

El Dorado County Health and Human Services Agency
**2026/2027 Community Needs Overview
and Assessment**



South Lake Tahoe Photo by James Ward

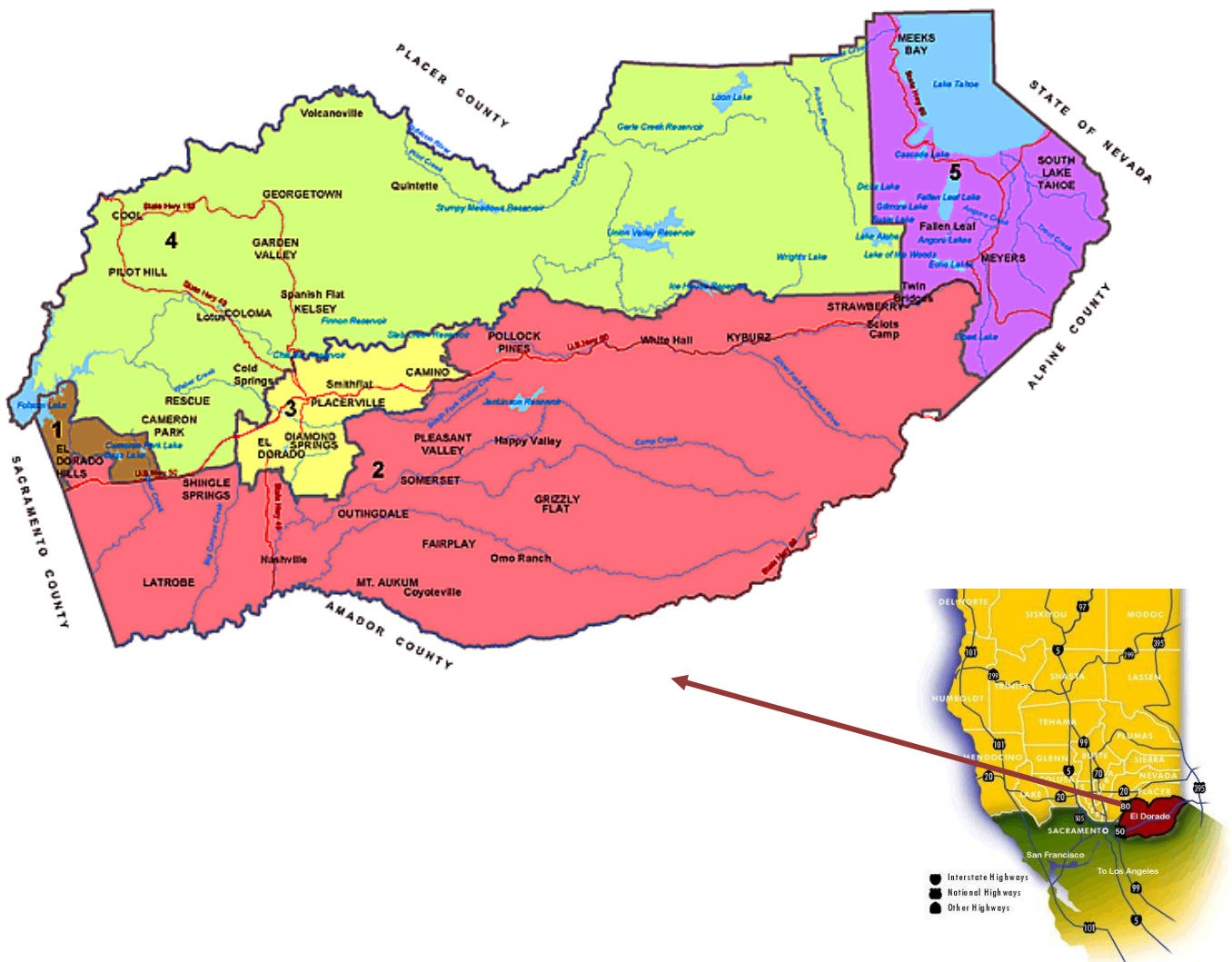
Prepared by:
El Dorado County Health and Human Services Agency

OUR GOLDEN COMMUNITY

The County of El Dorado is in the historic Gold Country in the Sierra Nevada Mountains and foothills between Sacramento and the State of Nevada, of which 1,710.8 square miles is covered in land and 78 square miles is water. El Dorado County is known for the snowcapped mountains in the winter and the swooping foothills and rivers in the summer.

The present-day site of El Dorado County was once home to the Maidu, Washoe, and Miwok Native American tribes, and is notable for being the site of the 1848 gold discovery that sparked the California Gold Rush. The County of El Dorado was one of California's original 27 counties. Its name is derived from the Spanish, meaning "the gilded/golden".

The county is topographically divided into two zones. The northeast corner of the county is in the Lake Tahoe basin, while the remainder is in the "western slope," the area west of Echo Summit. This landscape invites residents and tourists alike to enjoy outdoor recreation activities year-round. The administrative center in El Dorado County is Placerville. The population of El Dorado County has grown as Greater Sacramento has expanded into the region. In the unique Lake Tahoe area, environmental awareness and environmental protection initiatives have grown along with the population since the 1960 Winter Olympics, hosted in neighboring Placer County.



Appendix C: Community Needs Assessment

With its western border touching California's Sacramento Valley and its eastern boundary meeting Nevada at Lake Tahoe, El Dorado County stretches across 90 miles of foothills, valleys, and mountain peaks. The elevation of El Dorado County ranges from 200 feet above sea level on the western slope, to a peak of 10,881-foot elevation. The county experiences some of the most severe weather conditions in the State, with the median temperature in South Lake Tahoe ranging from 27 degrees in January to 61 degrees in July, and the average snowfall of 190.7 inches in the Tahoe Basin area.

Two major highways, U.S. 50 and State Route 49, intersect the county, while State Route 88 establishes the county's southern border with Amador and Alpine Counties.

Much of the county is public land. The El Dorado National Forest comprises a significant portion (approximately 43%) of the county's land area, primarily on the western slope. The Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, formerly part of the El Dorado and two other National Forests, manages much of the land east of the crest. The Pacific Crest Trail runs through the eastern part of the county along, or roughly paralleling, the Sierra Crest. The county is home to the Desolation Wilderness, a 63,960-acre federally protected wilderness area and a popular destination for hiking, backpacking, and fishing.

Our community is considered one of the most diversified recreational areas in California and people from around the world come to enjoy its beauty. South Lake Tahoe boasts several world-class ski resorts. The lake beckons visitors to enjoy the natural beauty, crisp clean air, frigid water, and all the art, music, sport, and entertainment that go along with the world's most beautiful scenery. Coloma is a small and mighty community and is most noted for being the site where James W. Marshall found gold and where the beautiful South Fork of the American River lies. The South Fork is California's most popular whitewater rafting river and vaunts numerous whitewater rafting companies.

Tourism and travel are one of El Dorado County's greatest assets. Tourism allows visitors to support the local business industry, making tourism a huge economic influence in El Dorado County. In 2023, El Dorado County generated more than \$100 million dollars in tax revenue, according to Visit California, California Travel Impacts Study. El Dorado County continues to see a steady increase of individuals and families visiting, making our community a beautiful vacation destination.

Rubicon 4x4 Trail is an 18.7-mile heavily trafficked point-to-point trail located near Pollock Pines, California. The trail is rated as difficult and primarily used for off-road driving.



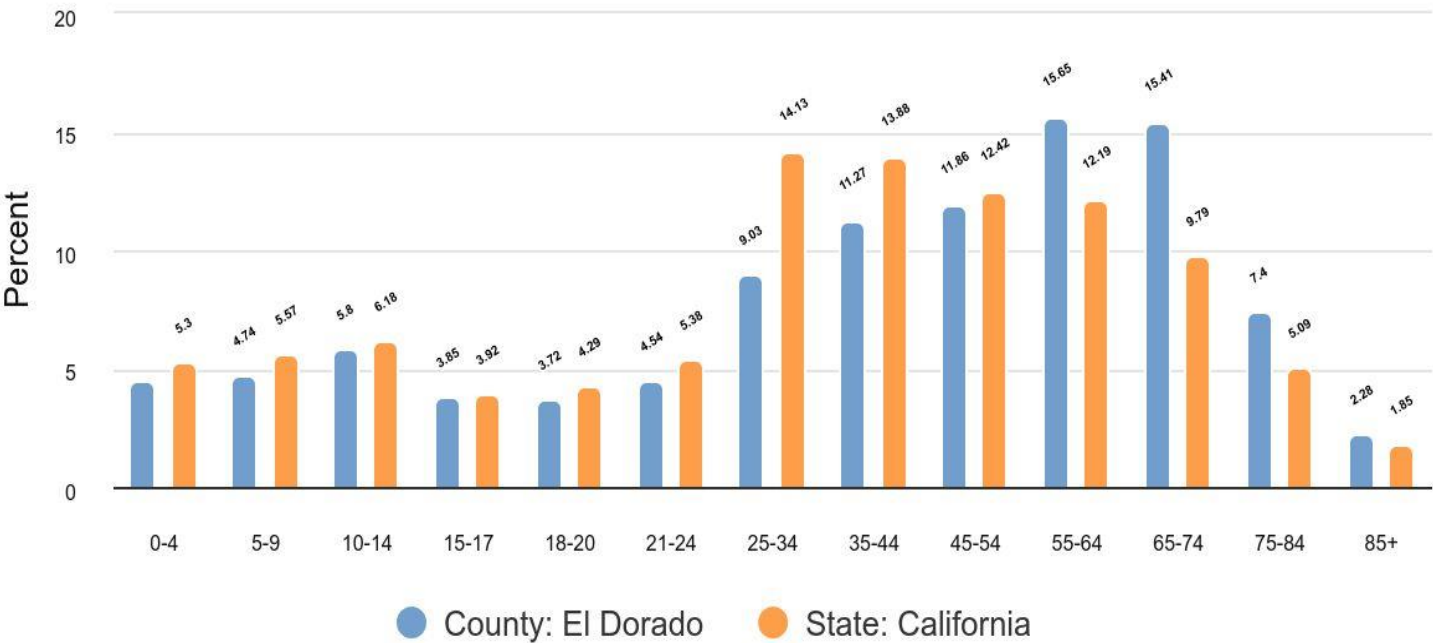
Apple Hill is situated in the greater Placerville area. From pumpkin patches to berry festivals and apple picking, there is something for everyone to do throughout the year.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Age and Race

El Dorado County is home to over 192,000 people. The largest racial group in El Dorado County is white, which comprises 74.37% of the population. According to the WELLDORADO website in 2024, 19.0% of the county’s population was 18 years and younger, while 25% was over age 65 years. Those between the ages of 55-64 make up the largest population by age group of 15.65% and are a higher percentage than the state average of only 12.19%. The ratio between males and females is about a 50/50 split. Over 84% of the population speaks primarily English and 15% is reported as bilingual Spanish-speaking homes.

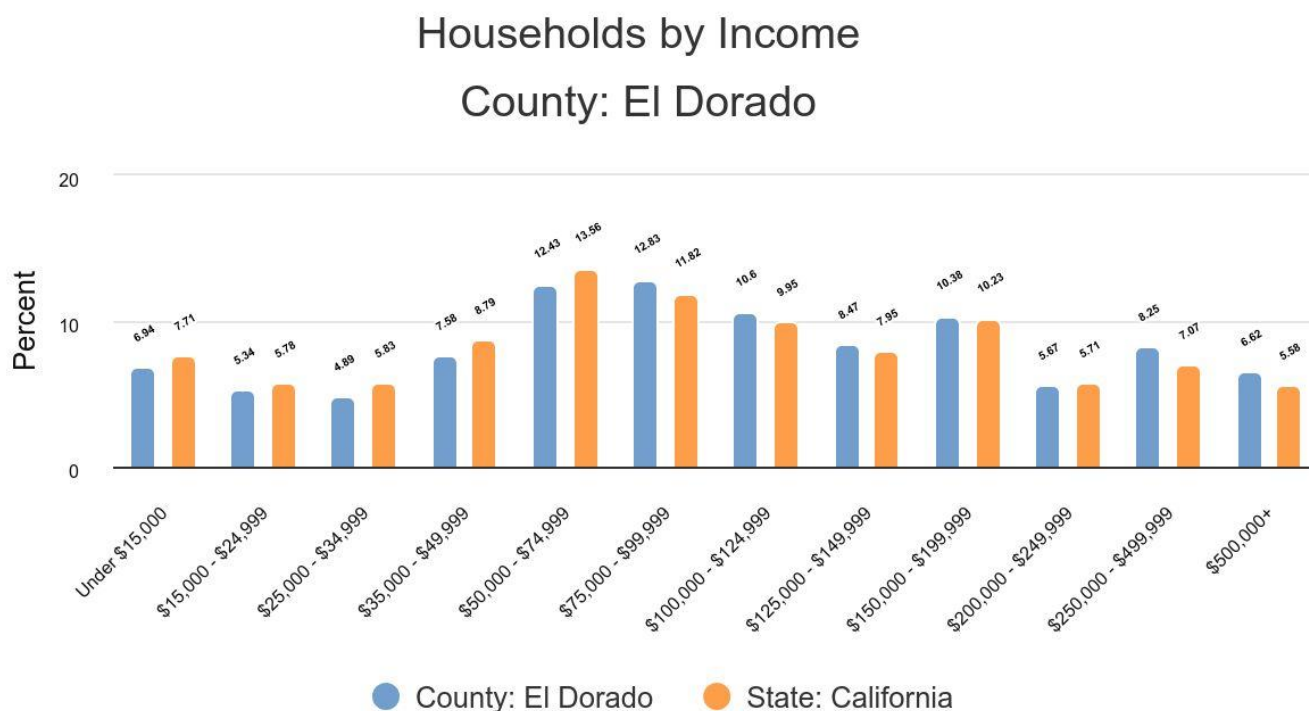
Population by Age Group
County: El Dorado



Claritas, 2024. welldorado.org

Income and Housing

In 2024, the reported amount of households is 76,249. The median household income for El Dorado County was \$99,986. The average household size is 2.5 persons. There are over 54,000 households with children living in El Dorado County. 6.18% of families living in El Dorado County live in poverty.



Claritas, 2024. welldorado.org

In recent years, the housing market has rebounded and encompasses over 94,000 housing units. The homeownership rate is over 76% which is higher than the national average of 65.6%. The county has two incorporated cities; South Lake Tahoe is the most populous, with 29,987 people, and Placerville has roughly 37,000 people. In December of 2024, the median home price in El Dorado County was \$750,000, which is up 4.2% from the previous months.

Rental rates have also increased. According to California Housing Partnership's 2023 El Dorado County Affordable Housing Needs Report, Renters in El Dorado County need to earn \$32.61 per hour - 2.1 times the state minimum wage - to afford the average monthly asking rent of \$1,696. State and federal funding for housing production and preservation in El Dorado County is \$159 million, a 1,053% increase from the year prior. 70% of extremely low-income households in El Dorado County are paying more than half of their income on housing costs compared to 3% of moderate-income households.

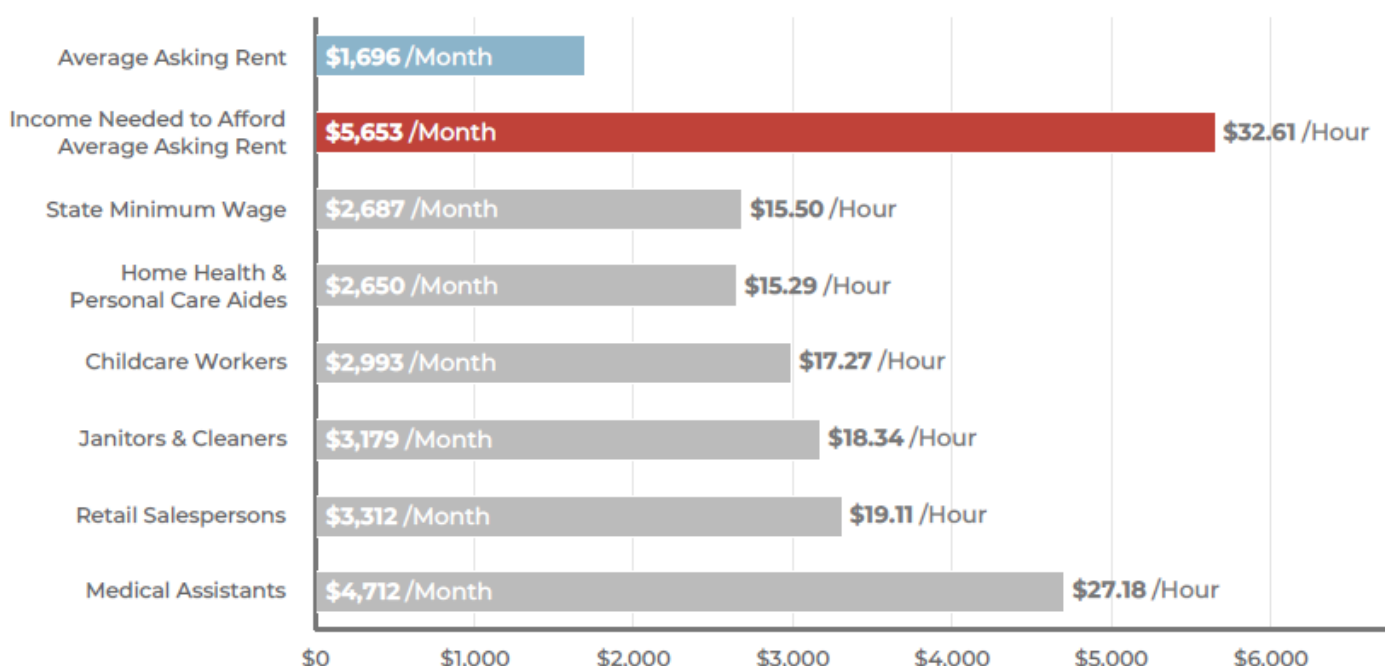
Appendix C: Community Needs Assessment

With limited affordable housing, families are forced to pay most of their paychecks on their housing and it is leaving less money to pay for essential items such as food and utility bills. A positive statistic is that the county is seeing an increase in jobs. El Dorado County's labor force has steadily grown while the unemployment rate has decreased.

In November 2024, over 89,000 individuals were employed, with an unemployment rate of 4.4%. El Dorado County is lower than the State unemployment rate of 5.3% according to the Labor Market Review by the California Employment Development Department. Although employment has increased, these jobs are still not sufficient to support the economic needs of the community yet it is growing in the right direction.

WHO CAN AFFORD TO RENT

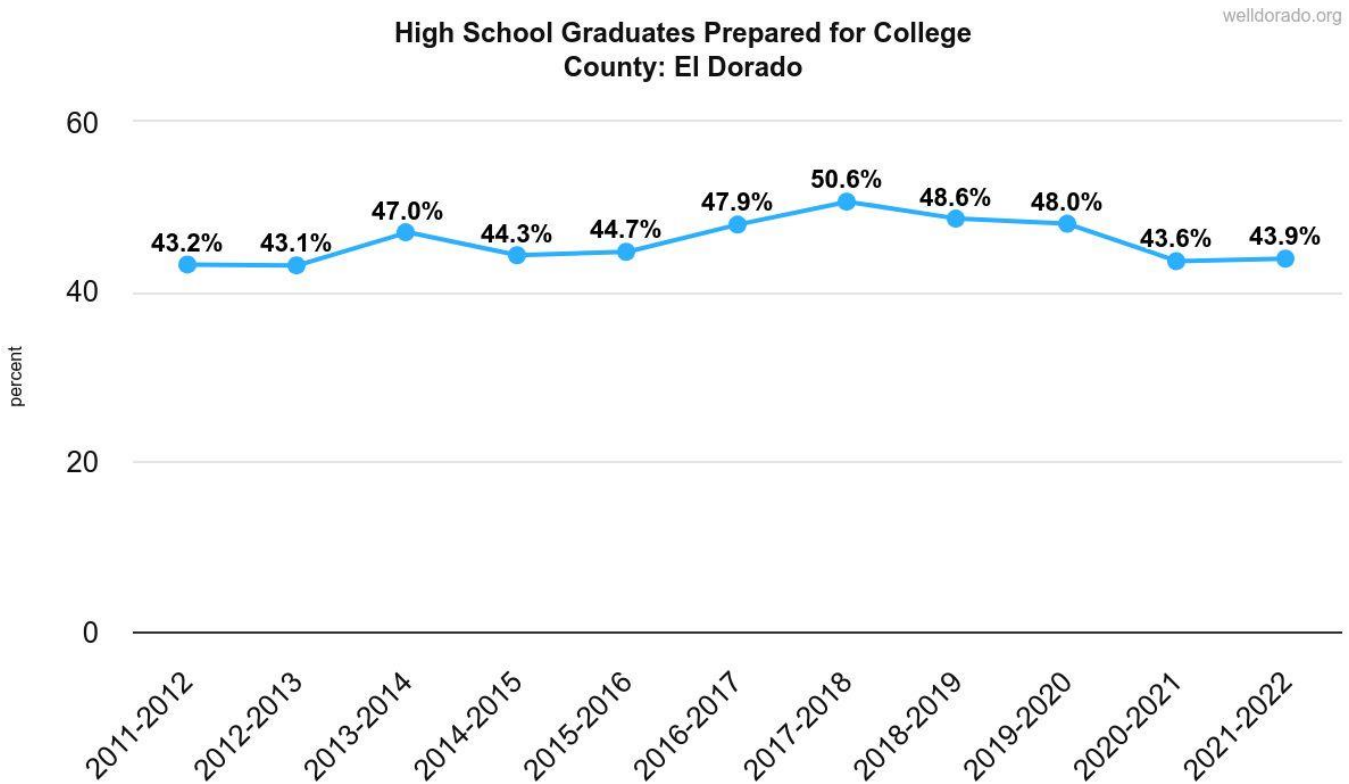
Renters need to earn **2.1 times** the minimum wage to afford the average asking rent in El Dorado County.



Across California, there is a shortfall of affordable rental homes and homes for purchase. USHousingData.com reports that the Fair Market Rent in El Dorado County for a 3-bedroom home is \$2,992. However, in smaller areas such as Cameron Park, the rental cost for a 3-bedroom home is \$3,110. With over 53.1% of renters spending 30% or more of household income on rent, many families are finding themselves priced out of the county. Spending a high percentage of household income on housing can create financial hardship, especially for home renters with limited incomes. High housing costs can make it hard to afford other expenses for health care, food, transportation, and savings, which can also increase stress, mental health problems, and other issues.

Education

El Dorado County Office of Education (EDCOE) offers a variety of services to many county-wide programs and 15 school districts. In the 2023-2024 school year, more than 33,000 students attended K-12. Over 9,000 students were enrolled in charter schools. That is 2,000 more than the 2021-2022 school year. That means more children are utilizing their homes for resources the schools would have provided such as electricity and day to day supplies. The total amount of foster youth enrolled in school was 112. This is slightly lower than the last reporting years of 2021-2022 school year. Collaborative partnerships between EDCOE, government agencies, and community organizations maximize local resources and taxpayer dollars to provide comprehensive, cost-effective assistance and opportunities to students and the community.



Source: California Department of Education (2021-2022)

KEY FINDINGS

Below are areas the agency is highlighting to emphasize the need in the community.

Home Energy Assistance Client Survey

The El Dorado County Health and Human Services Agency, Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) staff conducted a Client Satisfaction Survey for HEAP clients. HEAP clients were encouraged to fill out the survey and provide feedback on several topics related to current intake processes, past experiences, and past due notices. Surveys were distributed at Placerville and South Lake Tahoe HEAP office locations, via email, and the HEAP Website. The survey was distributed on March 14, 2023, and concluded on March 27, 2023. In a 2-week time, over 158 clients responded to the survey. 93% of clients responded they had applied for HEAP in the last 12 months; 53% received electricity assistance; 32% received propane assistance and the remaining clients received wood, natural gas, pellets, or kerosene. 96% of respondents reported that the HEAP Program helped save them money on their home energy costs. 22% of the respondents noted they had received a past-due bill in the last 12 months. A similar survey will go out again in 2025.

Many of the HEAP respondents provided additional insights on how HEAP helped them save money on their energy costs. Below are a few responses that stood out to agency staff:

"I try not to run the heat, as I live below the poverty level. With this program, I can turn on the heat and have lots of water."

"My wife and I are both retired, living on our savings. The ongoing high inflation has made it difficult for us to pay our food and the increasing utility bills. HEAP has helped us in paying our energy bills, especially during winter."

"As a single mom of 2 young children, if it weren't for HEAP, I don't know how I would make it. It's been a cold winter, so my heater has been on more. Me and my kids sleep with lots of blankets so the heater is not on high all night."

"Single mom to 4 kids and work full time, but still low-income. HEAP saves me money where I can use that money towards rising costs of other things like food and rent."

"With HEAP benefits, this makes it possible for us to buy fresh food and fuel to get to the store. Thank you, El Dorado County and HEAP, we would be hard-pressed without you!"

HEAP staff continues to assess households' needs during the initial HEAP application process and remains diligent in ensuring clients are referred to community resources such as community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, private and public sectors, and educational institutions. Leveraging these sectors is an important component of family self-sufficiency and success among our low-income families.

"HEAP has been a lifesaver
as we struggle to find a new normal
after losing everything in the Caldor
Fire. We are living in a travel trailer
as we try to rebuild our lives. It is so
hard to try and rebuild, as every
penny we have is going back to our
property and rebuilding. HEAP kept
us warm all winter as we only have
propane heat."
- Community Member

Senior Nutrition Program and Food Resources

To support the senior population's health and well-being, the Senior Nutrition Program provides nutritious meals to seniors throughout the entire county. The program utilizes two ways to distribute these meals, first is the congregate meal sites that are located throughout the county, and second is home-delivered meals if they are homebound. In 2024, about 683 unduplicated clients received 32,761 meals with the Congregate Meal program and about 764 unduplicated clients received 145,369 Home Delivered Meals. A total amount of meals served for the 2024 year was 182,172. This resource is a staple for ten percent of the senior population 65-74 years old in El Dorado County.

The El Dorado Food Bank is also a large support to the community in providing shelf-stable and nutritious foods to community members at no cost. The food bank has several areas in the county that distribute foods that are nutritious. The Senior Services program through Health and Human Services also provides farmers market vouchers to seniors where they can access free local and nutritious food.

Community Health Assessment

In 2022, the El Dorado County Public Health Division began updating our county's Community Health Assessment. In the first half of 2022, a detailed data inquiry process was undertaken to arrive at a comprehensive list of major health issues affecting El Dorado County. A host of federal, state, and local data sources, tools, and organizations were queried and researched. When looking at the health issues in El Dorado County, the following criteria were used to assist in determining health outcomes and/or risk factors of concern:

- Is the prevalence, morbidity, or mortality related to the health issue higher in El Dorado County compared to other counties, California, or the US overall?
- Within El Dorado, is the health issue characterized by notable disparities according to gender, race/ethnicity, or socio-economic status; or is a notable issue among special populations such as the seniors, children, or the homeless?
- Is the health issue trending in the wrong direction over time -- meaning that the prevalence, morbidity, or mortality is increasing compared to previous years?

Based on these tools and criteria, 12 health outcomes and risk factors were identified for initial focus including: heart disease; cancer; accidents, unintentional injuries, motor vehicle accidents; liver disease/cirrhosis; Alzheimer disease; mental health and suicide; substance use / drug overdose; diabetes; obesity and overweight; asthma; mental health; and child health. In the second half of 2022, Public Health staff participated in the Community Health Assessment Prioritization Process. Staff attended events throughout El Dorado County and asked County residents if they would like to give feedback on the health issues that the county will focus on over the next five years. Residents were asked to identify their top three health outcomes/risk factors. The results were tabulated, summarized, and presented to the Board of Supervisors on October 11, 2022. At that time, the following information was shared:

- 26 Community Events were completed with 572 community responses received
- Community events occurred in all five Supervisor Districts
- 864 responses to the electronic survey

Appendix C: Community Needs Assessment

Demographics:

- 78% of electronic survey respondents were white
- 83% of electronic survey respondents were between the ages of 35-74
- 1,504 people voted for their top 3 health priorities with 153 participants preferring not to volunteer their race/ethnicity
- The race/ethnicity of the community health prioritization participants matched the county's demographic profile except for Hispanic participation which, at 9%, was slightly lower

The Top 3 Health Priorities identified by community members were:

Mental Health/Substance Abuse, Child Health, and Overweight/Obesity.

[Data Source: Kidsdata.org, United States Census Bureau, Quickfacts California, Community and Economic Development Data, Bureau of Labor Statistics, State of California, El Dorado County Visitors Authority, WellDorado.org, ed-data.org, California Department of Public Health, Community HUBS Impact Report, Datausa.org, El Dorado Chamber of Commerce, EDC Health Assessment, Employment Development Department, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Bureau of Labor Statistics, CisitCalifornia.com, California Impact of Travel Study, National Low-Income Housing Coalition, Housing Market Report rocket.com, Mt. Democrat Newspaper. El Dorado county education data; https://www.ed-data.org/county/El-Dorado/ps_OTY3MA%5E%5E]