

THE SOUTHERN ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT PROJECT (SEAP)

Louisiana, South Carolina and Tennessee Residents Weigh in on Federal Funding

Federal Funding Community Needs Survey | MAY 2023

ABOUT THE SEAP

The Southern Economic Advancement Project (SEAP) is your partner and resource. SEAP amplifies existing organizations' and networks' efforts to broaden economic power and build a more equitable future. Broadening economic power brings attention to how race, class, and gender intersect in social and economic policy in the South. SEAP explores policy ideas designed to address these connections directly. SEAP focuses on 12 Southern states and marginalized/vulnerable populations within the region.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

The poverty rate in Louisiana, South Carolina and Tennessee all exceed 14%, with Louisiana having the highest rate at nearly 20%. Helping to change this narrative are large Federal investments like the State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). SEAP conducted a survey throughout February and March 2023 to gain insight into food-insecure residents' challenges and how they would like their leaders to address them with federal funding. SEAP received more than 1,600 responses to our survey. This report builds on the SEAP 2021-2022 American Rescue Plan (ARP) Community Needs Survey, which SEAP promoted in Alabama, Georgia and Mississippi. The results are similar, with affordable housing and utilities as top challenges, although food security is now a top concern for respondents.

SURVEY TOPLINES

- Respondents struggle to access and afford basic needs such as housing and reliable utilities and face financial burdens from personal debt and the rising cost of food.
- Across all three states, respondents would like local leaders to invest federal funding in the following:
 - Affordable Housing
 - Reliable Utilities
 - Food Security
- Similar to the 2022 survey responses, an overwhelming 95% of respondents say they have yet to hear from elected officials or community leaders regarding federal funds available to their communities.

WHO RESPONDED

The majority of respondents identified as women (85%), and most (88%) were between the ages of 25 - 64. Their households make less than \$20,000 per year (69%), and 48% live with one or more children under 18.

HOW TO USE THESE SURVEY RESULTS

The window of opportunity for local officials in Louisiana, South Carolina and Tennessee to invest federal funds equitably still exists. SEAP conducted this survey to give community leaders insight into the priorities of their community members.

Dollars from programs like the ARP, BIL, and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) can all work together to address many of the challenges highlighted throughout this report.

More information on these federal funding programs and how to promote a more equitable recovery is available in the [SEAP Federal Funding Outlet](#), where leaders can obtain the latest information and resources regarding federal grants and funding programs to promote an equitable recovery.

75% of respondents find it challenging to pay utilities. More than half struggle with personal debt and affordable housing

TOP PERSONAL CHALLENGES



Ability to Pay Utilities



Personal Debt



Access to Housing

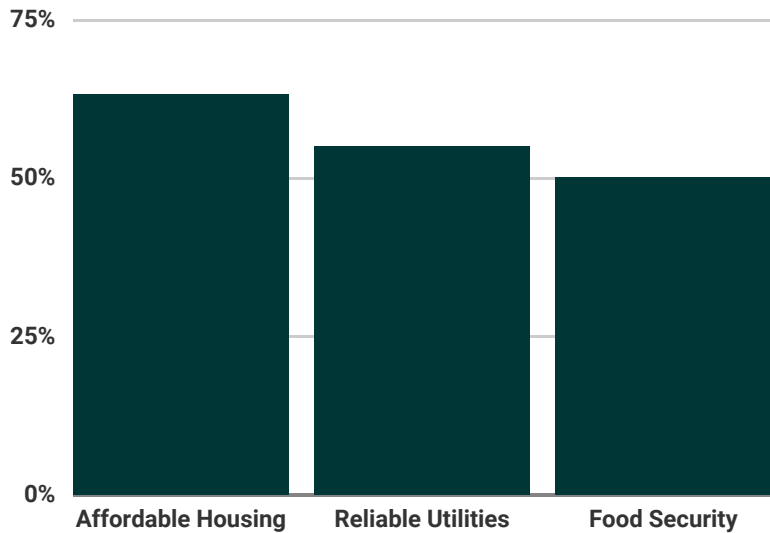
Note: Percentages will total more than 100% as respondents could select multiple (3) items

South Carolina Respondent

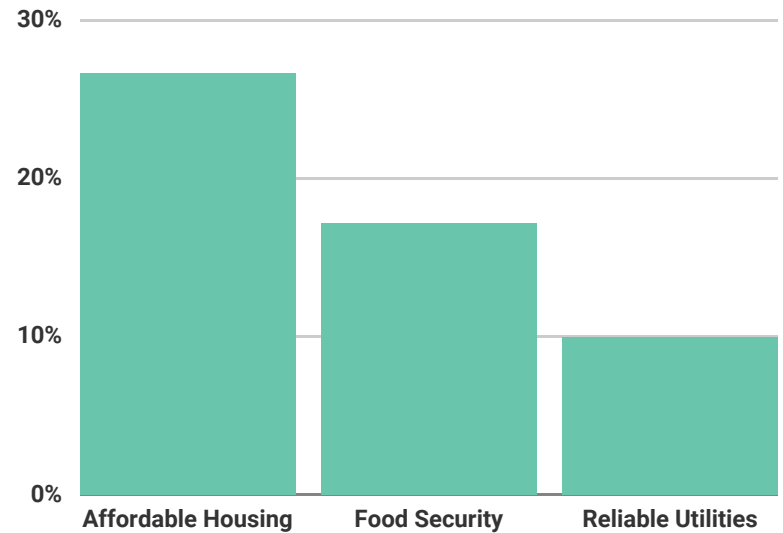
I am on a low-income budget, and I have a very hard time paying my bills and eating because they [dropped] my food stamps. I always worked and paid my way, and now I am disabled and cannot work like I once did. I am catching hell. It's not easy at all.

Respondents overwhelmingly list affordable housing as a top community challenge. It's also where they want the money spent. The same result we saw in 2022.

Challenges their communities are facing & How they want the money spent



Note: percentages will total more than 100% as respondents could select multiple (3) items.

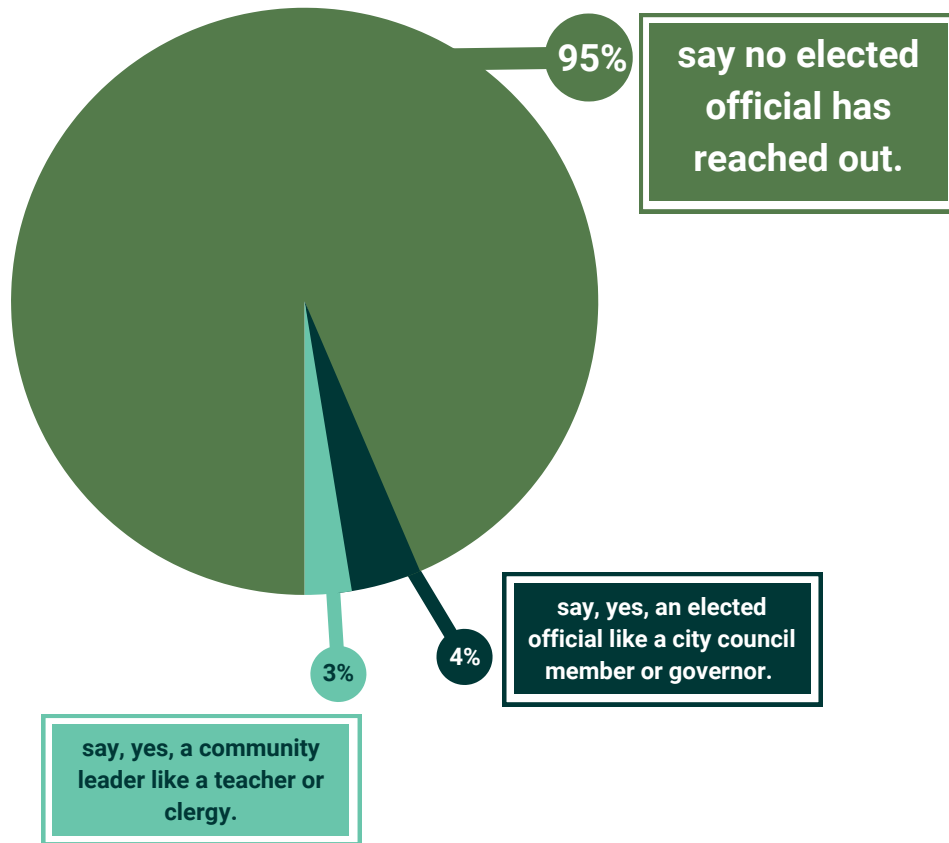


When asked how \$3 million in federal funds should be invested, respondents said affordable housing, food security, and reliable utilities. Note: Top three responses shown.

Louisiana Respondent

It is very hard trying to find a job now, and I am having a hard time just trying to get help keeping my place to live. I wish there were a way for people like me to get relief, have peace and not worry.

Are leaders connecting with community members regarding federal funding?



Respondents say no, but social media can help...

58%

say they want to receive information via social media

In addition, newspapers (36%) and neighborhood meetings (28%) are great outlets for communication.

Note: Percentages will total more than 100% as respondents could select multiple items.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

The ARP Activist Guide is a resource for individuals and organizations who seek to raise awareness of unmet needs in their communities and advocate for funding. SEAP designed this how-to guide to assist community activists and nonprofits in connecting with elected officials as they strategize how they plan to allocate federal funding.

A grayscale, high-angle photograph of a city skyline, likely New Orleans, Louisiana. The image shows a dense urban landscape with various buildings of different heights and styles. In the foreground, a large, multi-decked boat, possibly a riverboat or ferry, is docked at a pier along a river. The overall tone is muted and professional, serving as a background for the text.

LOUISIANA

We heard from nearly 700 food-insecure individuals in Louisiana, and they say affordable housing, reliable utilities, and food security are top issues.

Similar to the overall results, paying utilities is a top challenge for LA respondents.

TOP PERSONAL CHALLENGES



Ability to Pay Utilities



Personal Debt



Access to Housing

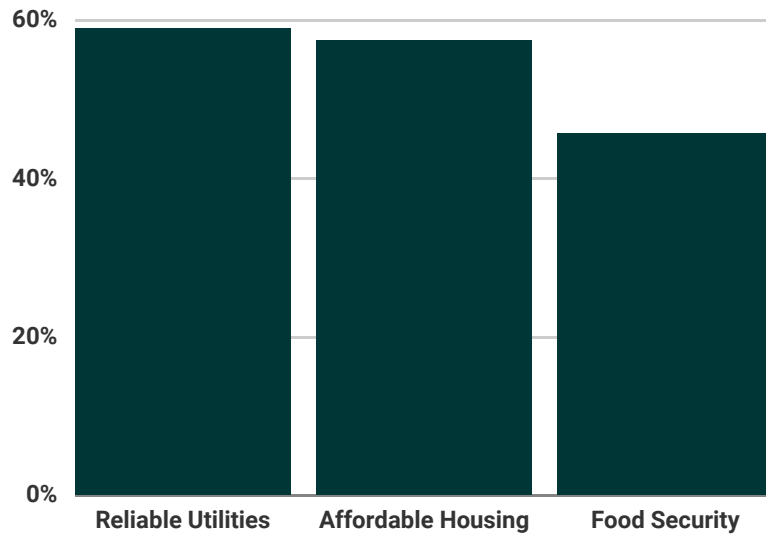
Note: Percentages will total more than 100% as respondents could select multiple (3) items

Louisiana Respondent

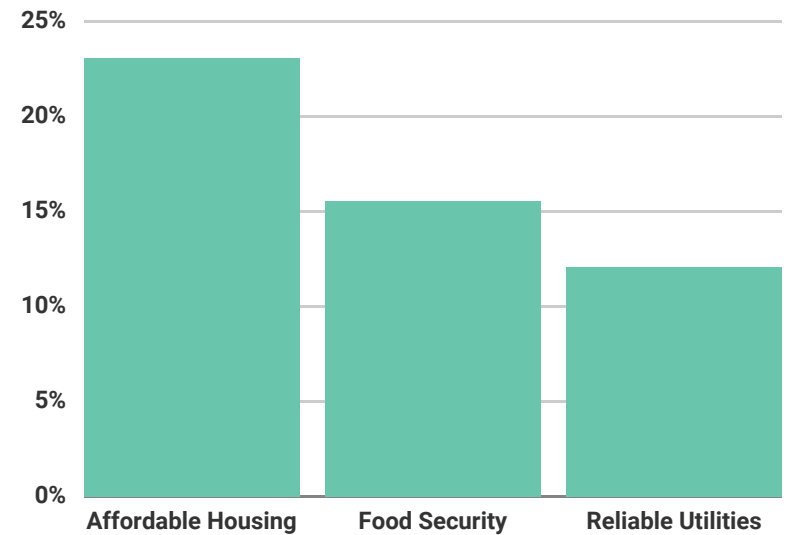
We need better wages. The cost of living has increased, along with so many other things. Once we pay bills and housing, our paycheck is gone. Our children need reliable transportation. Buses run differently than they used to. Food is high. Benefits each month helps, but it's not enough. Have to buy food with what's left of my paycheck. Gas prices are RIDICULOUS.

Access to reliable, safe and cost-effective utilities is a top concern amongst LA respondents.

Challenges their communities are facing & How they want the money spent



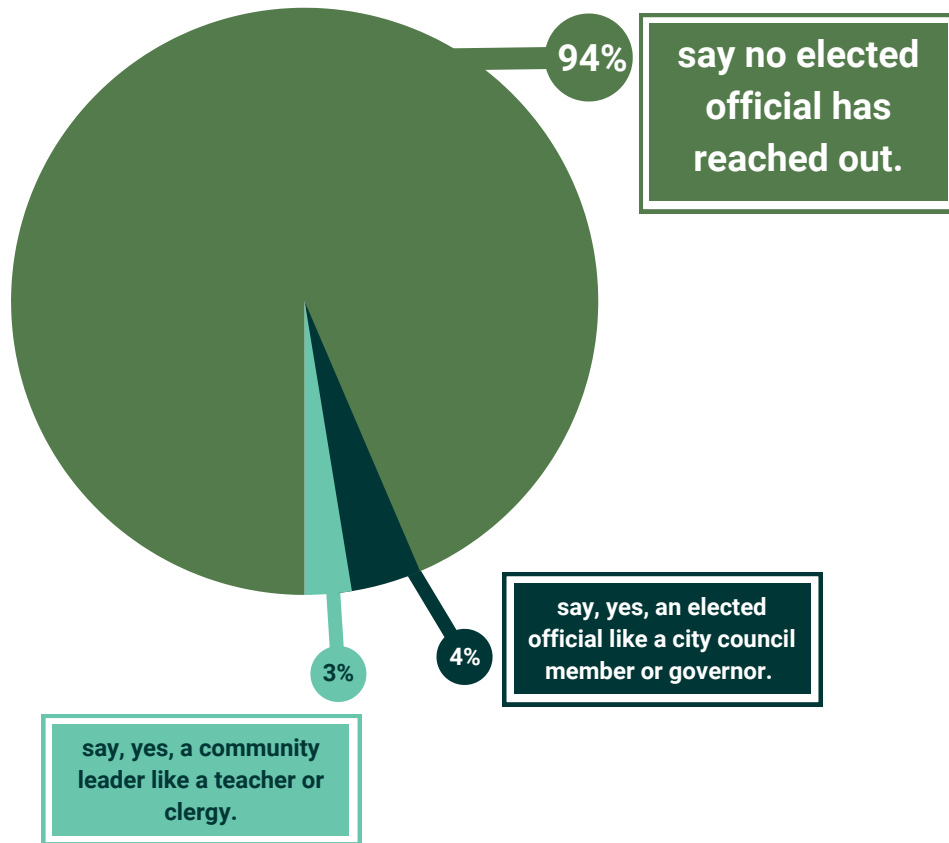
Note: percentages will total more than 100% as respondents could select multiple (3) items.



When asked how \$3 million in federal funds should be invested, respondents said affordable housing, food security, and reliable utilities. Note: Top three responses shown.

“
Louisiana Respondent
The water situation our water is scary. The water is brown, doesn't smell good, and it's not drinkable.”

Are leaders connecting with community members regarding federal funding?



LA respondents say no, but social media can help...

54%

say they want to receive information via social media

In addition, newspapers (37%) and neighborhood meetings (30%) are great outlets for communication.

Note: Percentages will total more than 100% as respondents could select multiple items.

SOUTH CAROLINA

We heard from more than 400 food-insecure individuals in South Carolina, and they say affordable housing, food security and reliable utilities are top issues.

74% of SC respondents say it's challenging to keep up with utility bills, on top of personal debt.

TOP PERSONAL CHALLENGES



Ability to Pay Utilities



Personal Debt



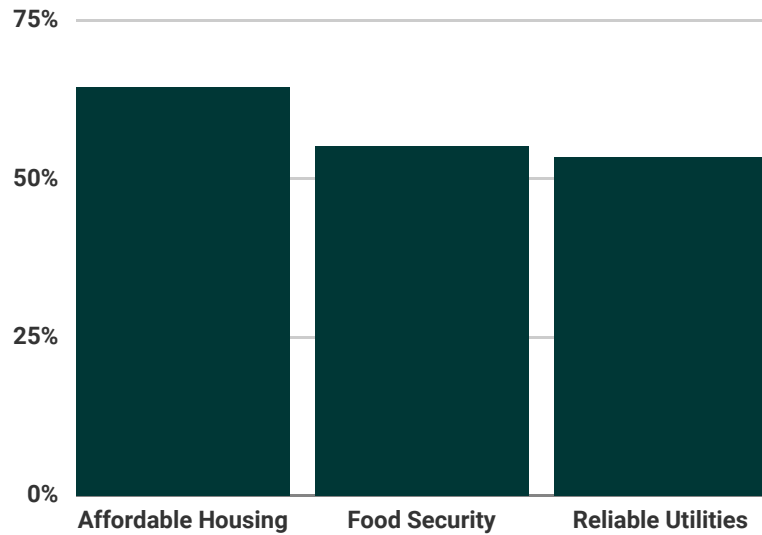
Access to Housing

Note: Percentages will total more than 100% as respondents could select multiple (3) items

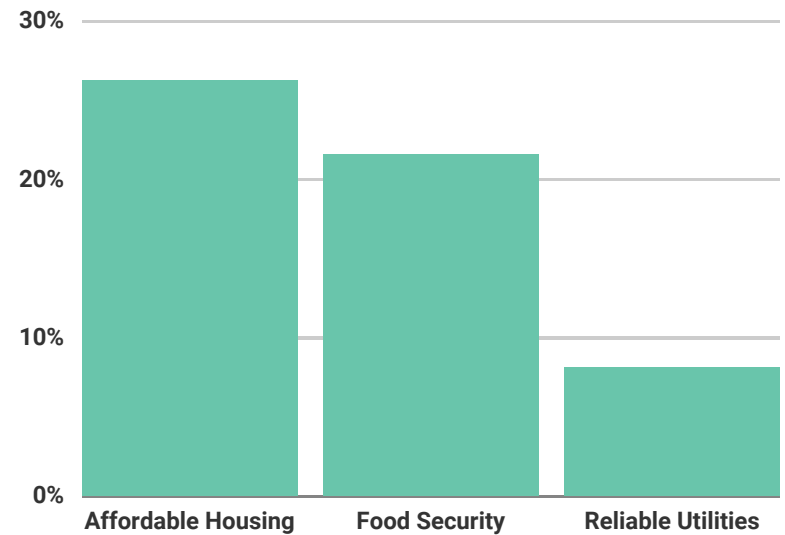
“
South Carolina Respondent
We need to be able to pay our bills. We need help with electricity. We need help with debt due to a lack of jobs. We need to matter. We need help with food. We need a lot of help because the small man is losing.

SC respondents say they need local leaders to invest federal funds in affordable housing.

Challenges their communities are facing & How they want the money spent



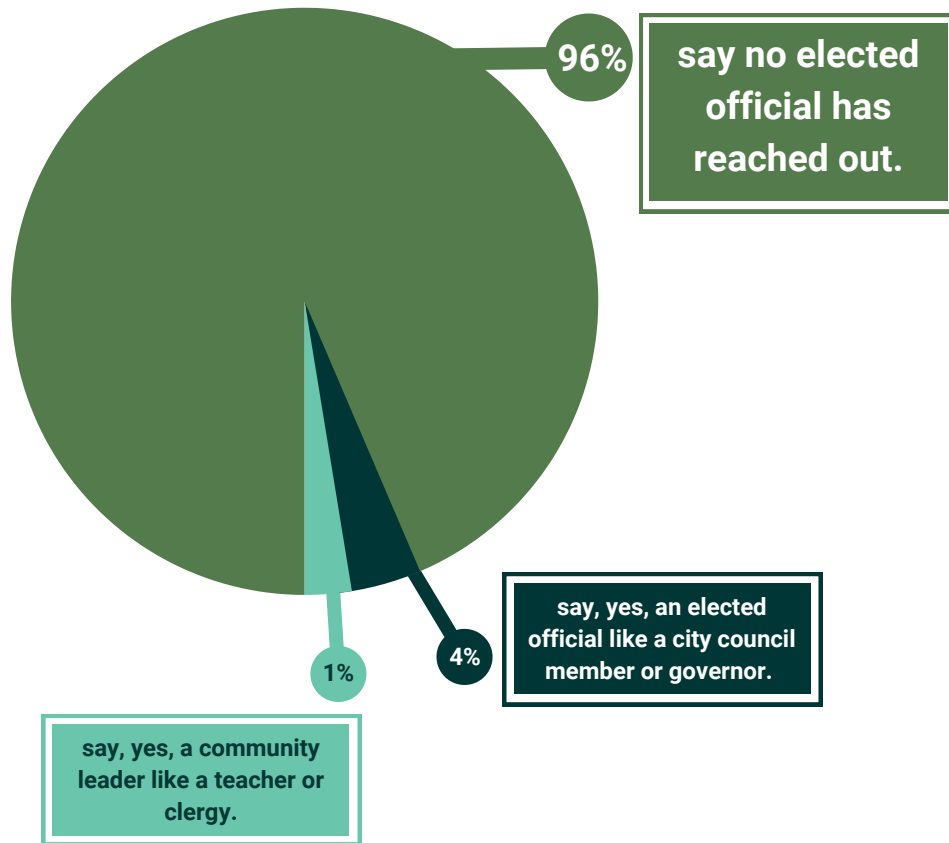
Note: percentages will total more than 100% as respondents could select multiple (3) items.



When asked how \$3 million in federal funds should be invested, respondents said affordable housing, food security, and reliable utilities. Note: Top three responses shown.

“
South Carolina Respondent
Everyone says they want solutions, but never in proximity to their home. I may be homeless now, but for 36 years, I was your neighbor. Now, I'm a problem.”

Are leaders connecting with community members regarding federal funding?



SC respondents say no, but social media can help...

61%

say they want to receive information via social media

In addition, newspapers (38%) and neighborhood meetings (28%) are great outlets for communication.

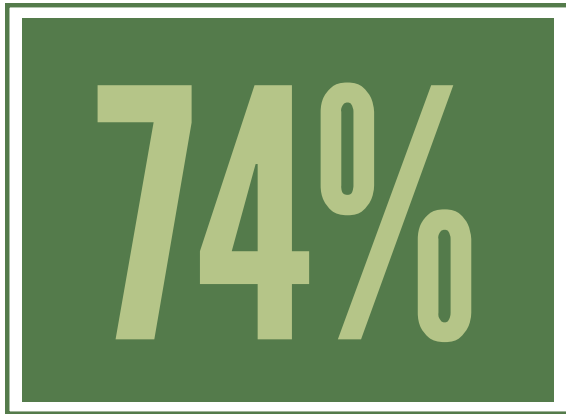
Note: Percentages will total more than 100% as respondents could select multiple items.

TENNESSEE

We heard from more than 400 food-insecure individuals in Tennessee, and they say affordable housing, food security and reliable utilities are top issues.

TN respondents struggle to keep up with basic needs such as housing and reliable utilities.

TOP PERSONAL CHALLENGES



Ability to Pay Utilities



Personal Debt



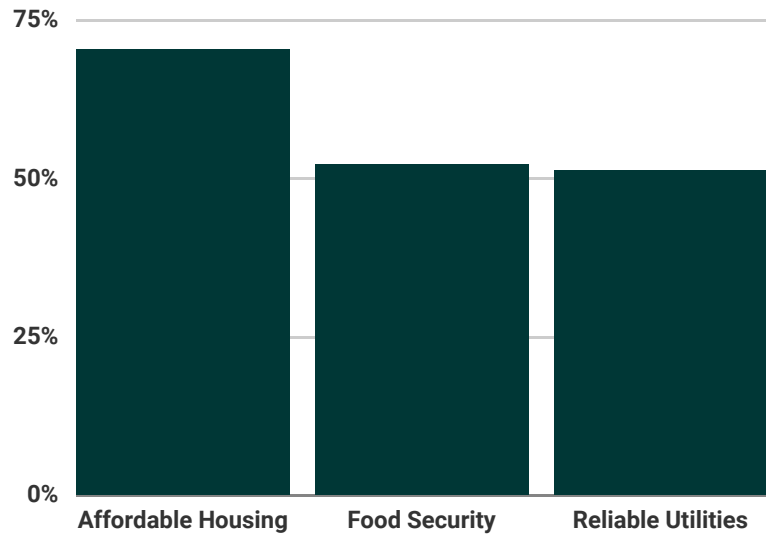
Access to Housing

Note: Percentages will total more than 100% as respondents could select multiple (3) items

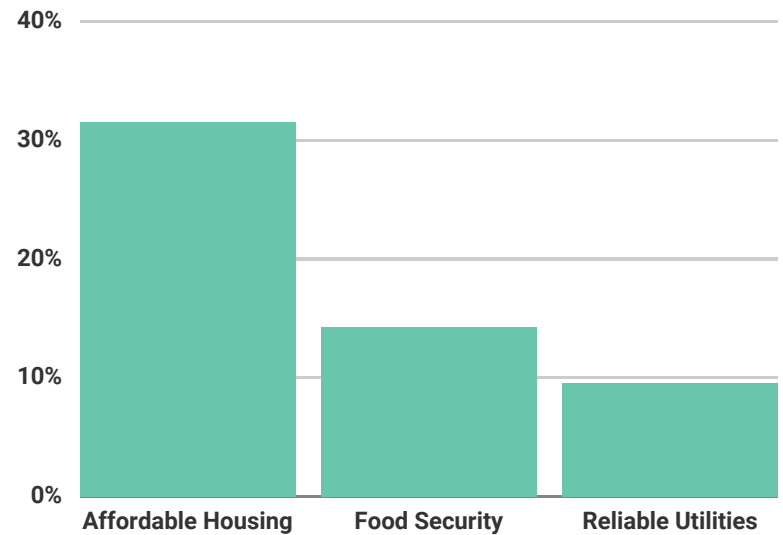
“
Tennessee Respondent
”
Where I live in the rural west TN area, you can't get reliable internet. We need that for the students. The only other thing would be affordable child care. For a 2-year-old, having to be at daycare from 6:30 am to 6:30 pm costs my daughter, a single mom of three, \$200.00 a week. Something needs to be done about that.

TN respondents would like leaders to use incoming federal funding to address the lack of affordable housing.

Challenges their communities are facing & How they want the money spent



Note: percentages will total more than 100% as respondents could select multiple (3) items.

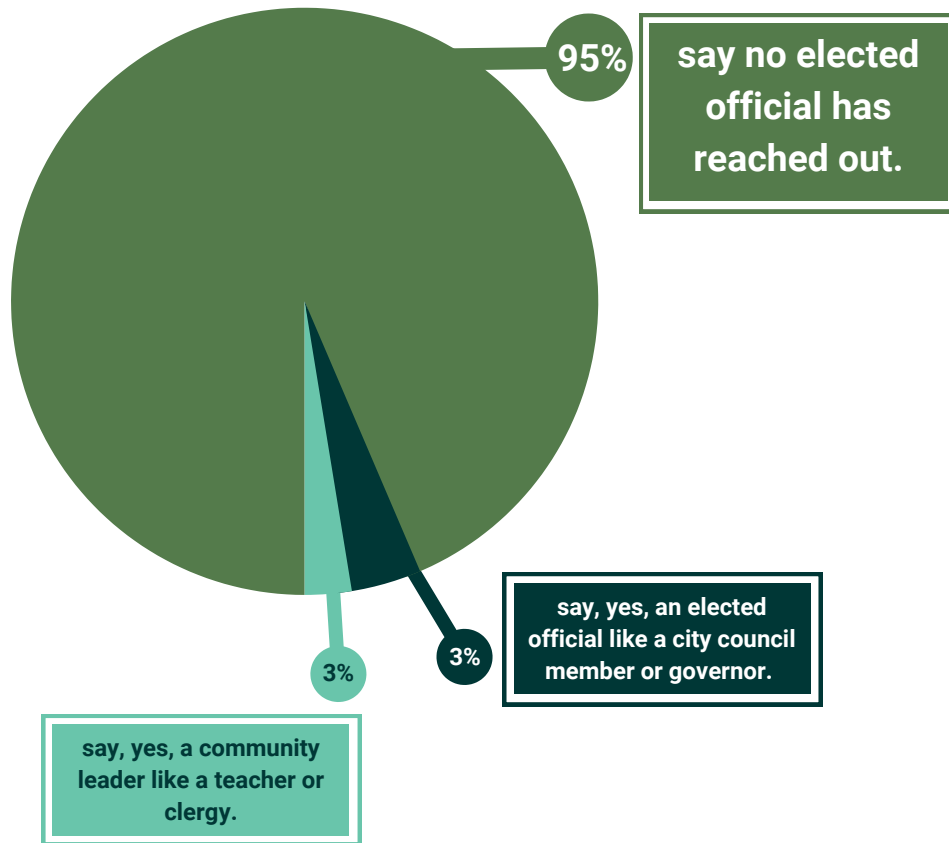


When asked how \$3 million in federal funds should be invested, respondents said affordable housing, food security, and reliable utilities. Note: Top three responses shown.

Tennessee Respondent

It is so hard for people with disabilities and those on social security to find low-income housing that serves their needs. There's also a lack of public transportation. Most on social security can't afford a car.

Are leaders connecting with community members regarding federal funding?



TN respondents say no, but social media can help...

60%

say they want to receive information via social media

In addition, newspapers (35%) and neighborhood meetings (27%) are great outlets for communication.

Note: Percentages will total more than 100% as respondents could select multiple items.



LEARN MORE AT WWW.THESEAP.ORG