@uky.edu

