



LA CROSSE COUNTY SERVICES SURVEY REPORT



Measuring Awareness and Access to Government Services
Key Findings Among La Crosse Residents
Spring 2026

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Acknowledgements

This project was made possible through the partnership established by Eric Timmons of La Crosse County and Lisa Klein of the Office for Community Engagement at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. Their collaboration created the foundation for this work and provided the opportunity for meaningful community-engaged research.

We would also like to recognize the exceptional dedication and effort exhibited by the senior students who carried out this course-embedded research project in Dr. Kristina LaPlant's POL 494 "Senior Capstone" course: Luke Brown, Evan Buckingham, Maddie Foley, Paige Janssen, Brennen Pelletier, Marrison Rodriguez, Leela Schuch, Cameron Seebruch, Max Van Asten, Ashlyn VanCamp, and Carissa Weis.

Overview

This report presents findings from a community-wide survey conducted by senior students in Dr. Kristina LaPlant's POL 494 Senior Capstone course at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, in partnership with La Crosse County. The survey assessed La Crosse County residents' awareness, familiarity, usage, and barriers to access across ten county services: Roads and Highways, Emergency Services, County Libraries, Long-Term Care Facilities, Integrated Support and Recovery Services (ISRS), the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC), Women Infants and Children (WIC), Economic Support and Benefits Services (ESBS), Foster Care, and Veterans Services. We also examine residents' trust in local government and service-seeking behavior. A total of 1,095 residents were recruited through a combination of paid social media advertising, direct mail, and community outreach. Findings indicate that awareness was strongest for more visible, universally utilized services and weakest for specialized, needs-based services. Across all services, the most common reason for non-use was lack of need; however, awareness and eligibility concerns were the most frequently cited barriers among users. Aggregate analysis revealed that lower-income residents, caregivers, and those with lower trust in county government were disproportionately likely to experience barriers to access. This pattern underscores the importance of targeted outreach and accessible service delivery for La Crosse County's most vulnerable residents.

I. Sampling Techniques and Respondent Characteristics

By Kristina LaPlant

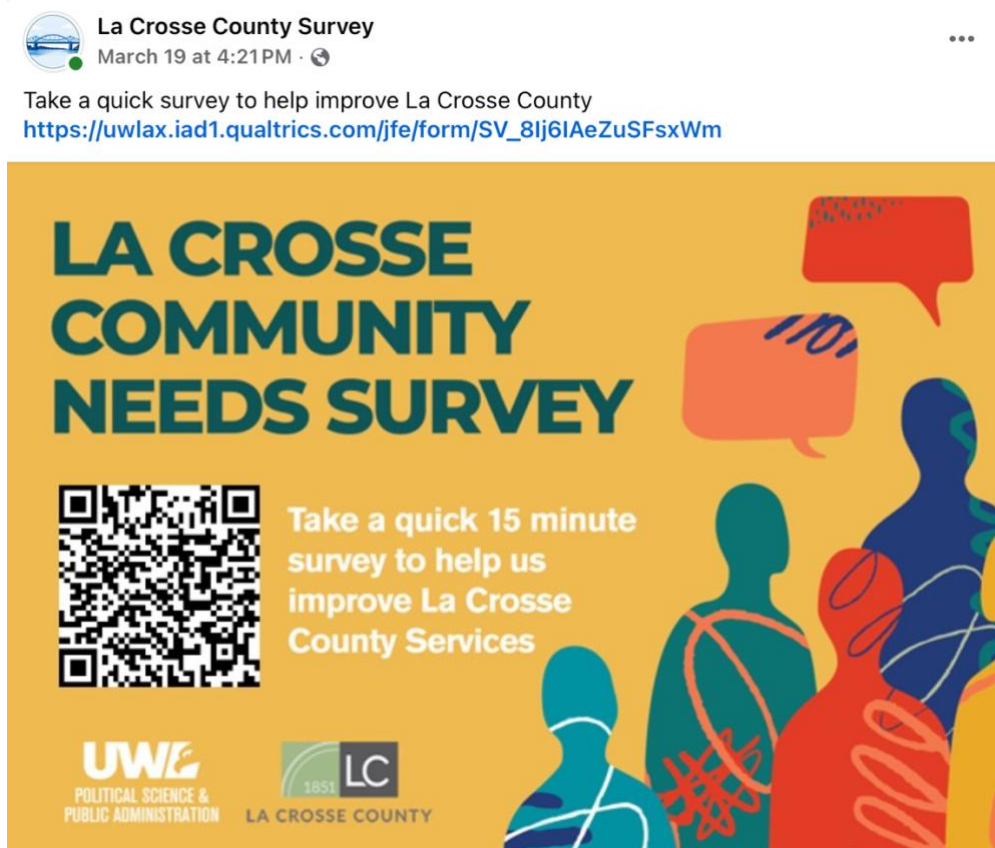
This section details the methods used to recruit participants and provides information on the characteristics of the sample, including key demographic information.

Social Media Campaign

To maximize survey reach, the research team launched a three-week paid social media campaign through Meta Advertising Suite (March 19 – April 9), targeting La Crosse County residents aged 18 and older. The campaign operated on an average daily budget of \$30, with a total spend of approximately \$630.

The campaign generated 65,161 total impressions and reached 14,719 unique users. Of those, 937 individuals clicked through to the survey landing page, resulting in a cost-per-engagement of approximately \$0.67. Below, Figure 1.1.1 provides a sample Facebook advertisement promoting the survey.

Figure 1.1.1 Facebook Advertisement for Survey Recruitment

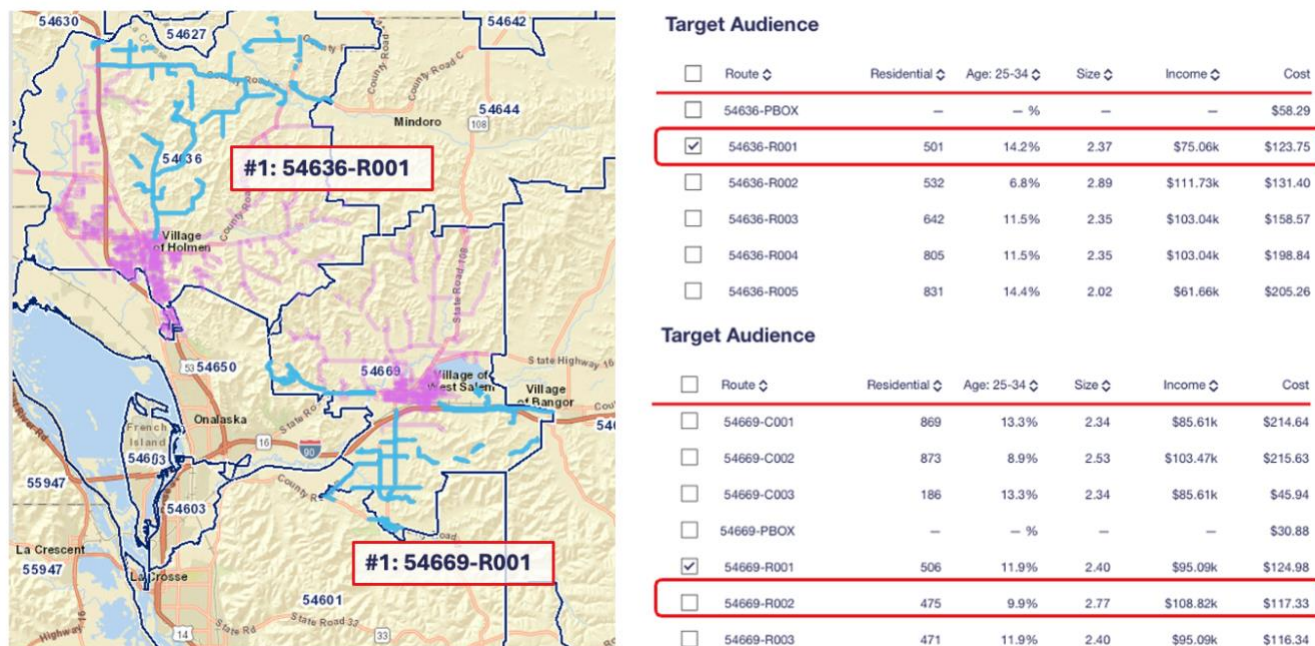


Direct Mail Campaign

The research team also conducted a direct mail campaign utilizing the USPS Every Door Direct Mail (EDDM) service, which allowed for targeted outreach to rural, low-income areas of La Crosse County. Two

mail routes were selected (see Figure 1.1.2): one in Holmen (Route #54636-R001) and one in West Salem (Route #54669-R001). These routes were chosen based on their low-income demographics and manageable household counts of approximately 500 households each, enabling the team to reach over 1,000 households while remaining within budget. Postcard printing cost approximately \$533, and USPS processing and postage totaled approximately \$200, for a combined campaign cost of roughly \$733.

Figure 1.1.2: Selected Mail Routes and Corresponding Demographic Information



Community Outreach

Additionally, several students engaged in direct community outreach, contacting local nonprofits, community organizations, and businesses to request that they distribute the survey through newsletters or display QR code flyers in their facilities.

As of May 5, 2026, a total of 1,094 La Crosse County residents were recruited to the survey. Approximately 94% of respondents (n=1,025) were recruited via anonymous online link, while the remaining 6% (n=69) were recruited via mail or scanning the QR code. Given the comparatively low engagement generated by direct mail and physical flyers, future iterations of this survey are recommended to prioritize social media advertising as the primary recruitment strategy.

Demographics

By Carissa Weis

This section examines respondents’ demographics, including age, gender, income, and education. Understanding these characteristics helps provide context for the results and allows for better analysis of differences in awareness and access to county services.

Figure 1.2.1: Respondent Age

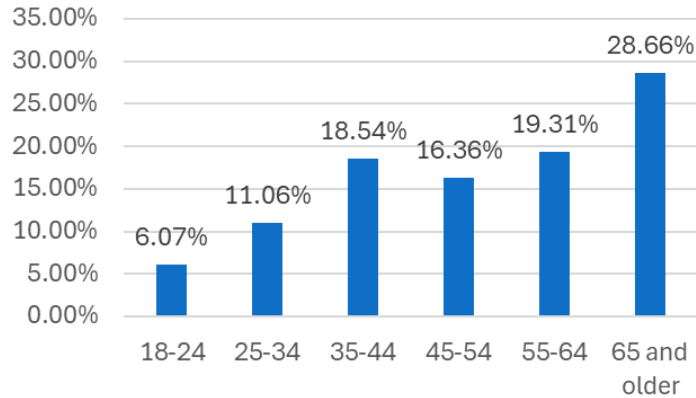


Figure 1.2.1 reports of respondents' age. Overall, 784 respondents answered this question. The data shows the sample is skewed toward older respondents. Approximately 64% of the sample was 45 years of age or older while only 17% of the same was under the age of 34.

Figure 1.2.2: Respondent Educational Attainment

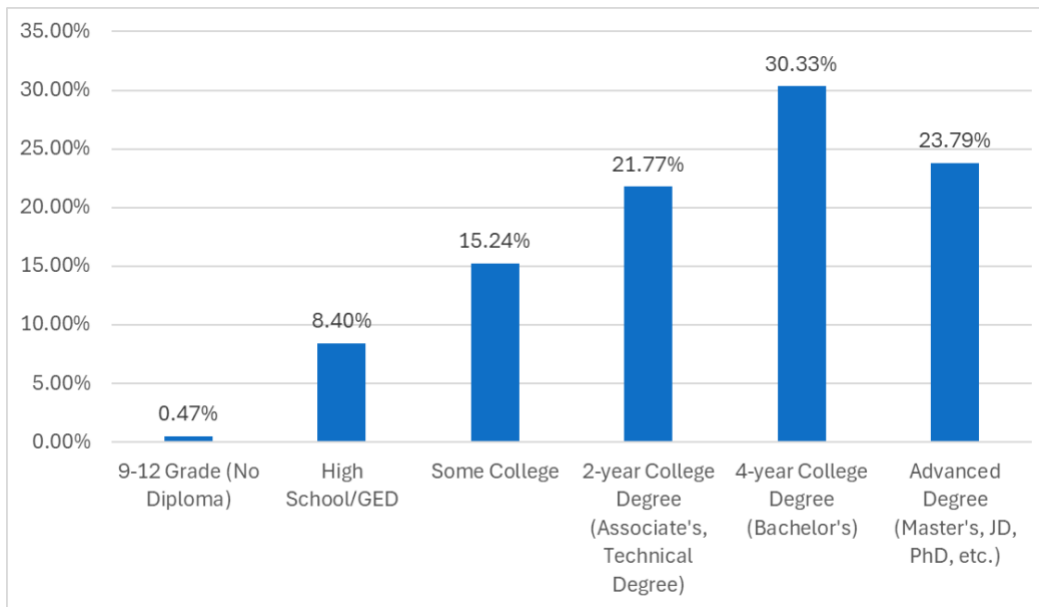


Figure 1.2.2 reports of respondents' highest level of education they have completed. Overall, 643 respondents answered this question. The data shows the sample is skewed toward more educated individuals. According to the US Census Bureau, approximately 38% of US adults have earned a Bachelor's degree or higher. However, more than 53% of our sample has achieved a Bachelor's degree or higher.

Figure 1.2.3: Respondent Household Income

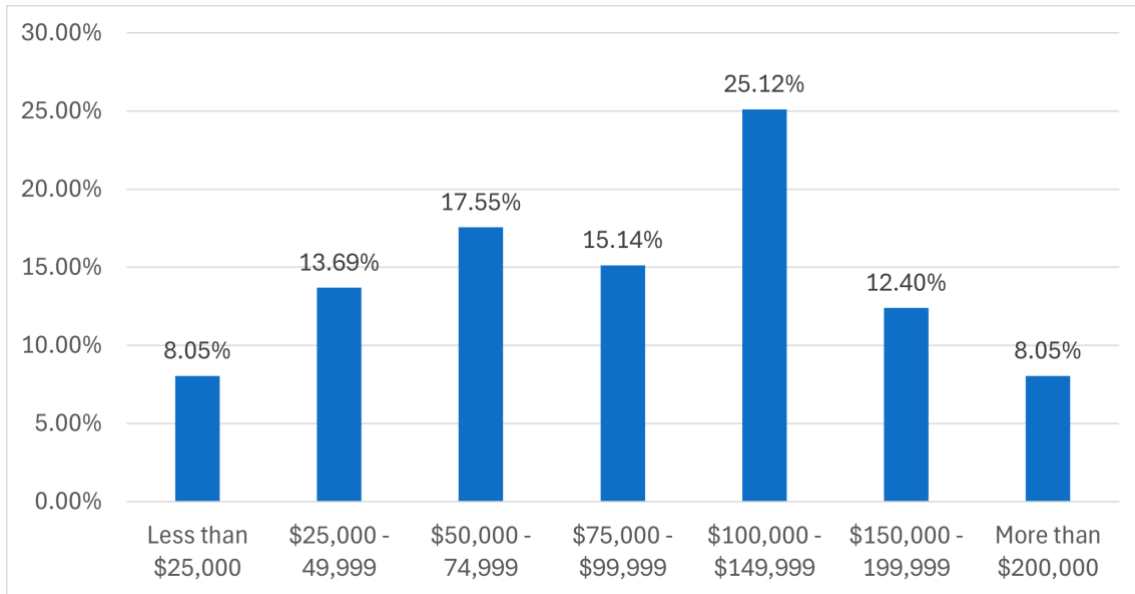


Figure 1.2.3 reports of respondents combined annual household income. Overall, 621 respondents answered this question. The data is somewhat normally distributed but there is a slight skew toward higher income earners. According to the US Census Bureau, the 2024 inflation-adjusted median household income is estimated around \$83,000. Our sample estimates slightly exceed that with about 60% of respondents reporting a combined annual household income of \$75,000 or more.

Figure 1.2.4: Respondent Sex

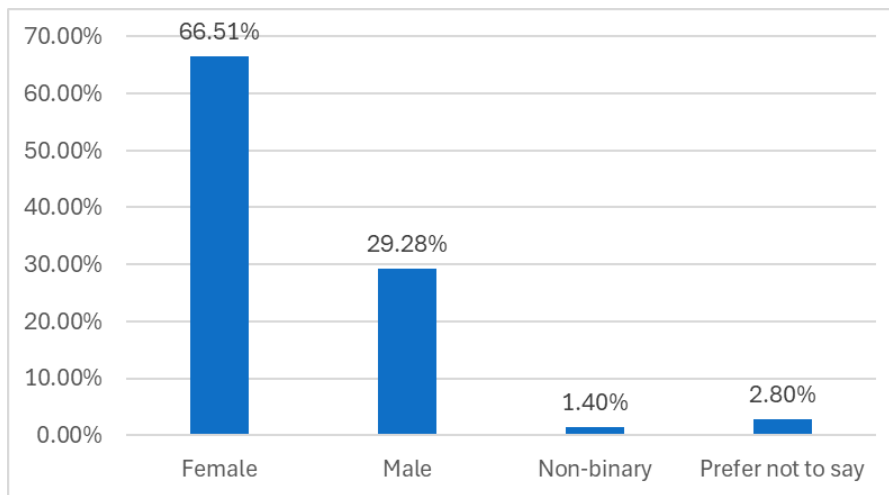


Figure 1.2.4 reports on respondents' gender. Overall, 784 respondents answered this question. The data shows the sample is overwhelmingly female at 66% (n= 427) compared to men at 30% (n=188).

Figure 1.2.5: Respondent Race

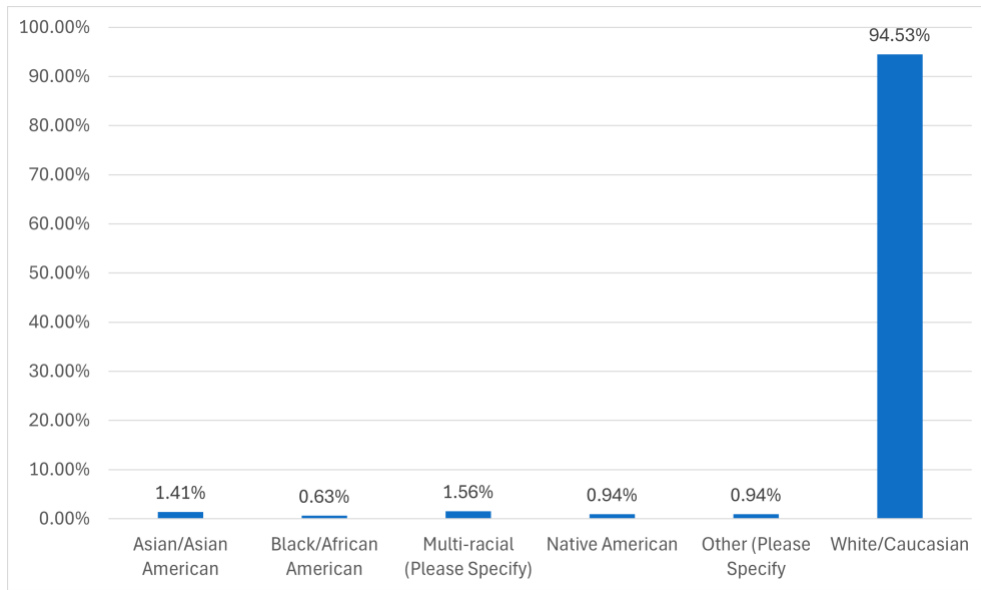


Figure 1.2.5 reports of respondents’ race. Overall, 784 respondents answered this question. According to the US Census Bureau, La Crosse County’s population is predominately white, around 88%, but our sample estimates overrepresent white respondents at about 95% (n=605) while the remaining 5% of respondents (n=179) selected a non-white racial identity.

Figure 1.2.6: Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origin

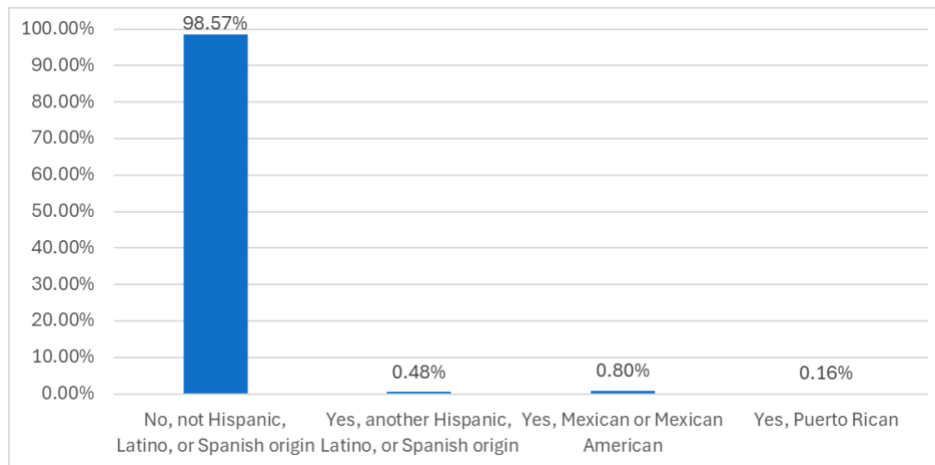


Figure 1.2.6 reports if respondents identify as Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish Origin. Overall, 784 respondents answered this question. According to the US Census Bureau, approximately 3% of La Crosse County residents identify as Hispanic or Latino, whereas less than 1.5% of our sample identifies as Hispanic or Latino.

Figure 1.2.7: U.S. Military Veteran Status

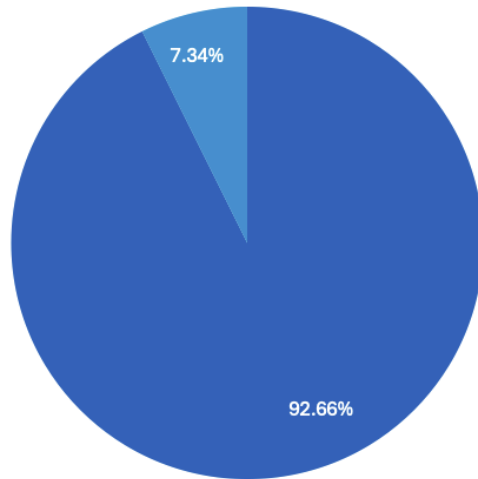
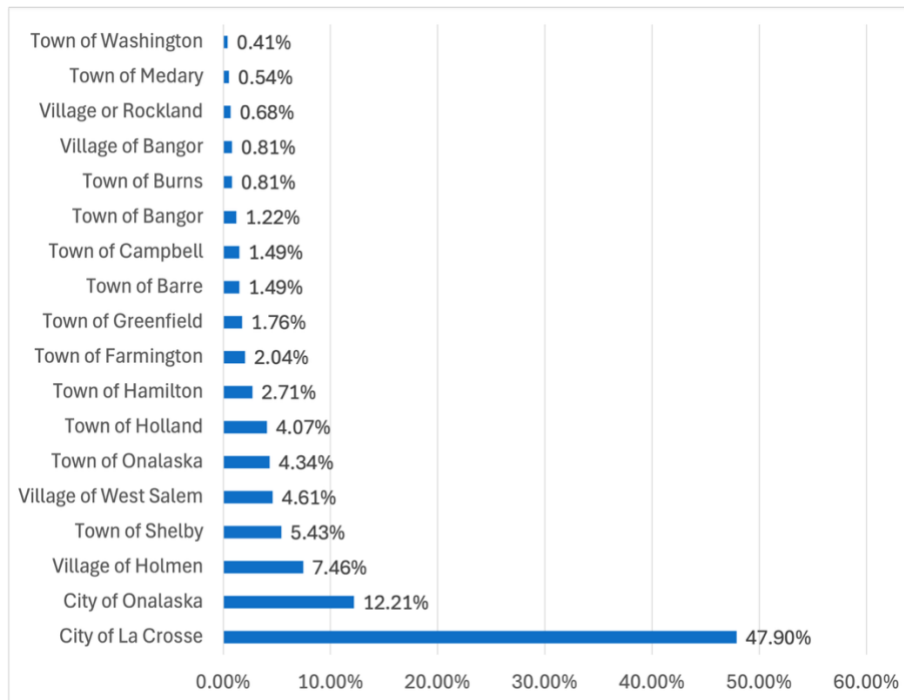


Figure 1.2.7 reports if the respondent is a US military veteran. Overall, 640 respondents answered this question. The data shows that only about 7% (n=47) of respondents identified as US military veterans.

Figure 1.2.8 Respondent Residency



Finally, Figure 1.2.8 reports in which village, town, or city the respondent resides. A total of 737 respondents answered this question. According to the US Census Bureau, La Crosse County has a population of roughly 122,000 with the most populous areas of La Crosse City (42%), Onalaska City (16%) and Holmen Village (8%). As evidenced in Figure 1.2.8, our sample closely mirrors the population statistics of the top three most populous areas of La Crosse County.

While the sample provides valuable insight into resident perceptions of La Crosse County services, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. Respondents skewed toward higher levels of educational attainment, higher income brackets, and white racial identity relative to the broader La Crosse County population. As such, findings may not fully reflect the experiences and perspectives of lower-income residents, racial and ethnic minorities, and those with less formal education. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the results that follow.

II. County Services Assessment

In this section, we report respondents' knowledge, access, and evaluation of ten La Crosse County services: Roads and Highways, Emergency Services, Public Libraries, Long-Term Care Facilities, Integrated Support and Recovery Services (ISRS), Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC), Women Infants and Children (WIC), Economic Support and Benefits Services (ESBS), Foster Care, and Veterans Services.

County Highways and Roads

By Carissa Weis

This section focuses on awareness and perceptions of La Crosse County highways and roads. It looks at how familiar residents are with these services and how they view the overall condition of the county's infrastructure. Understanding this is important because it shows whether people are informed about local responsibilities and how satisfied they are with the roads they use every day.

Figure 2.1.1: Evaluation of County Highways

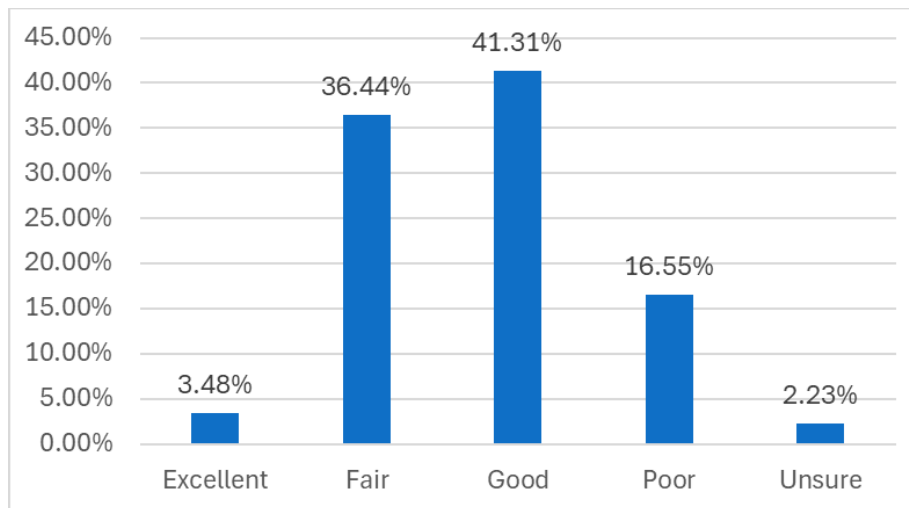


Figure 2.1.1 reports on respondents' evaluation on the condition of La Crosse County roads and highways. Overall, 719 respondents answered this question. The data shows that respondents overwhelmingly evaluated county roads and highways positively (~80%) while only 16% of the sample rated them as poor.

Emergency Services

By Leela Schuch

This section examines respondents' awareness of La Crosse County Emergency Services and how confident respondents feel in the quality of these services. Awareness is essential because residents must know services exist before they can use them, while confidence is important because it measures whether residents trust these services to respond during emergencies.

Figure 2.2.1: Emergency Services Awareness

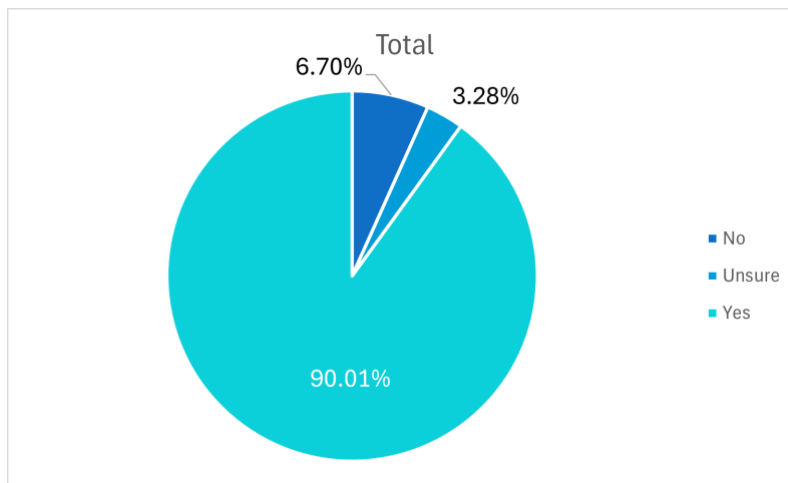


Figure 2.2.1 shows that 90.01% of respondents (n=631) had heard of the emergency services that La Crosse County provides. Only 6.70% of respondents (n=47) had not heard of these services, and 3.28% of respondents (n=23) were unsure whether they had heard of these services. We predicted that awareness of emergency services would be high because they are visible and essential public services. While awareness was strong, it is also essential to understand whether respondents felt confident in the quality of these services.

Figure 2.2.2 Emergency Services Evaluation of Service

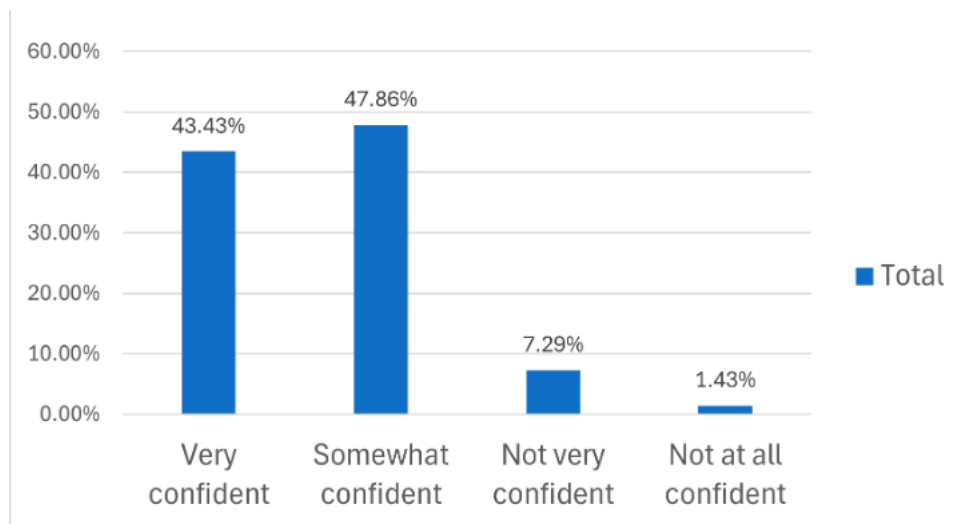


Figure 2.2.2 illustrated that 91.29% of respondents (n=639) felt very or somewhat confident in the emergency services that La Crosse County provided, whereas 8.72% of respondents (n=61) were not very or not at all confident. These results suggest that respondents possess high trust and confidence in the county's emergency services.

County Libraries

By Ashlyn VanCamp

This section examines respondent awareness, familiarity, usage, and barriers to access regarding La Crosse County's public library system and its services.

Figure 2.3.1: Awareness of County Libraries

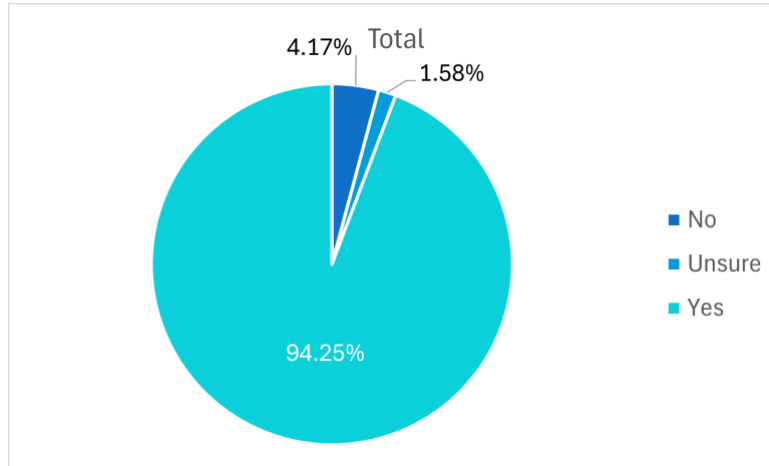


Figure 2.3.1 shows that the majority of the county members are aware of the County libraries and services. The graph shows that 94.25% (n=656) of the county respondents are familiar with them, while 4.17% (n=29) of the respondents stated they were not aware of the County libraries or the services that they provide. The respondents that were unsure of their awareness of County Libraries made up 1.58% (n=11).

Figure 2.3.2: Familiarity of County Libraries' Resources

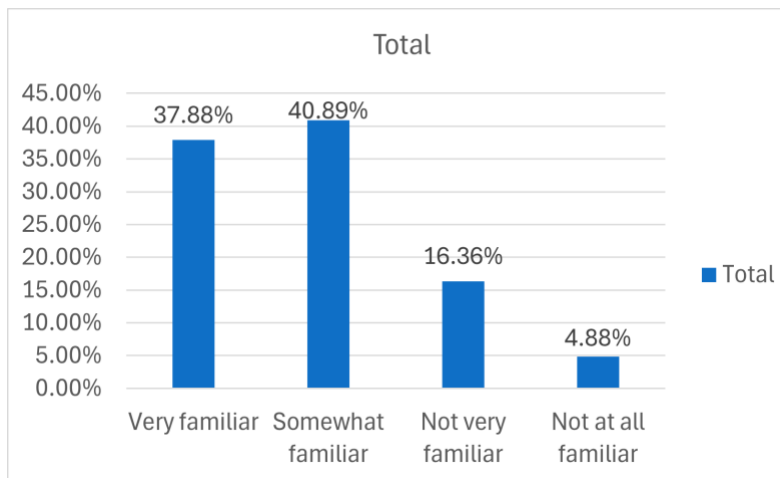


Figure 2.3.2 illustrates the familiarity of County libraries in La Crosse County. Of the total respondents, 37.88% of respondents (n=264) in La Crosse County were very familiar with County libraries, while 40.89% of the respondents (n=285) were only somewhat familiar. This shows that most of the respondents in La Crosse County are familiar with La Crosse County Libraries. The percentage of people who were not very

familiar with County Libraries was 16.36% (n=114). Only 4.88% of the respondents (n=34) were not at all familiar with the La Crosse County Libraries.

Figure 2.3.3: Usage of County Libraries

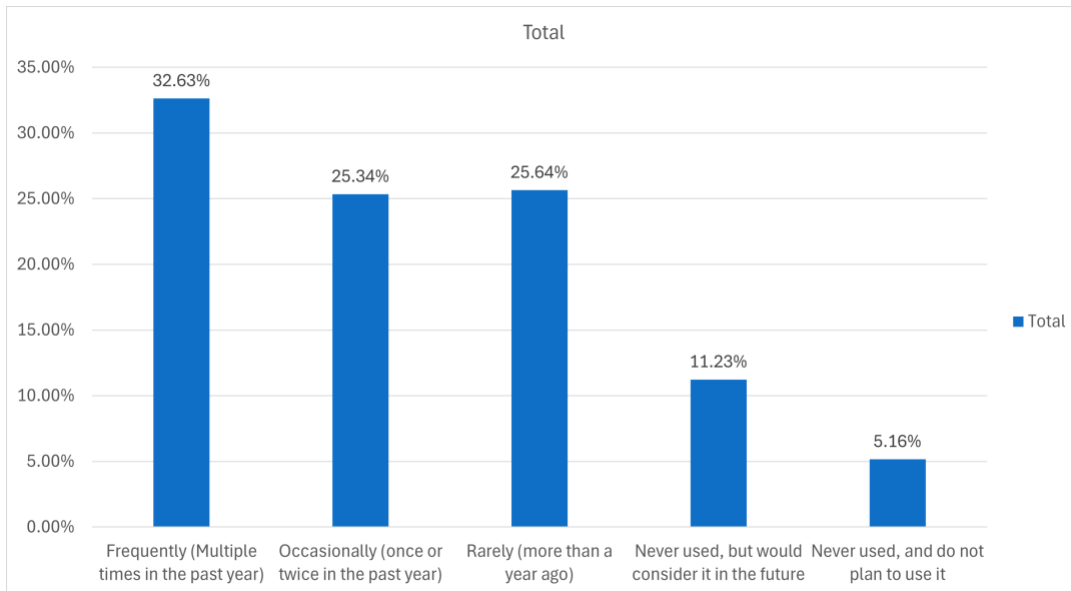


Figure 2.3.3 depicts the usage of County Libraries in La Crosse County. Respondents that use the county libraries frequently, which is calculated multiple times in the past year, were 32.63% (n=215), while 25.34% of the respondents (n=167) of the La Crosse County Libraries were only used occasionally, as only once or twice in the past year and 25.64% of the respondents (n=169) only used it rarely. Of the respondents that have never used it, 11.23% (n=74) of the total respondents would consider using County libraries in the future, while 5.16% (n=34) selected that they do not plan to ever use it.

Figure 2.3.4: Reasons for Not Using County Libraries

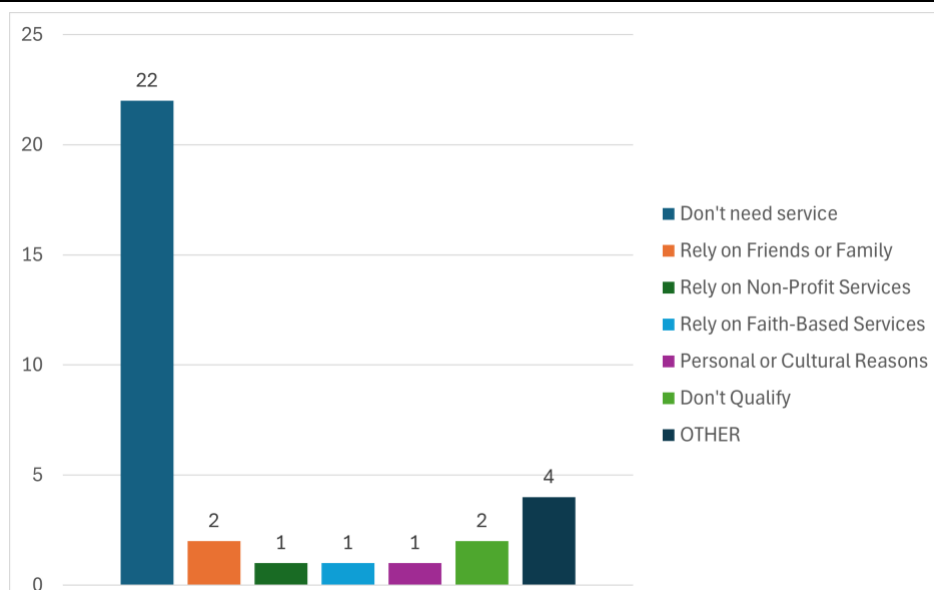


Figure 2.3.5 shows the responses on the reasons for not using County Libraries. The largest number of respondents, 66.67% (n=22), selected that they do not use County Libraries' services because they don't need to. Of the total amount of respondents, 12.12% (n=4) of the respondents in La Crosse County do not use County libraries due to other reasons not listed. A total of 6.0% (n=2) of respondents selected that they do not need to use La Crosse County Libraries' services because they rely on friends or family members. Only 3.00% (n=1) of the respondents felt they didn't use the services because they rely on non-profit services while another 3.00% (n=1) of the respondents rely on faith-based services. Only 3.00% (n=1) of the total respondents don't use the services because of personal or cultural reasons. When it comes to qualifying for services, 6.00% (n=2) of the respondents in the survey do not believe they qualify, so they don't use County Libraries.

Figure 2.3.5: Barriers to County Libraries

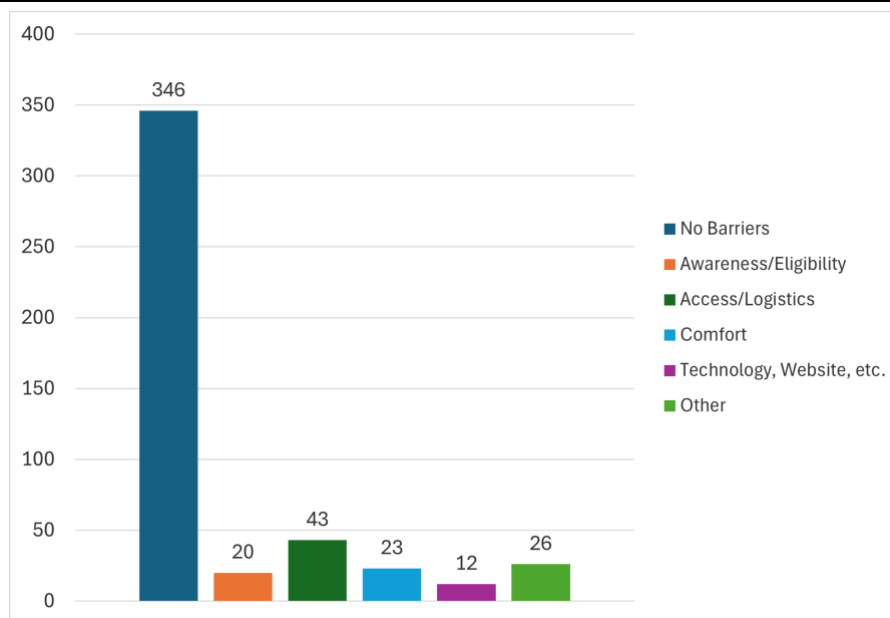


Figure 2.3.5 describes the barriers that people encounter when trying to access or while accessing La Crosse County Libraries' services. Of the total 470 respondents, 73.62% of the respondents (n=346) reported that they did not have any barriers. The largest barrier that 9.1% of the respondents (n=43) experienced was due to access or logistical difficulties. The next largest barrier was 5.5% of the respondents (n=26) who had other reasons not provided as a barrier. Those respondents that reported that they experienced other barriers reported concerns with safety entering the building due to the unhoused population. The lowest categories of barriers were comfort in use with 4.9% respondents (n=23), awareness barriers with 4.3% of the respondents (n=20), and 2.5% of the respondents (n=12) experienced technology or website usage barriers.

Most of the respondents reported that they were aware of the libraries in La Crosse County and familiar with their services. The outlook on usage of county libraries also shows that most people currently use it, have used it, or would use it in the future. Most respondents do not feel the need to use library services. When accessing library services, most respondents did not report any barriers.

Long-term Care (LTC) Facilities

By Maddie Foley

This section will focus on assessing the awareness, confidence, usage, and barriers regarding the long-term care facilities provided through the La Crosse County government. Using survey data from residents across the county, the following figures assess the extent to which individuals are informed about available long-term care campuses, their level of trust in these services, whether they have used or would consider using them, and the primary reasons for non-use or difficulty accessing care. These findings provide insight into both the reach and perceived limitations of long-term care services in La Crosse and West Salem.

Figure 2.4.1: Awareness of Long-term Care Facilities

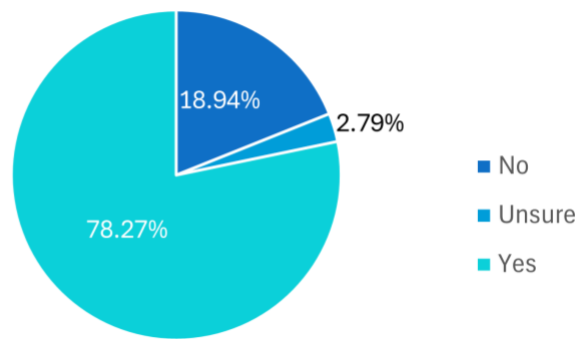


Figure 2.4.1 assesses the respondent's awareness of La Crosse County's long-term care services. This question provided respondents with information regarding long-term care facilities operating in La Crosse and West Salem. Once provided with background information, respondents were asked: "before today have you ever heard of La Crosse County's Long-term Care Campuses? Out of 681 total respondents, 18.49% of respondents answered no (n= 129), 2.79% of respondents answered unsure (n= 19), and 78.27% of respondents answered yes (n= 533). This indicates that most La Crosse County residents are aware of the long-term care services provided by the County.

Figure 2.4.2: Confidence in Long-term Care Facilities

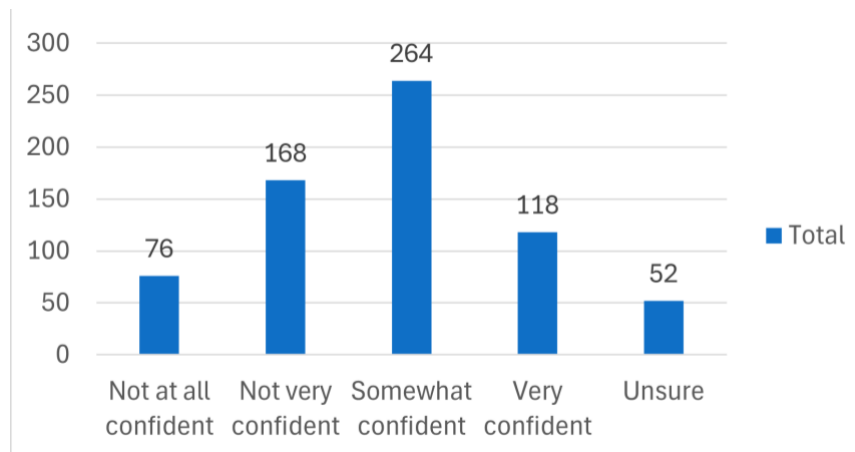


Figure 2.4.2 reports the confidence levels respondents had regarding La Crosse County’s long-term care facilities. Of the 678 respondents, 76 reported they were not at all confident (11.21%), 168 reported they were not very confident (24.78%), 264 reported they were somewhat confident (38.94), 118 reported they were very confident (17.40%), and 52 reported they were unsure (7.67%). The data seems to indicate that a significant number of La Crosse residents lack confidence in the county’s long-term care facilities.

Figure 2.4.3: Usage of Long-term Care Facilities

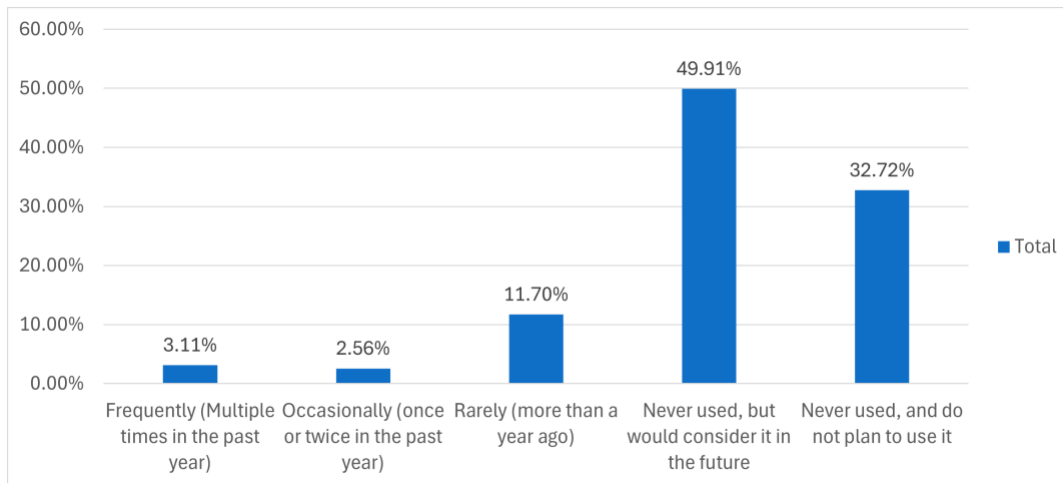


Figure 2.4.3 depicts how many respondents have used or would use La Crosse County’s long-term care facilities. Of the 547 respondents, 3.11% reported they frequently used long-term care facilities (n=17), 2.56% reported they occasionally used long-term care facilities (n=14), 11.70% reported they rarely used long-term care facilities (n=64), 49.91% of respondents reported they would consider using long-term care facilities but have never used them before (n=64), and 32.72% reported they have never used long-term care facilities and do not plan to (n=179).

Figure 2.4.4: Reasons for Not Using Long-term Care Facilities

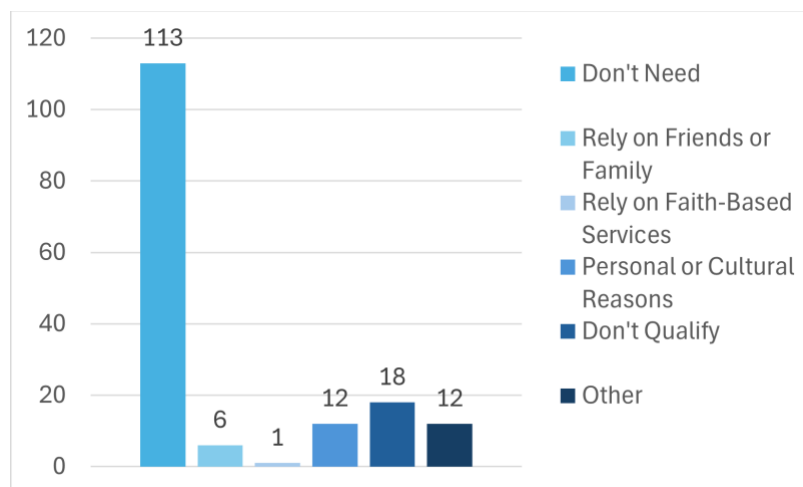


Figure 2.4.4 shows reasons respondents have not used La Crosse County’s long-term care facilities. Of the 162 respondents, 113 reported that they don’t need long-term care facilities, 6 responded they rely on friends or family, 1 reported using faith-based support services, 12 reported personal or cultural reasons, 18 reported they don’t qualify, and 12 responded other. The written responses under “Other” expressed distrust in the quality-of-care LTC services provided and issues regarding the affordability of LTC services. It is important to note that 0 respondents selected the “Rely on Non-Profits” category.

Figure 2.4.5: Barriers to Accessing Long-term Care Facilities

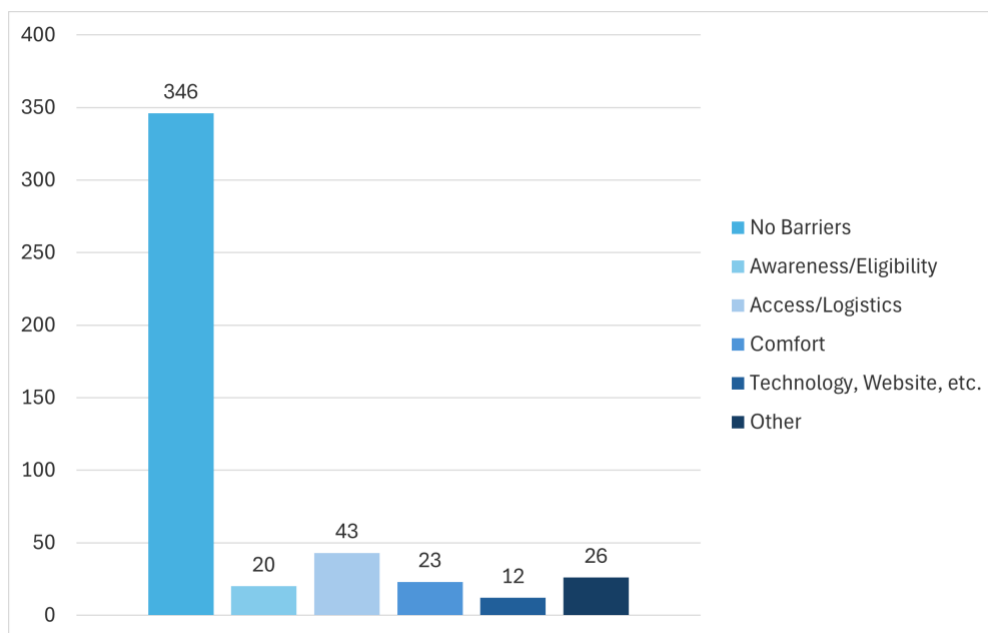


Figure 2.4.5 illustrates the barriers respondents faced while accessing long-term care facilities. Approximately 74% reported facing no barriers. Among the roughly 25% of respondents who reported experiencing barriers, the most common obstacles reported were access/logistics and comfort/stigma. The written responses under the “Other” category expressed concerns with the upkeep and cleanliness of the facilities, as well as issues with the County’s website being outdated. The data seems to indicate that most people in La Crosse County have not experienced any significant barriers to accessing the County’s long-term care facilities.

While most La Crosse County residents are aware of the county’s long-term care services, a notable lack of confidence persists, with over one-third of respondents reporting they are “not at all” or “not very” confident in these facilities. Although most respondents have never used the services, nearly half would consider using them in the future. The primary barrier to non-use is a lack of need, though qualitative responses reveal underlying concerns about care quality, affordability, facility upkeep, and an outdated county website. Despite these issues, most respondents reported facing no significant barriers to access.

Integrated Support and Recovery Services

By Brennen Pelletier

This Section focuses on La Crosse County’s Integrated Support & Recovery Services (ISRS). ISRS provides comprehensive mental health, crisis intervention, substance abuse, and support services to La Crosse County residents. The following figures breakdown awareness, usage, and barriers to accessing ISRS. These findings provide insight into La Crosse County residents’ awareness and perception of ISRS, including potential limitations.

Figure 2.5.1: Awareness of Integrated Support & Recovery Services

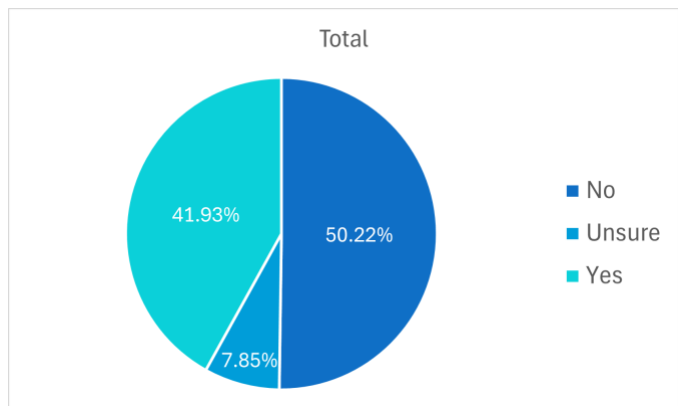


Figure 2.5.1 shows that out of 675 total respondents, 399 (50.22%) said they were aware of Integrated Support and Recovery Services (ISRS). While 41.93% of respondents (N=283) said they were unaware of ISRS. Additionally, 7.85% of respondents (N=53) indicated that they were unsure whether they were aware of ISRS.

Figure 2.5.2: Evaluation of Integrated Support & Recovery Services

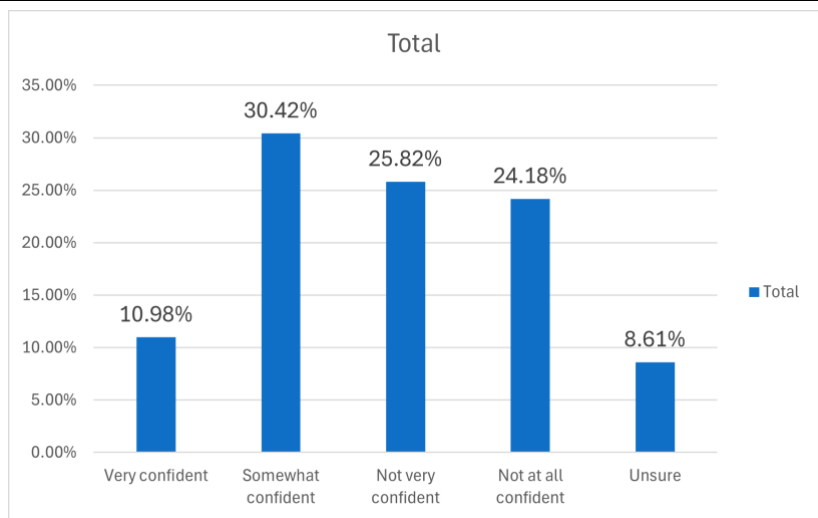


Figure 2.5.2 measures the confidence of La Crosse County residents knowing how to access Integrated Support & Recovery Services (ISRS). Out of 674 total respondents, 279 (41.40%) expressed that they would be at least somewhat confident knowing how to access ISRS, while 337 of the total respondents (50%) expressed that they would not be confident knowing how to access ISRS. An additional 58 respondents (8.61%) indicated that they were unsure of their level of confidence.

Figure 2.5.3: Usage of Integrated Support & Recovery Services

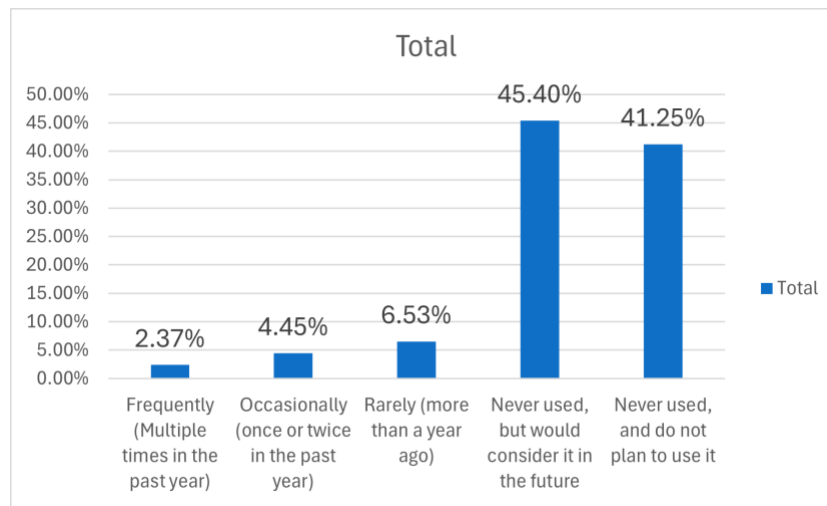


Figure 2.5.3 indicates how often respondents utilize Integrated Support & Recovery Services (ISRS). Respondents consist of those who reported that they are unsure of or least somewhat confident in their ability to access ISRS (n=337). Fifty-Three respondents (15.7%) reported that they have utilized ISRS at least once. Eight respondents (2.37%) reported that they are frequent users of ISRS. While 292 respondents (86.6%) reported that they have never utilized ISRS, 153 of those respondents (52.4%) said they would consider utilizing ISRS in the future.

Figure 2.5.4: Reasons for Not Using Integrated Support & Recovery Services

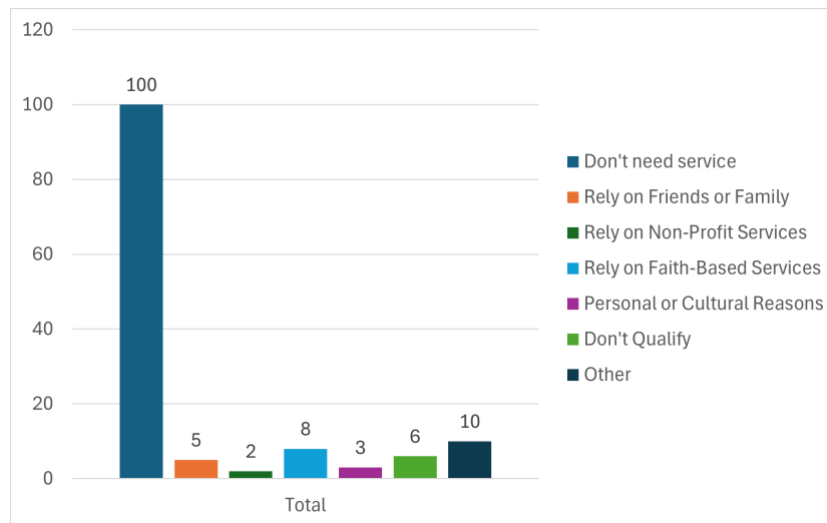


Figure 2.5.4 addresses why La Crosse County residents opted to not utilize Integrated Support & Recovery Services (ISRS). This Question was asked to those who reported that they have never used ISRS and do not intend on accessing ISRS (n=134). Of the total responses, there were 100 (76.6%) respondents that chose not to access ISRS because they do not need the service. The most popular reason for not accessing ISRS with 10 responses (7.5%) was the “Other” category, which gave respondents the opportunity to provide a short explanation. Out of the 10 responses, 6 expressed concerns about the competence/reputation of

ISRS, which is 4.5% of total responses. The other most selected reason for electing to not use ISRS with 8 responses (6.0%) was a reliance on faith-based services.

Figure 2.5.5: Barriers to Accessing Integrated Support & Recovery Services

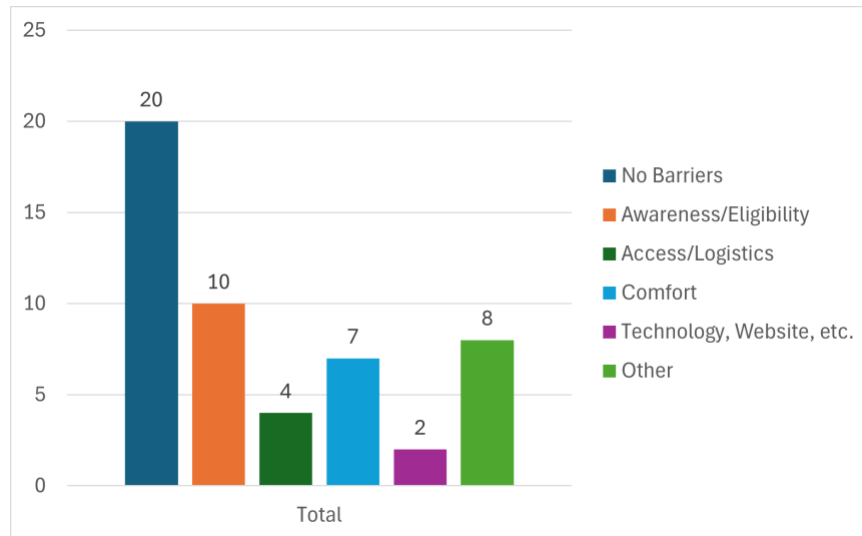


Figure 2.5.5 illustrates barriers to accessing Integrated Support & Recovery Services (ISRS). This question was presented to those who indicated that they have utilized ISRS at least once (n=51). Out of the total responses, 20 (39.2%) reported experiencing “No Barriers.” The remaining 31 responses (60.8%) reported experiencing a barrier. So, the survey results report that La Crosse residents are more likely to experience a barrier while accessing ISRS than not. Out of the 31 responses that reported a barrier, 10 (32.2%) selected “Awareness/Eligibility” as the primary barrier to accessing ISRS. Another 8 respondents (25.8%) selected “Other,” most of whom expressed frustrations about the quality of Integrated Support & Recovery Services. One respondent put it simply: “[n]ot always helpful.”

Overall, Integrated Support & Recovery Services (ISRS) had the lowest awareness among La Crosse County residents of the services included in the survey. Of the total respondents (n=675), fewer than half reported being aware of ISRS. Usage of ISRS dwindled even further with only 53 respondents reporting having used the service. A vast majority of the respondents who were aware of ISRS opt not to use ISRS because they do not need the service. For residents who’ve accessed ISRS, those who experience barriers (n=31) outnumbered those who did not (n=20). Compared to other services included in the survey, ISRS shows the highest proportion of respondents who reported experiencing barriers relative to those who did not. “Awareness & Eligibility” was the most common barrier experienced. Additionally, concerns about the quality of the service arose organically as a significant barrier.

Ageing and Disability Resource Center

By *Luke Brown*

This section focuses on the ADRC. In particular we will be looking at La Crosse County resident’s awareness, familiarity, frequency of use, reasons for not using, and access to the ADRC and its services. The

ADRC offers services related to caregiver support, dementia care, and long-term care counseling for older adults, people with disabilities, and their caregivers.

Figures 2.6.1: Awareness of the ADRC

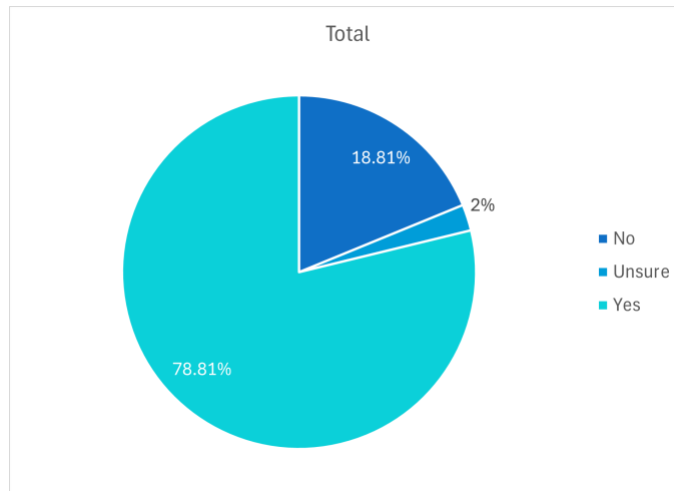


Figure 2.6.1 assesses respondent’s awareness of the ARDC and its services. Of the 670 respondents who answered this question, 78.81% of respondents (n=528) said yes, 18.81% (n=126) of the respondents answered no, and 2.4% (n=16) were unsure if they had heard of the ADRC. This shows that the majority of respondents are aware that the ADRC exists.

Figures 2.6.2: Familiarity of the ADRC Services

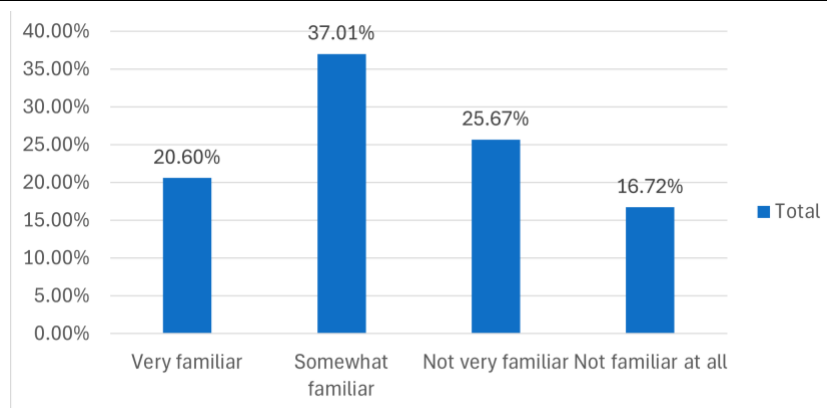


Figure 2.6.2 assesses if people are familiar with the types of services offered by the ADRC. Of the 670 respondents who answered this question, 20.60% (n=138) were “Very Familiar”, 37.01% (n=248) were “Somewhat Familiar”, 25.67% (n=172) of the respondents were “Not Very Familiar”, and 16.72% (n=112) of the respondents were “Not Familiar At All”. The most common response was “Somewhat Familiar.” In total, 57.61% (n=386) indicated some understanding of the types of services offered by the ADRC. Less than half of the respondents, 43.39% (n=284), indicated a lack of understanding of the ADRC and its services.

Figures 2.6.3: Frequency of use of the ADRC Services

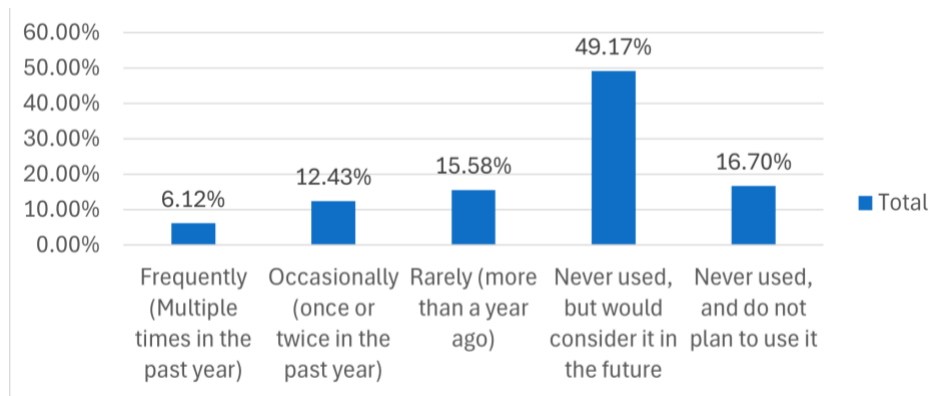


Figure 2.6.3 accesses how often, if ever, have they used the ADRC. Of the 539 respondents who answered the question, 6.12% (n=33) used it “Frequently”, 12.43% (n=67) used the ADRC “Occasionally”, 15.6% (n=84) of the respondents used it “Rarely”, 49.17% (n=265) “Never Used but Would in the Future,” and 16.70% (n=90) respondents “Never Used and Do Not Plan to Use It.” In total, 65.87% (n=355) of the respondents never used the ADRC and 34.1% (n=184) have used the ADRC at some point. Of those who have used the ADRC, those who use it frequently are the smallest group. Slightly more than twice as many people used the ADRC “Occasionally (once or twice in the past year)” than “Frequently (Multiple times in the past year).” In total, 83.30% (n=449) of the respondents answered that they either used the ADRC before or were willing to in the future.

Figures 2.6.4: Reasons for Not Using the ADRC

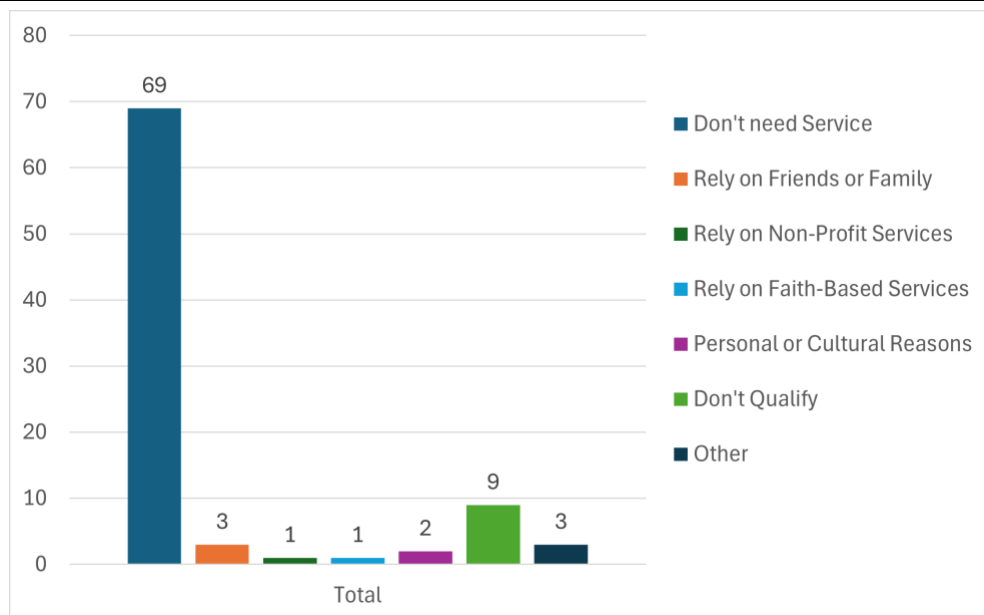


Figure 2.6.4 accesses the reasons why people have chosen not to use the ADRC. The most common answer was “Don’t need Service” with 78.4% (n=69) of the respondents. When looking at the rest of the answers, 3.4% of responses answered that they “Rely on Friends or Family,” 1.1% (n=1) of the responses answered that they Rely on “Non-Profit Services” and “Faith-Based Services”, 2.2% (n=2) respondents answered that

they rely on personal or cultural reasons, 10.2% (n=9) of respondents answered “Don’t Qualify”, and 3.4% (n=3) of respondents answered “Other.”

Figures 2.6.5: Barriers to Accessing the ADRC

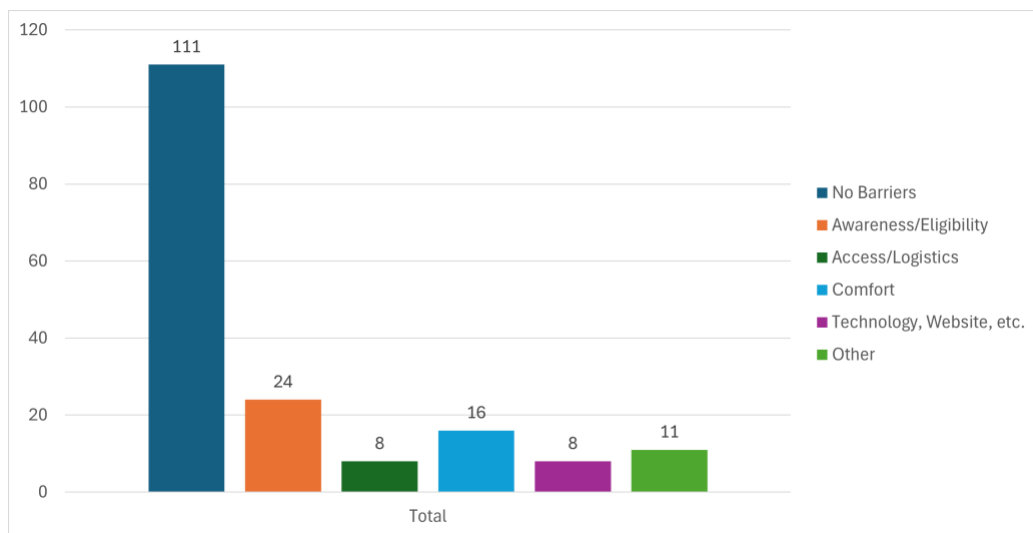


Figure 2.6.5 accesses the barriers to accessing the ADRC. Of the 178 responses from those who used the ADRC, 62.3% (n=111) responded that they faced “No Barriers,” 13.5% (n=24) said that “Awareness/Eligibility,” 8.9% (n=16) of the respondents for “Comfort,” 6.1% (n=11) with “Other,” and 4.4% (n=8) for both access/logistics and technology, website, etc.

Overall, the ADRC is well known among La Crosse County residents with more than three fourths of the residents answering that they were aware that the service exists. When looking at if they were familiar with the types of services the ADRC offers, the numbers decrease slightly. Over half of the respondents answered that they were “Very Familiar” or “Somewhat Familiar.” When looking at the frequency of use, 83.30% (n=449) of the respondents answered that they either used the ADRC before or were willing to use the ADRC. This also means that there are 16.70% (n=90) who never plan on using the ADRC. The most common reason for not using the ADRC was that they don’t have a need for it. The majority of people using the ADRC faced no barriers to access, but for those who do “Awareness/eligibility” was the most common barrier.

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program

By Cameron Seebruch

This section will focus on assessing the awareness, usage, and barriers of the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program offered by the La Crosse County government. This includes a breakdown of respondents’ answers to whether they have heard of WIC and their familiarity with WIC. Additionally, this section includes data on the usage of WIC by survey respondents, why some respondents do not use WIC, and if respondents have faced any barriers to using WIC.

Figure 2.7.1: Awareness of Women, Infants, and Children

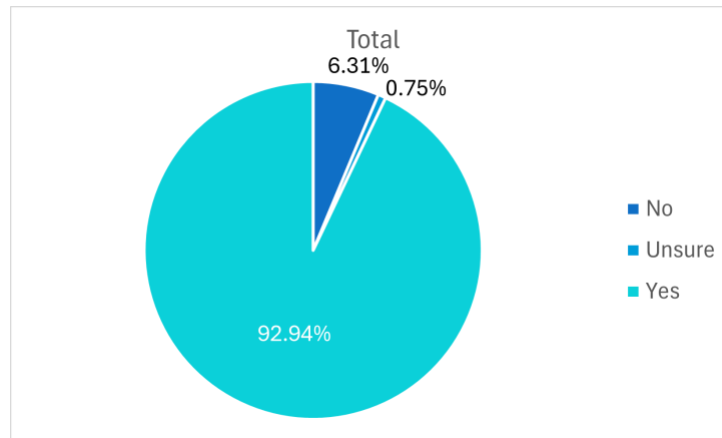


Figure 2.7.1 displays the awareness of the Women, infants, and Children’s (WIC) program in La Crosse County. This question had 666 total responses. Of the total responses, 619 (92.94%) said that they were aware of this service, 42 (6.31%) of the total respondents said that they were not aware of this service, and 5 (0.75%) of the total respondents were unsure if they had heard of this service. Overwhelmingly, respondents to the survey were aware of the Women, Infants, and Children program in La Crosse County.

Figure 2.7.2: Familiarity of Women, Infants, and Children

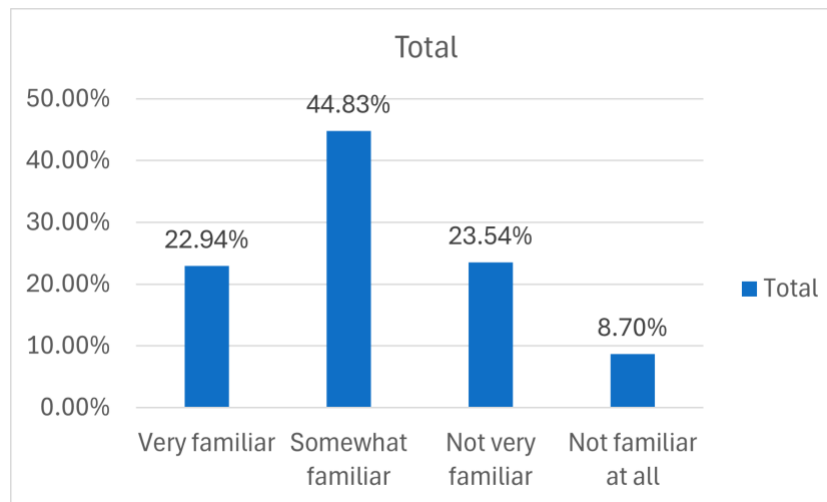


Figure 2.7.2 displays the levels of familiarity with Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program in La Crosse County. This question had 667 total responses. There were 299 (44.83%) respondents who said they were somewhat familiar with this service. There were 153 (22.94%) respondents who said that they were “Very Familiar” with WIC and an almost equal number, 157 (23.54%), who said that they were “Not Very Familiar” with the program. The remainder of the respondents totaled 58 (8.70%) and said that they were “Not Familiar at All” with WIC. When looking at the familiarity of Women, Infants, and Children, 452 (67.77%) respondents were at least somewhat familiar with the program while the remaining 215 (32.23%) respondents were either not very familiar or not familiar at all with the service.

Figure 2.7.3: Usage of Women, Infants, and Children

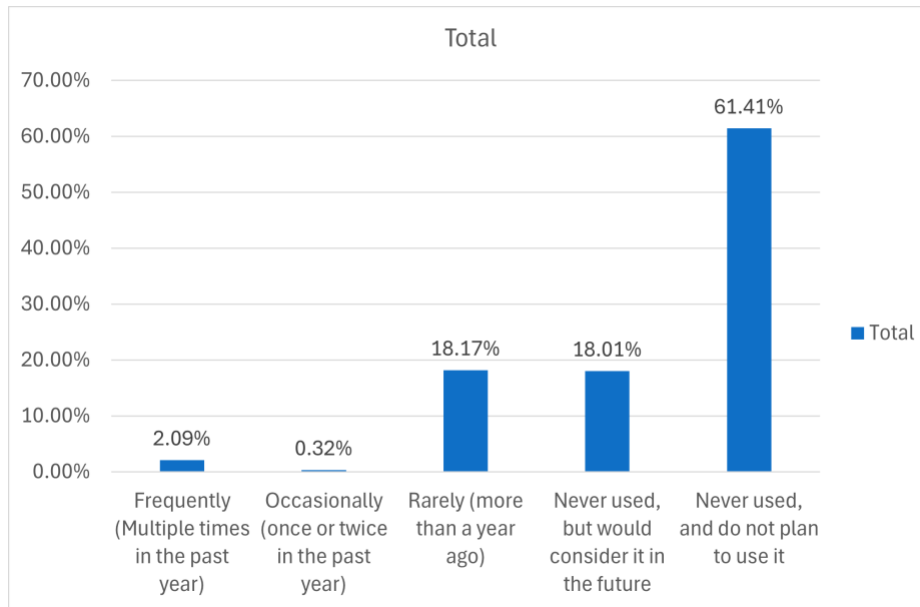


Figure 2.7.3 displays the frequency of usage of Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program in La Crosse County. This question had 622 total responses. There were 382 (61.41%) respondents who said they have “Never Used, and Do Not Plan to Use” WIC. Other significant groups include 113 (18.17%) respondents who have used WIC “Rarely” and 112 (18.01%) respondents who have “Never Used but Would Consider [WIC] in the Future”. The last significant group includes 13 (2.09%) respondents who have used WIC “Frequently”. This graphic indicates that 494 (79.42%) survey respondents have never used WIC, which is contrasted by 128 (20.58%) respondents who said that they have ever used WIC.

Figure 2.7.4: Reasons for Not Using Women, Infants, and Children

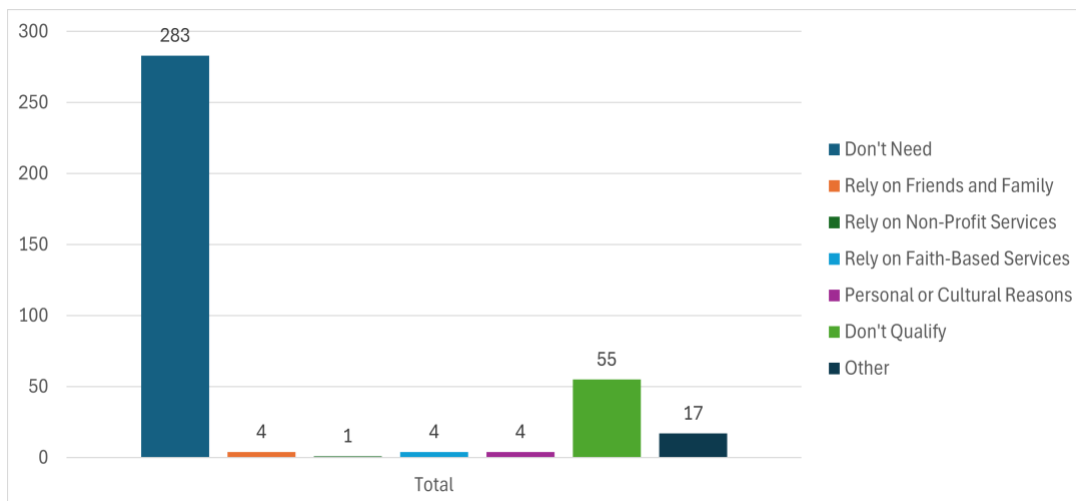


Figure 2.7.4 displays expressed reasons for not using Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) by respondents who reported that they have not used the service. This question had 368 total responses. There were 283 (76.90%) respondents who said they “Didn’t Need” WIC. Other significant groups included 55 (14.95%)

respondents who said they ‘Don’t Qualify’ for WIC and 17 (4.62%) respondents who selected “Other” reasons for not using the program. Within the “Other” category, respondents expressed that they did not have a need or were not eligible for the program.

Figure 2.7.5: Barriers to Accessing Women, Infants, and Children

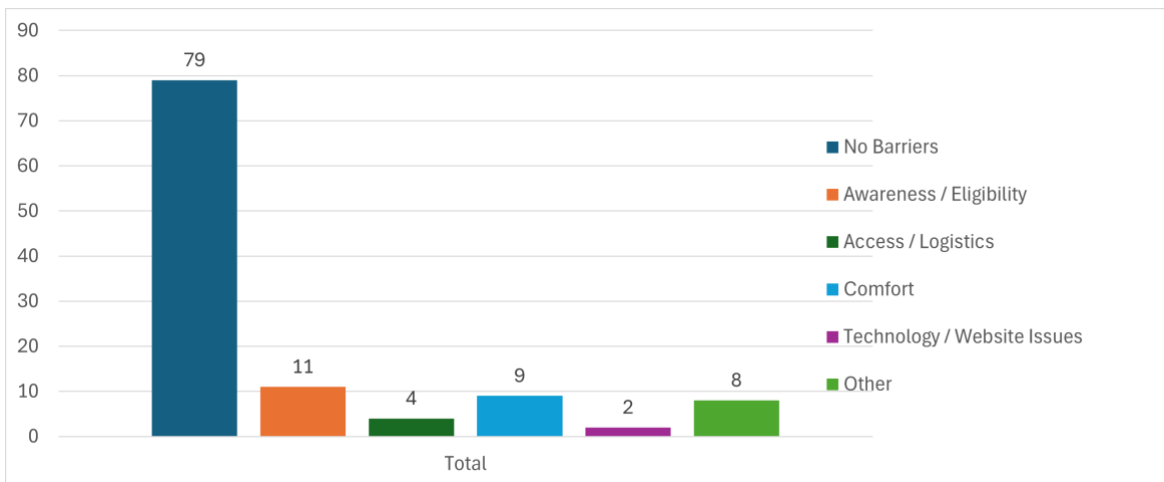


Figure 2.7.5 displays expressed barriers to accessing Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) by respondents who reported that they have used the service. This question had 113 total responses compared to the 128 respondents who indicated using WIC in the past or present. There were 79 (69.91%) respondents who said they faced “No Barriers” to accessing WIC. However, 34 (30.08%) respondents reported a barrier to accessing this program. The most notable of these barriers included 11 (9.73%) respondents who selected “Awareness/Eligibility” as a barrier to accessing the service, while 9 (7.96%) respondents selected “Comfort” as a barrier. The last notable section was “Other” where respondents shared they were no longer able to meet the eligibility requirements for WIC. Of those who expressed a barrier to the service, the largest barriers were a lack of awareness of the service, a lack of comfortability using the service, and no longer meeting the eligibility requirements for the service.

Overall, Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is well known among survey respondents with 619 (92.94%) respondents having heard of the program. This is paired with 452 (67.77%) respondents who reported being at least somewhat familiar with the program and the services that it offers. Following the knowledge of the program, there were 128 (20.58%) respondents who have used or are currently using WIC and of these respondents 34 (30.08%) reported a barrier to using WIC while 79 (69.91%) reported no barriers to using the program and 15 people did not answer the question. Of those who expressed barriers to the service, a majority said the barrier was related to eligibility and/or awareness of the service.

Economic Support and Benefits Services (ESBS)

By Max Van Asten

This section will focus on assessing the awareness, usage, and barriers associated with the La Crosse County Government’s Economic Support and Benefits Services (ESBS). Using survey data from residents across the county, the following figures assess the extent to which individuals are informed about ESBS, their level

of familiarity with ESBS, whether they have used or would consider using ESBS, and the primary reasons for non-use or barriers to accessing ESBS. These findings provide a valuable baseline for residents' experience accessing ESBS.

Figure 2.8.1: Awareness of Economic Support and Benefits Services

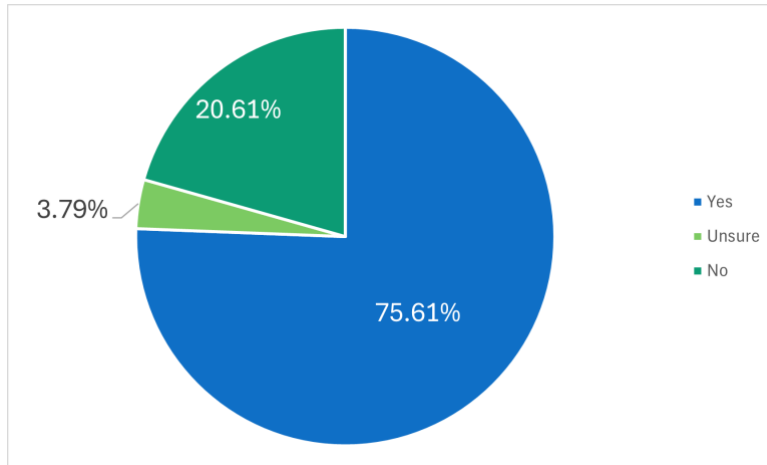


Figure 2.8.1 reports respondents' awareness of La Crosse County's Economic Support and Benefits Services. A total of 660 responses were collected on awareness of ESBS. The figure shows that 499 respondents (75.61%) reported they were aware of ESBS, while 136 respondents (20.61%) reported they were not aware and 25 respondents (3.79%) were unsure. Thus, a substantial majority of respondents were aware of ESBS, but slightly under 1/4 of respondents were not aware, or certain, of their awareness.

Figure 2.8.2: Familiarity Level with Economic Support and Benefits Services

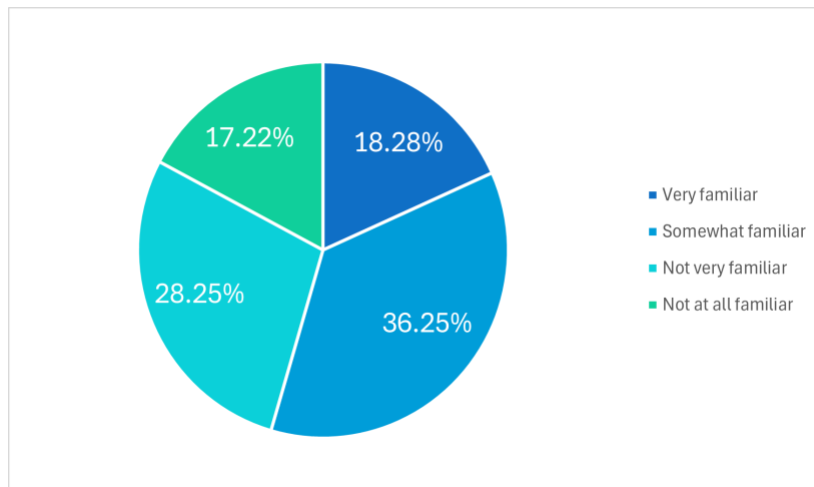


Figure 2.8.2 reports respondents' familiarity level with La Crosse County's Economic Support and Benefits Services (ESBS). A total of 662 responses were collected on familiarity with ESBS. The figure shows that 121 respondents (18.28%) were "Very familiar" with ESBS and another 240 respondents (36.25%) were "Somewhat familiar" with ESBS. It also shows that 187 respondents (28.25%) were "Not very familiar" with ESBS, and 114 respondents (17.22%) were "Not at all familiar" with ESBS. Thus, a majority of

respondents, 54.53%, reported being somewhat or very familiar with ESBS, while under half of respondents, 45.47%, reported lower levels of familiarity.

Figure 2.8.3: Usage of Economic Support and Benefits Services

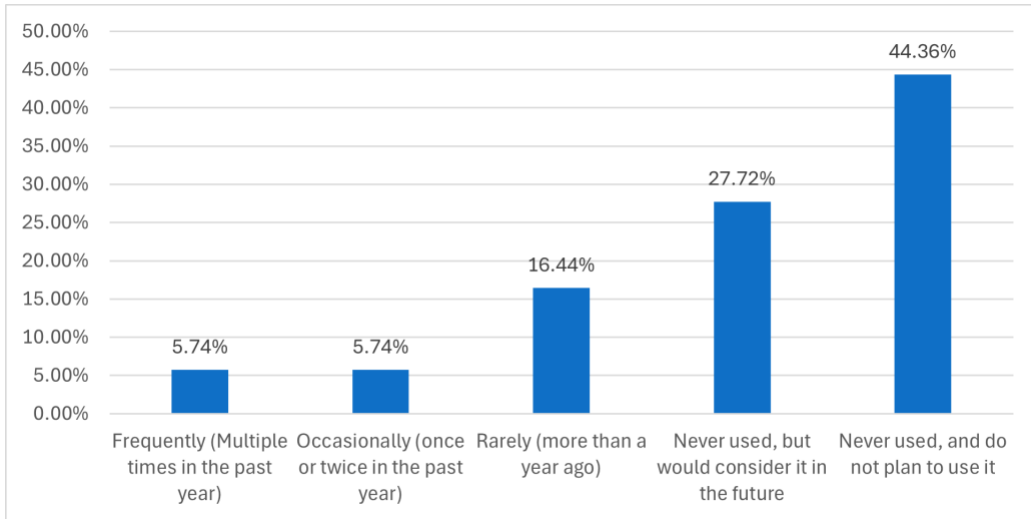


Figure 2.8.3 reports respondents’ usage of La Crosse County’s Economic Support and Benefits Services (ESBS). A total of 523 responses were collected on usage of ESBS. The figure shows that 232 respondents (44.36%) have “Never used, and do not plan to use [ESBS]”, along with 145 respondents (27.72%) have “Never used, but would consider [ESBS] in the future”. Another 86 respondents (16.44%) reported using ESBS “Rarely”, while 30 respondents (5.74%) reported using ESBS in each of the “Occasionally” or “Frequently” answer choices. Overall, 146 respondents (27.92%) reported usage of ESBS, compared to 377 respondents (72.08%) who reported never using ESBS.

Figure 2.8.4: Reasons for Non-Use of Economic Support and Benefits Services

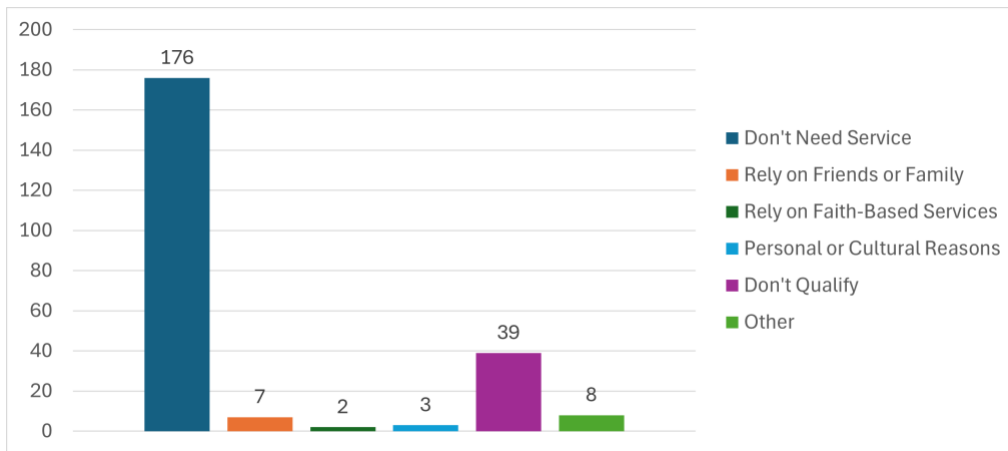


Figure 2.8.4 reports respondents’ reasons for not using La Crosse County’s Economic Support and Benefits Services (ESBS). This question was only asked to respondents who reported never using ESBS and not planning to use ESBS, as shown in Figure 9.3. A total of 235 responses were collected on reasons for non-use of ESBS. The figure shows 176 respondents (74.89%) who reported never using ESBS, reported “Don’t

Need Service” as a reason for non-use. The second largest reason for non-use among the respondents was “Don’t Qualify”, gathering 39 responses (16.6%). “Rely on Friends or Family”, “Rely on Faith-Based Services”, and “Personal or Cultural Reasons” were the lowest recorded responses, gathering 12 responses altogether (5.1%). There were also 8 respondents who reported “Other” reasons for non-use and 0 respondents that reported “Relying on Non-Profit Services”. Hence, respondents overwhelmingly responded (91.5%) not needing or not qualifying for ESBS as their reasons for non-use.

Figure 2.8.5: Barriers to Accessing Economic Support and Benefits Services

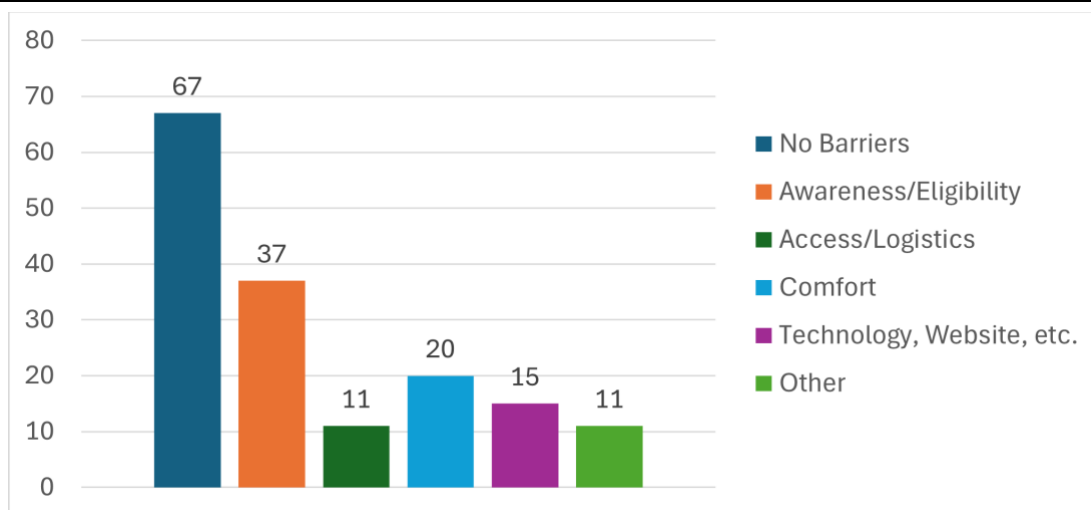


Figure 2.8.5 reports respondents’ barriers to accessing La Crosse County’s Economic Support and Benefits Services (ESBS). This question was only asked to respondents who reported some usage of ESBS, as shown in Figure 9.3. A total of 161 responses were recorded on barriers to accessing ESBS. The figure shows that 67 responses (41.61%) reported experiencing no barriers to access, the most frequent response among respondents who reported usage of ESBS. It also shows 37 responses (22.98%) reported “Awareness/Eligibility” as a barrier to access, making it the most reported barrier for respondents who reported usage of ESBS. Another 11 responses (6.83%) reported “Access/Logistics”, 20 responses (12.42%) reported “Comfort”, and 15 responses (9.32%) reported “Technology, Website, etc.” as barriers to accessing ESBS, although these percentages should be interpreted with caution due to lower sample sizes. “Other” barriers to accessing ESBS received 11 responses (6.83%). Overall, the most common responses for barriers to usage of ESBS were “Awareness/Eligibility” and “No Barriers”, making up 104 responses (64.60%), with the other four options adding together for 57 responses (35.40%).

La Crosse County’s Economic Support and Benefits Services (ESBS) was recognized by the majority of our sample, with 75.61% of respondents being aware of ESBS. Familiarity level with ESBS was more varied, seeing most respondents answer “Somewhat Familiar” and “Not Very Familiar.” While awareness and familiarity showed promise, usage of ESBS was lower. Out of 523 total respondents in Figure 9.3, 72.1% respondents reported never using ESBS. When asked why respondents had not used ESBS, aside from the majority response of “Don’t Need the Service”, most stated “Don’t Qualify.” Of those who had used ESBS, barriers to accessing the service were varied. Respondents stated “Awareness/Eligibility” as the most common barrier encountered, which follows a similar pattern of respondents answering why they do not use

ESBS. Overall, 58.39% of responses from respondents who used ESBS in the past reported a barrier to access, a high percent in our survey.

Foster Care

By *Evan Buckingham*

This section addresses awareness of, access to, and usage of Foster Care services in La Crosse County. In addition to this, respondents who had not used Foster Care were asked why, and respondents who had used Foster Care were asked if they experienced barriers in doing so.

Figure 2.9.1: Awareness of Foster Care

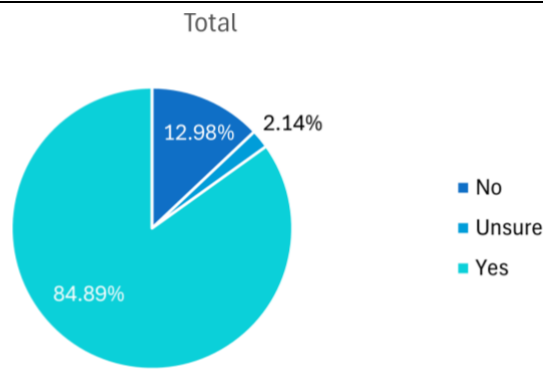


Figure 2.9.1 displays the results of foster care awareness in La Crosse County. This question got 655 total responses. Of these responses, n=556 (84.89%) were aware of foster care services, n=85 (12.98%) were not aware of foster care services, and n=14 (2.14%) were unsure if they were aware of foster care services. An overwhelming number of respondents were aware of La Crosse County foster care services.

Figure 2.9.2: Evaluation of Foster Care Access

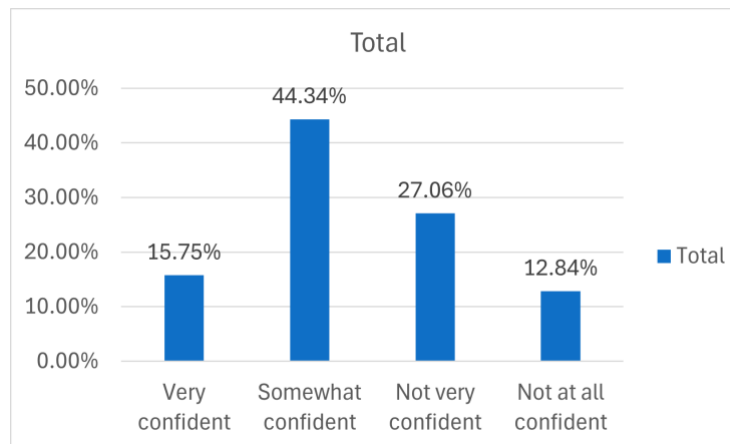


Figure 2.9.2 displays the results of foster care access evaluation in La Crosse County. The total responses for this question were 654. Overall, most respondents said they were either confident or very confident they could access foster care services (n=393; 60.09%). There was still a sizable portion of respondents who did not feel confident they could access foster care service (n=261; 39.9%).

Figure 2.9.3: Usage of Foster Care

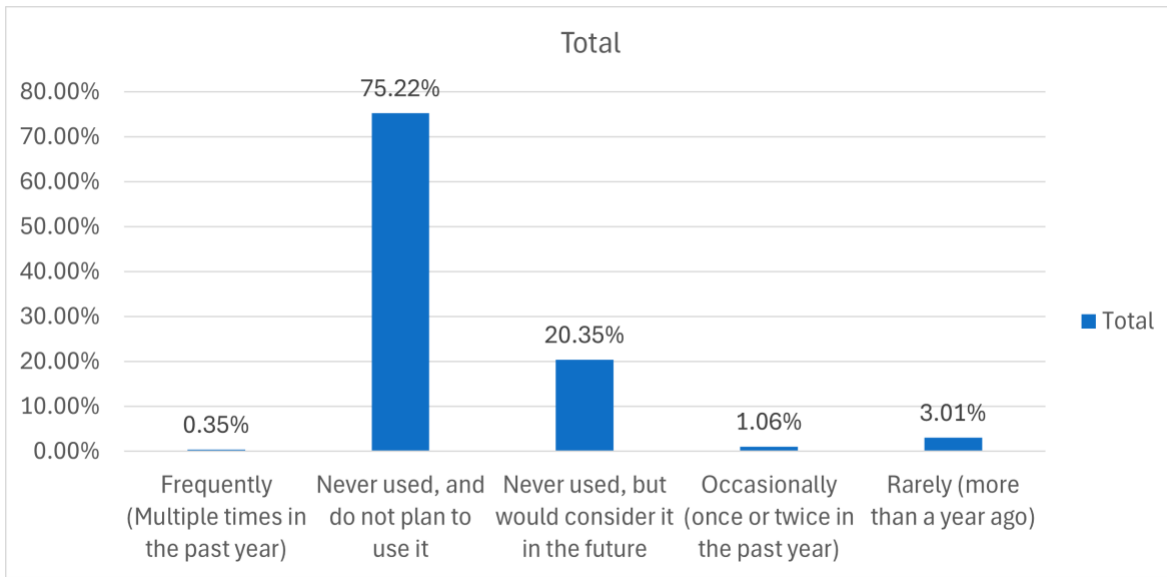


Figure 2.9.3 displays the usage of foster care in La Crosse County. This question had 565 total responses. Respondents overwhelmingly reported (n=424; 75.22%) that they have never used foster care and do not plan to use it. Some reported they would consider using it in the future (n=115; 20.35%), while there were only a few respondents who had used foster care (n=25; 4.42%).

Figure 2.9.4: Reasons for Not Using Foster Care

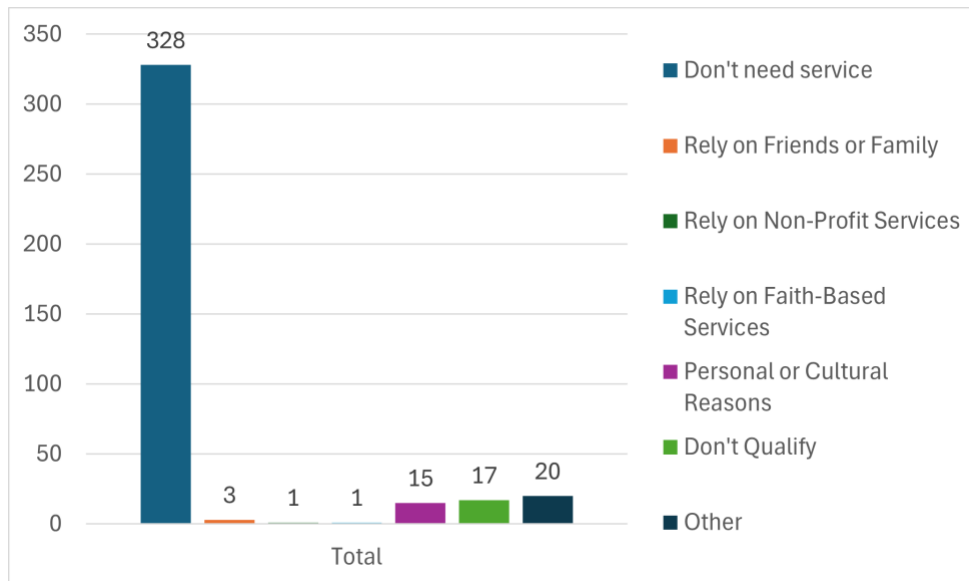


Figure 2.9.4 reports the reasons respondents chose not to use foster care. There were 385 responses to this question. Of these, 328 respondents (85.20%) stated that they do not need the service. The responses that were more common among a smaller portion of respondents were “Personal/Cultural Reasons” (n=15; 4%), “Don’t Qualify” (n=17; 4%), and “Other” reasons (n=20; 5%). Of the “Other” responses, a common concern mentioned was being too old to be a foster parent.

Figure 2.9.5: Barriers to Accessing Foster Care

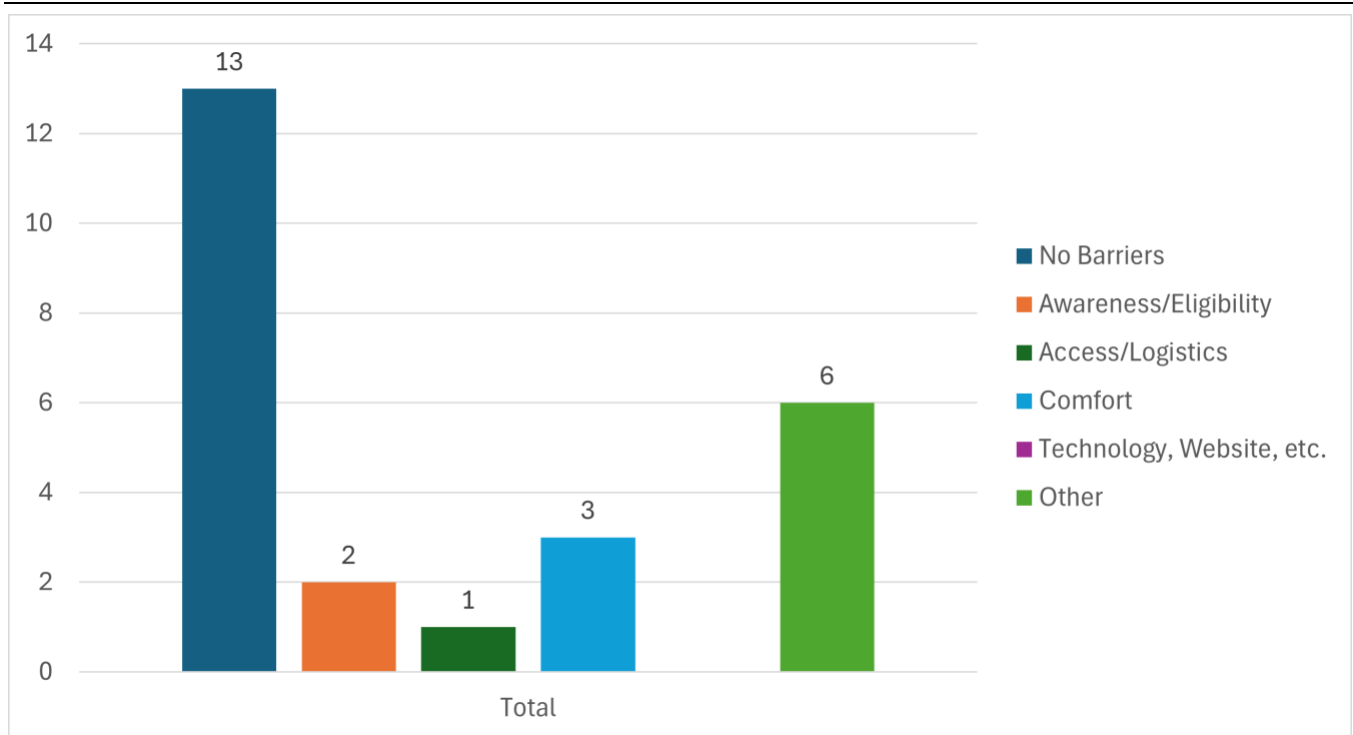


Figure 2.9.5: This graph displays the barriers to accessing foster care. There were 25 total responses to this question. Most respondents reported no barriers to accessing foster care (n=13; 52%). Additionally, n=3 (12%) stated “Comfort” barriers, n=2 (8%) stated “Awareness/Eligibility” barriers, and n=1 (4%) stated “Access/Logistics” barriers. There were no reports of “Technological” barriers. A total of n=6 (24%) selected “Other” barriers that our survey did not capture, including concerns of transparency, stigma for the children in foster care, and the rights of foster parents were mentioned by respondents.

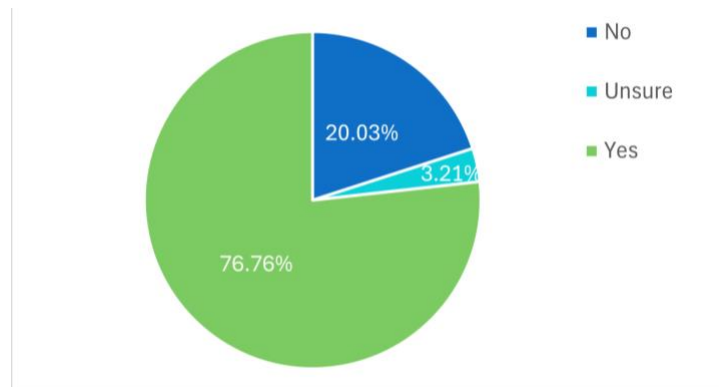
Overall, foster care in La Crosse County was widely recognized by the sample of our survey with n=556 (84.89%) being aware of this service. Confidence in access to Foster Care was also moderately high, with n=393 (60.09%) stating they were either confident or very confident in accessing Foster Care. While awareness and access were both above 50%, usage of Foster Care was lower. Out of 565 total respondents in Figure 10.3, n=539 (95.40%) stated they have never used Foster Care. When asked why respondents had not used Foster Care, aside from the majority response of “Don’t Need the Service” (n=382; 85.20%), most stated “Personal/Cultural Reasons” (n=15; 4%), “Don’t Qualify” (n=17; 4%), and “Other” reasons (n=20; 5%). Of the “Other” responses, a common concern mentioned was being too old to be a foster parent. Of those who had used Foster Care, most did not experience any barriers (n=13; 52%). The “Other” response category (n=6; 24%) examining barriers revealed concerns surrounding system transparency and foster parent rights in a legal setting, along with stigma for the children served by Foster Care.

Veterans Services

By Paige Janssen

This section addresses awareness of, access to, and usage of Veterans Services in La Crosse County.

Figure 2.10.1 Awareness of Service



When survey respondents were asked whether they had previously heard of La Crosse County’s Veterans Services, which provides benefits such as counseling, claims assistance, and emergency financial aid for eligible veterans, active-duty service members, and their families, the majority indicated familiarity with the office. Of the 654 respondents, 502 (76.76%) reported that they had heard of Veterans Services prior to taking the survey, while 131 (20.03%) had not, and 21 (3.21%) were unsure. These results suggest that Veterans Services maintains a relatively strong presence within the community, with more than three in four residents already aware of the office and its offerings. However, the remaining roughly one in four respondents who were either unaware or uncertain of the office’s existence highlights a continued opportunity for outreach, particularly among demographics who may not yet know that these services are available to them.

Figure 2.10.2: Awareness of Services Provided through Veterans Services

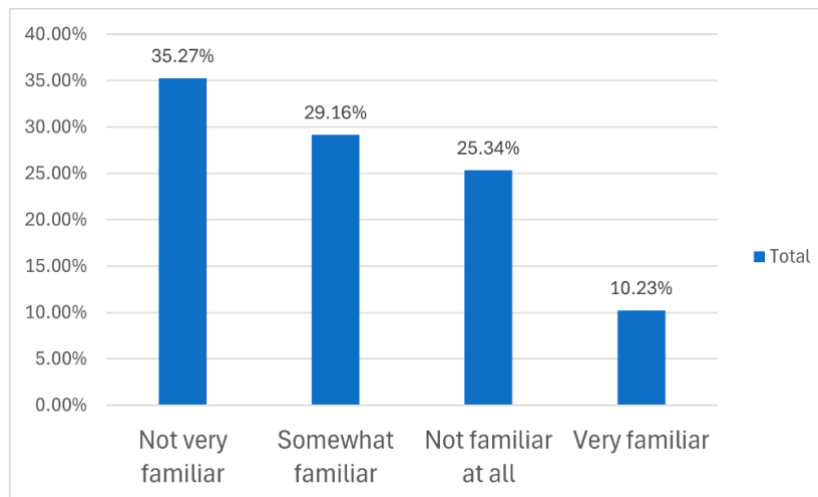


Figure 2.10.2 illustrates respondents’ level of awareness regarding services provided through Veterans Services. The results indicate generally low levels of familiarity among participants. The largest proportion of respondents (35.27%) reported being not very familiar with available services, followed by 29.16% who indicated that they were somewhat familiar. 25.34% of respondents reported that they were not familiar at all. Our smallest category is held by 10.23% of respondents who replied that they were very familiar. Overall, this data suggests that a majority of respondents lack strong awareness of Veterans Services, with

over 60% indicating either no familiarity or limited familiarity. The relatively low percentage of individuals who are very familiar highlights a potential gap in outreach, communication, or accessibility of information regarding available resources. These findings suggest a need for increased efforts to improve public awareness and education about Veterans Services to ensure that individuals who may benefit from these resources are adequately informed.

Figure 2.10.3: Reasons for Not Using Veterans Services

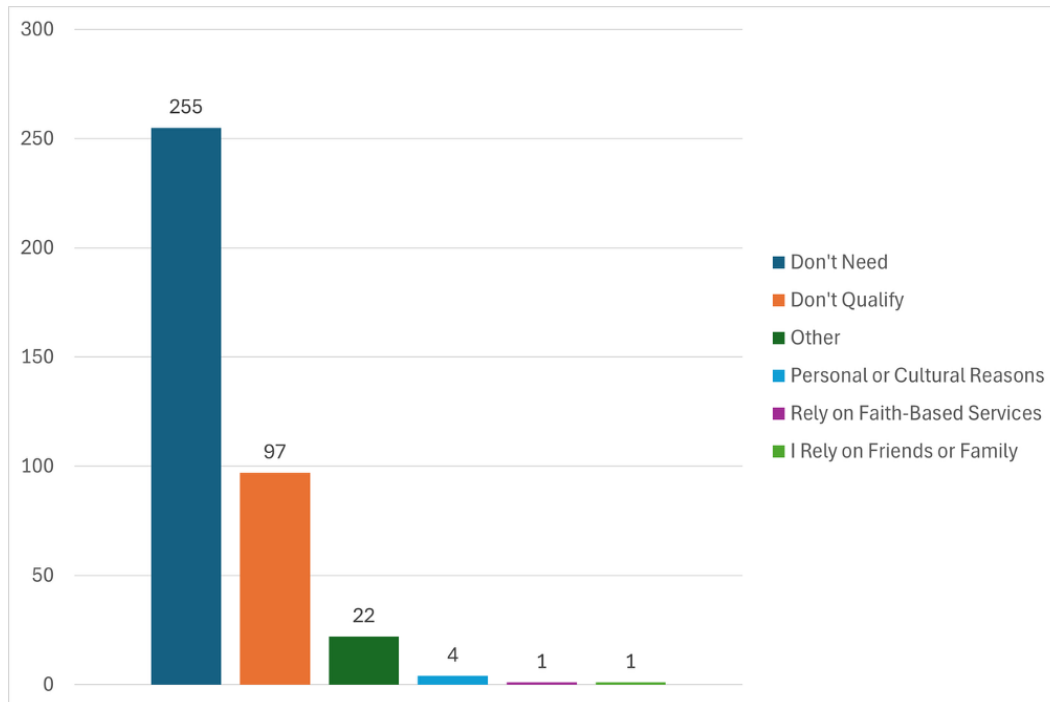
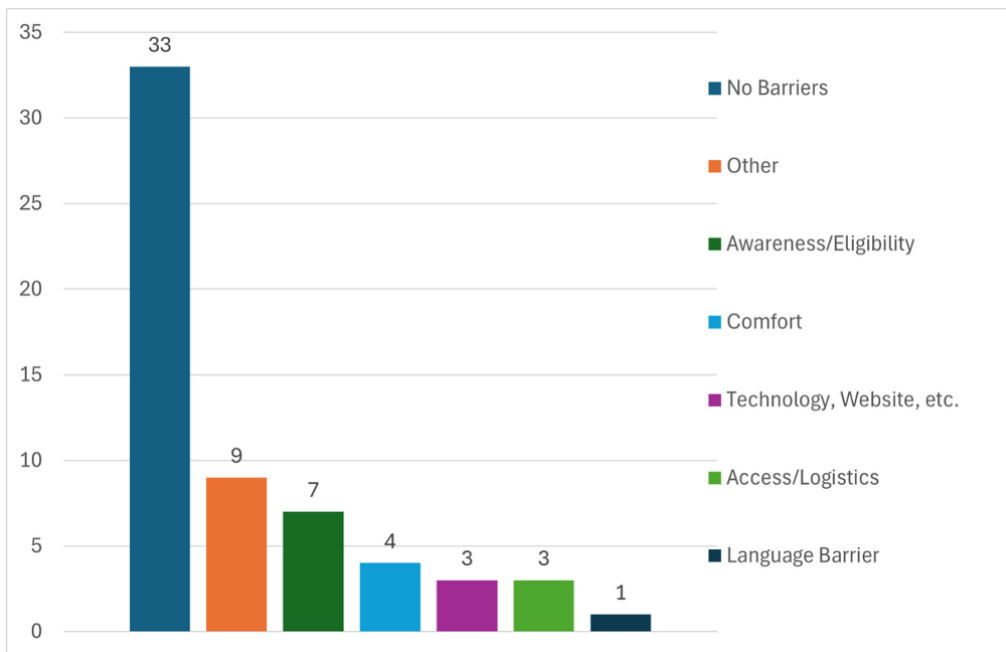


Figure 2.10.3 presents respondents reasons for not utilizing Veterans Services. The most reported reasoning being that they do not need these services (67%; n=255). The second most frequent response was that they did not qualify for services (25%; 97). This suggests that eligibility requirement acts as a barrier for a notable amount of community members. Other reasons were reported far less frequently including other (22), personal or cultural reasons (4), and relying on faith-based services (1) and lastly relying on family or friends (1). Overall, these findings suggest that non-use of Veterans Services is driven primarily by perceived lack of need and eligibility limitations, rather than cultural barriers or personal preferences. When considered alongside

Figure 2.10.4: Barriers to Accessing Veterans Services



As shown in Figure 11.4, of the 60 respondents who reported using La Crosse County Veterans Services, 55% (n=33) reported experiencing no barriers to access. Among those who did report barriers, the most common responses were “other,” followed by awareness and eligibility concerns, and discomfort asking for help.

Among respondents who selected “other” as a barrier to accessing Veterans Services, several common themes emerged. The most prevalent concerns centered on appointment availability and reliability, with multiple respondents citing difficulty scheduling appointments and frustration with last-minute cancellations. Several respondents also reported feeling dismissed or poorly served by staff, describing experiences of being brushed off, given inadequate guidance, or having claims discouraged outright. A recurring sentiment was that staff lacked sufficient understanding of veterans’ needs, with one respondent explicitly calling for veterans themselves to fill these roles. Additional barriers included lack of awareness of service locations, parking limitations, and a preference for email communication over required phone calls. Taken together, these responses suggest that accessibility, staff responsiveness, and service quality represent the most significant areas for improvement.

While it is encouraging that a majority of users reported no barriers, the qualitative feedback suggests that those who do encounter difficulties face meaningful obstacles. For the county, this points to an opportunity to improve appointment reliability, enhance outreach around eligibility, and foster a more welcoming and veteran-centered service environment to better serve those who may currently be slipping through the cracks.

III. Trust in Local Government

By Marrison Rodriguez

This section examines respondents’ perceptions of trust in La Crosse County government. Specifically, it explores whether respondents believe county officials care about their opinions, act in residents’ best interests, make sound decisions, and treat residents with respect. It also includes an overall measure of trust using a numerical scale. Together, these results provide a broader understanding of how respondents view the actions and credibility of county officials.

Figure 3.1 La Crosse County Officials Care About My Opinion

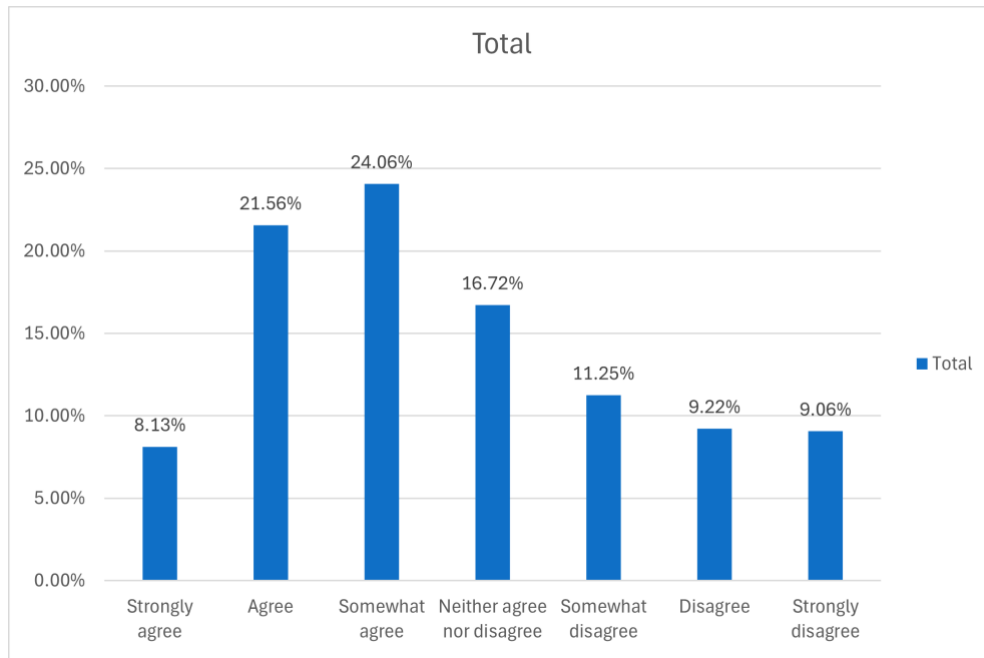


Figure 3.1 reports respondents’ views on whether La Crosse County officials care about their opinion. An overall total of 640 respondents answered this question. The largest share of respondents reported “Somewhat Agree,” 154 respondents (24.06%) selected this category, while 138 respondents (21.56%) selected “Agree”. A smaller share of 107 respondents (16.72%) reported “Neither,” 72 respondents (11.25%) answered “Somewhat Disagree,” 59 respondents (9.22%) disagreed, 58 participants (9.06%) responded with “Strongly Disagree,” and only 52 respondents (8.13%) strongly agreed that La Crosse County officials care about their opinion. Overall, responses leaned slightly positive, as more respondents expressed agreement than disagreement. However, the percentage of neutral and negative responses suggests that many respondents were uncertain or did not feel strongly that county officials cared about their opinions.

3.2 La Crosse County Officials Have Residents' Best Interest in Mind

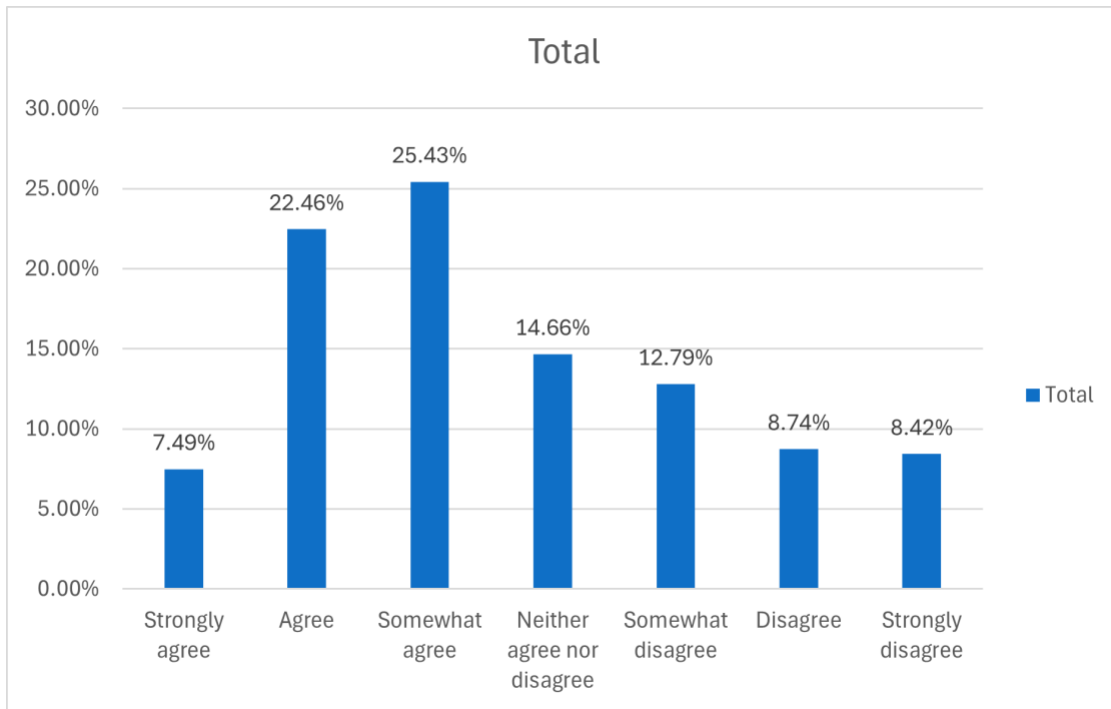


Figure 3.2 reports respondents' views on whether La Crosse County officials have residents' best interest in mind. Overall, a total of 641 respondents answered this question. The most common response was "Somewhat Agree," selected by 163 respondents (25.43%), followed by "Agree" selected by 144 respondents (22.46%). Smaller amounts of respondents selected "Neither," with 94 respondents (14.66%), and 82 respondents (12.79%) answered with "Somewhat Disagree". Fewer respondents selected "Disagree" with only 56 respondents (8.74%), "Strongly Disagree" with 54 respondents (8.42%), or "Strongly Agree" where only 48 respondents (7.49%) selected this category.

Overall, respondents leaned slightly positive, as more respondents expressed agreement than disagreement. However, a notable portion of respondents reported neutral or negative views, suggesting that confidence in whether officials act in residents' best interests was mixed rather than strongly positive.

3.3 La Crosse County Officials Can Be Trusted to Make the Right Decision

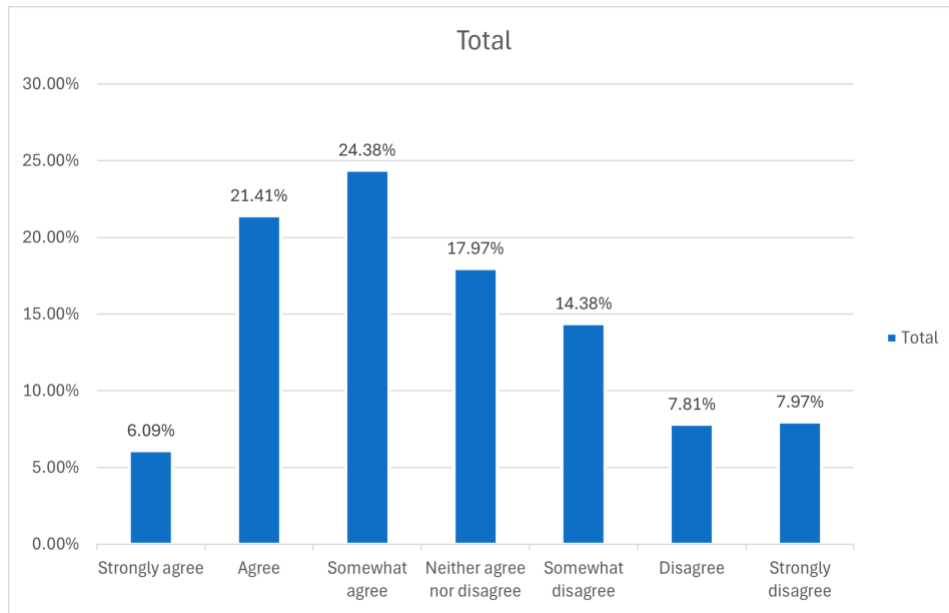


Figure 3.3 summarizes levels of trust in officials’ decision-making. In total, 640 respondents answered this question. The most frequent response was “Somewhat Agree” selected by 156 respondents (24.38%), followed by “Agree” selected by 137 respondents (21.41%). A notable share of respondents selected “neither,” with 115 respondents (17.97%). This pattern suggests moderate levels of trust rather than strong confidence. Although agreement was more common than disagreement, the number of neutral responses indicates that many respondents were uncertain about officials’ ability to make the right decisions.

3.4 La Crosse County Officials Treat Residents with Respect

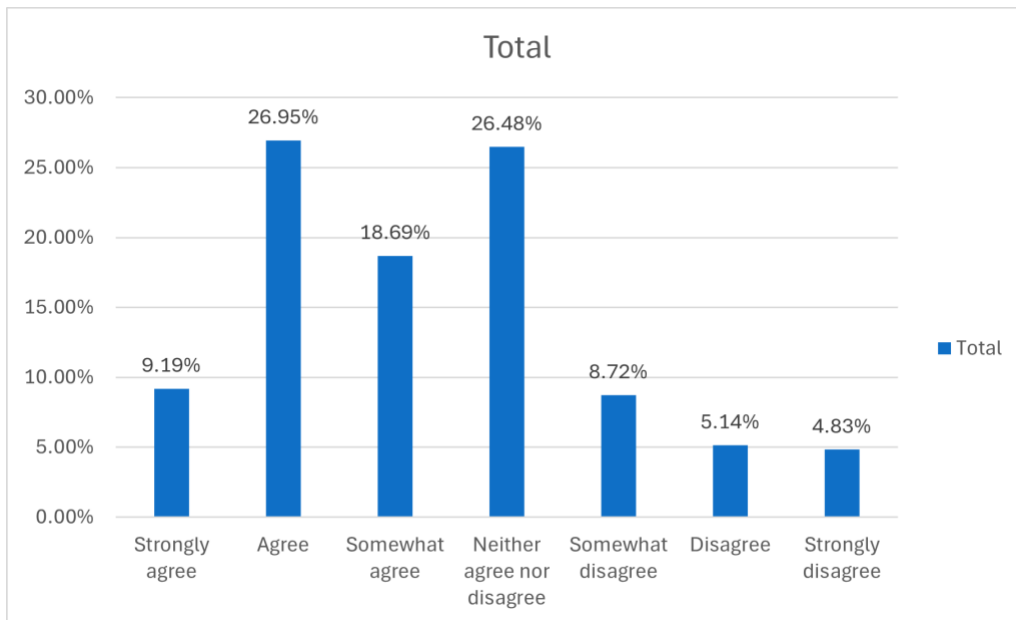


Figure 3.4 shows how respondents rated whether officials treat residents with respect. Overall, 642 respondents answered this question. The largest share of respondents selected “Strongly Agree” with a total of 173 respondents (26.95%), although nearly as many reported “Neither”; 170 respondents (26.48%) selected this response. Fewer respondents indicated disagreement. Overall, perceptions of respect were generally positive. However, the high proportion of neutral responses suggests that many respondents did not express a strong opinion, pointing to varied or unclear experiences.

3.5 Overall Trust in County Government

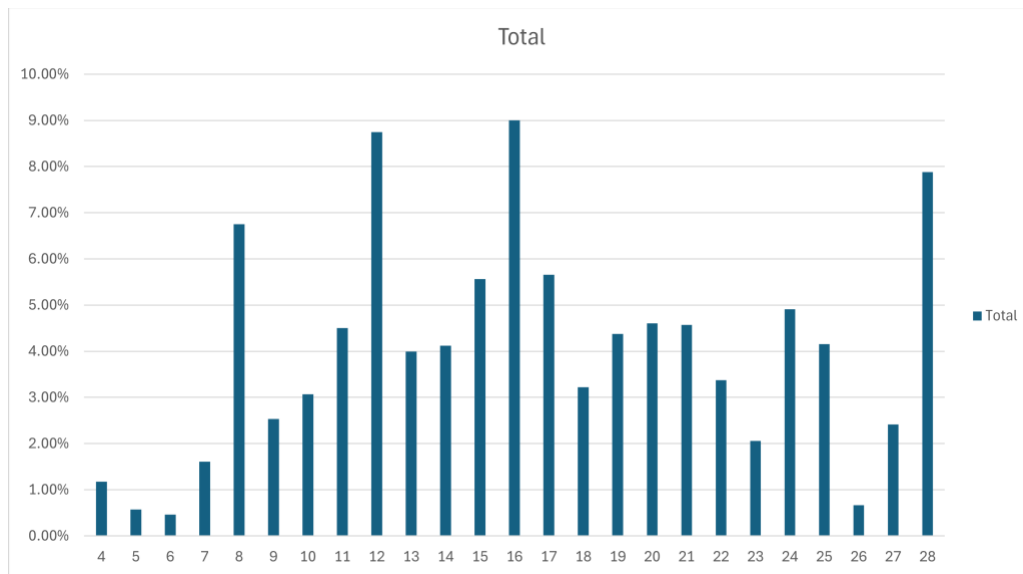


Figure 3.5 illustrates overall trust in La Crosse County government using an index constructed from multiple trust-related survey questions. This index combines responses from the previous items to create a composite measure of trust, where lower values indicate less trust and higher values indicate greater trust. Scores were distributed across the full range of the scale, with the highest concentrations occurring around mid-range values. The most common scores were 16, reported by 704 respondents (9.0%) and 12, reported by 684 respondents (8.8%). A smaller peak was also observed at the highest value of 28, reported by 616 respondents (7.9%), while very few respondents selected the lowest values on the scale. Overall, responses were concentrated in the mid-range, suggesting that most respondents reported moderate levels of trust. While some respondents indicated high trust, strong distrust was relatively uncommon. This pattern indicates that respondents generally held mixed or moderate views of trust in county government rather than extreme trust opinions.

Overall, respondents across these measures suggest that trust in La Crosse County government was generally moderate rather than strongly positive or negative. While more respondents expressed agreement than disagreement on most items, indicating some level of confidence in county officials, there was also a consistent presence of neutral responses. This pattern suggests that many respondents were uncertain or held mixed views about officials’ actions, particularly regarding whether officials care about residents’ opinions and act in their best interest. The distribution of responses in the overall trust scale further supports this interpretation, with most responses concentrated in the middle range rather than at the

extremes. Taken together, these findings indicate that while strong distrust was relatively uncommon, strong trust was also limited, pointing to an overall sense of cautious or moderate confidence in county government.

IV. Measuring Service-Seeking Patterns and Identifying Support Networks

By Marrisona Rodriguez

This section examines where respondents reported seeking services, including reliance on informal supports such as family and faith-based organizations, as well as formal providers such as nonprofits and government agencies. This section also considers the types of services respondents do not seek. The following figures summarize these patterns across different service categories.

Figure 4.1 Where Respondents Seek Services

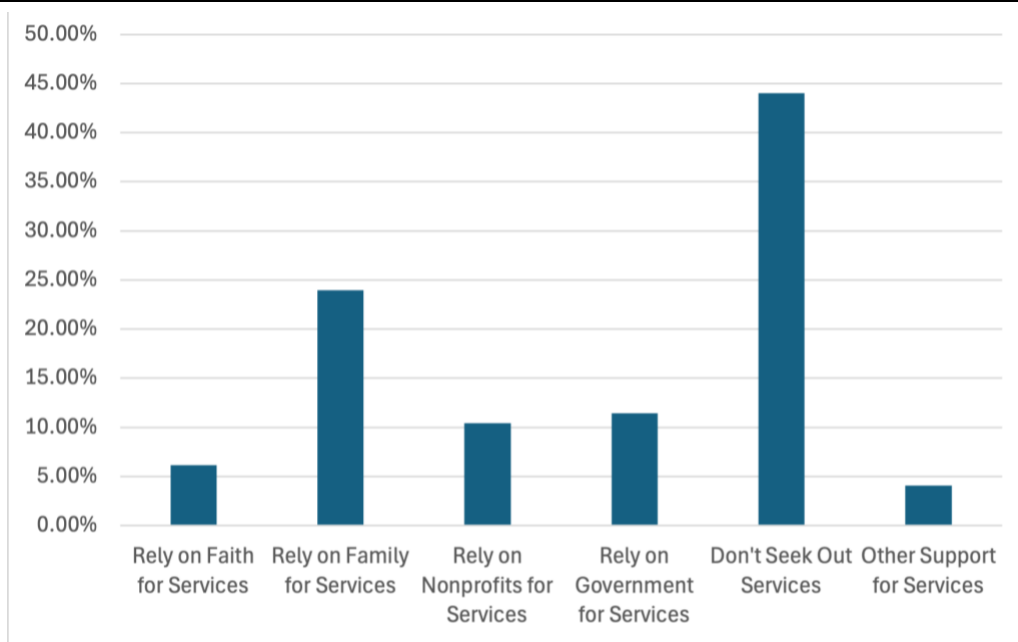


Figure 4.1 illustrates where respondents seek services. Overall, 718 respondents answered this question. The most common response was not seeking out services, accounting for the largest amount of responses with 316 respondents (44.01%) reported not seeking out any services. Among those who did seek assistance, the most frequent source was family, reported by 172 respondents (23.96%), followed by government which was selected by 82 respondents (11.42%), and nonprofit organizations, reported by 75 respondents (10.45%). Smaller shares of respondents reported relying on Faith-based services, with 44 respondents (6.13%) or other sources, with 29 respondents (4.04%). Overall, the results suggest that many respondents either depend on informal support systems or do not seek out services at all, while formal providers are utilized by a smaller portion of the population.

4.2 Rely on Faith-Based Organizations for Services

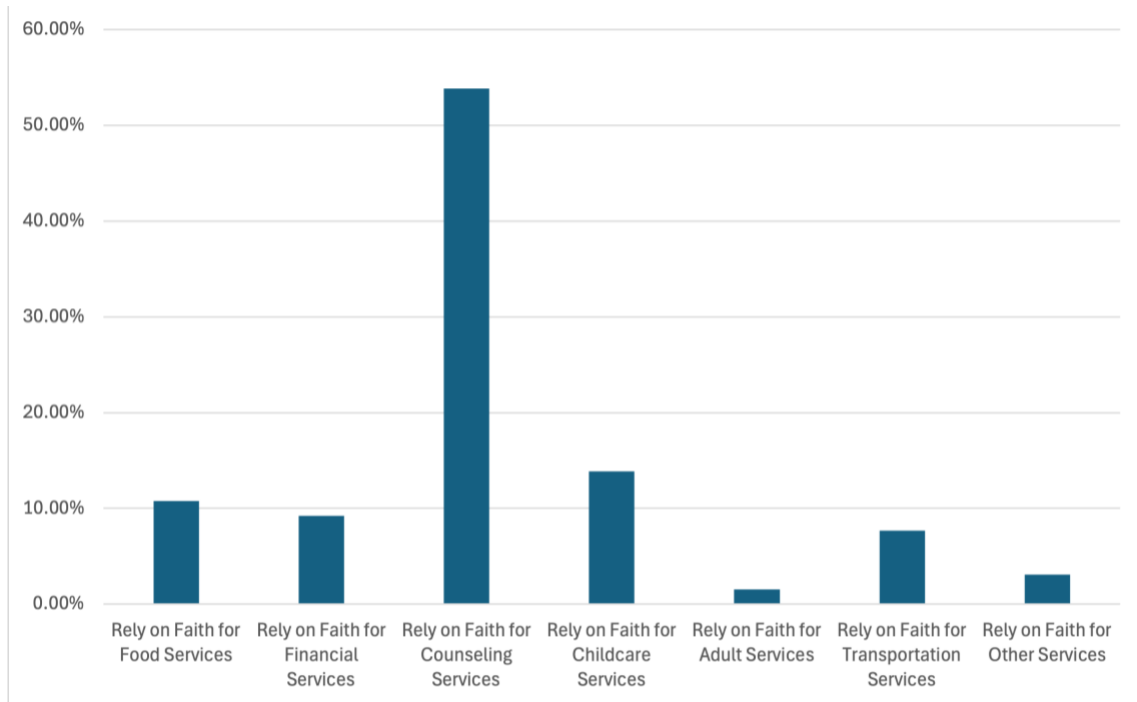


Figure 4.2 presents the types of services respondents seek through faith-based organizations. An overall total of 65 respondents answered this question. Counseling services presented with the largest sample with 35 respondents (53.85%), considerably exceeding other categories. Childcare was sought out by 9 respondents (13.85%) and 7 respondents (10.77%) reported relying on faith for food services. The remaining service types, including financial, transportation, adult, and other services, were reported by relatively few respondents. These findings suggest that faith-based organizations are primarily used for counseling related support, with more limited use across other service areas.

4.3 Rely on Family for Services

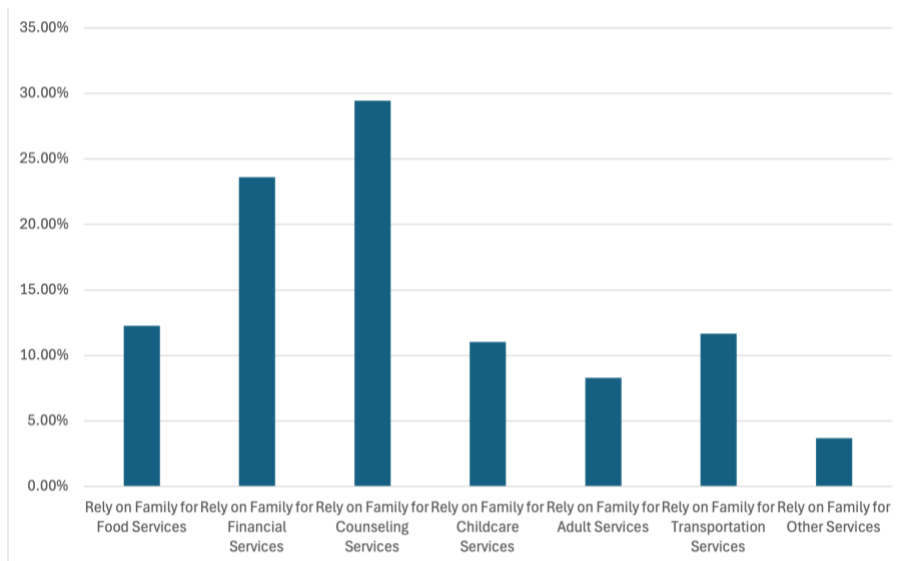


Figure 4.3 shows the types of services respondents seek through family support. In total, 326 respondents answered this question. The most common service was counseling, reported by 96 respondents (29.45%), followed by financial support, reported by 77 respondents (23.62%). Smaller amounts of respondents reported utilizing food services, transportation services, childcare services, adult services, and other services were reported less frequently. This pattern suggests that family networks play a central role in meeting a range of needs, particularly those related to counseling and financial assistance.

4.4 Rely on Nonprofits for Services

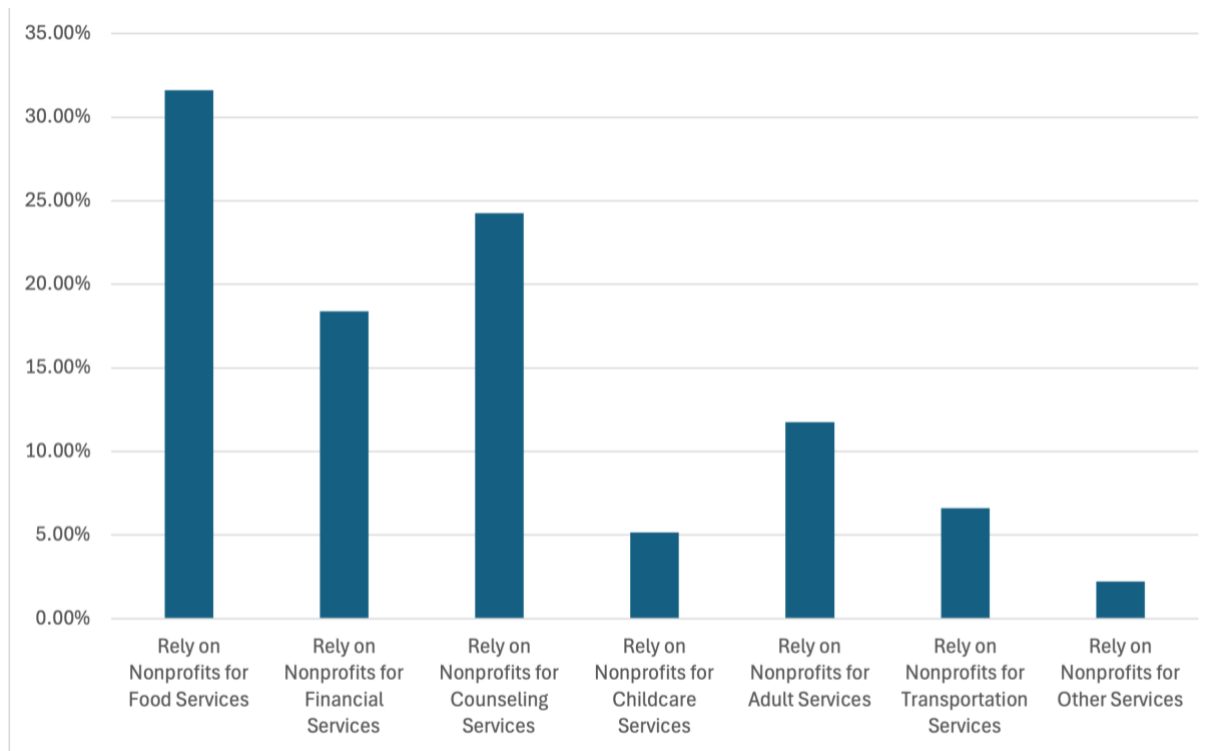


Figure 4.4 illustrates the types of services respondents seek from nonprofit organizations. A total of 136 participants responded to this question. Food services accounted for the largest share, as 43 respondents (31.62%) reported relying on nonprofits for food services. Counseling also is a notable category with 33 respondents (24.26%) reported utilizing nonprofit counseling services, alongside financial services with 25 respondents (18.38%) utilizing nonprofit financial services. Services such as childcare, adults, transportation, and other services were used less frequently amongst nonprofit organizations. Overall, nonprofit organizations appear to be most commonly utilized for basic needs, especially food assistance, while also providing support in additional areas at lower levels.

4.5 Rely on Government for Services

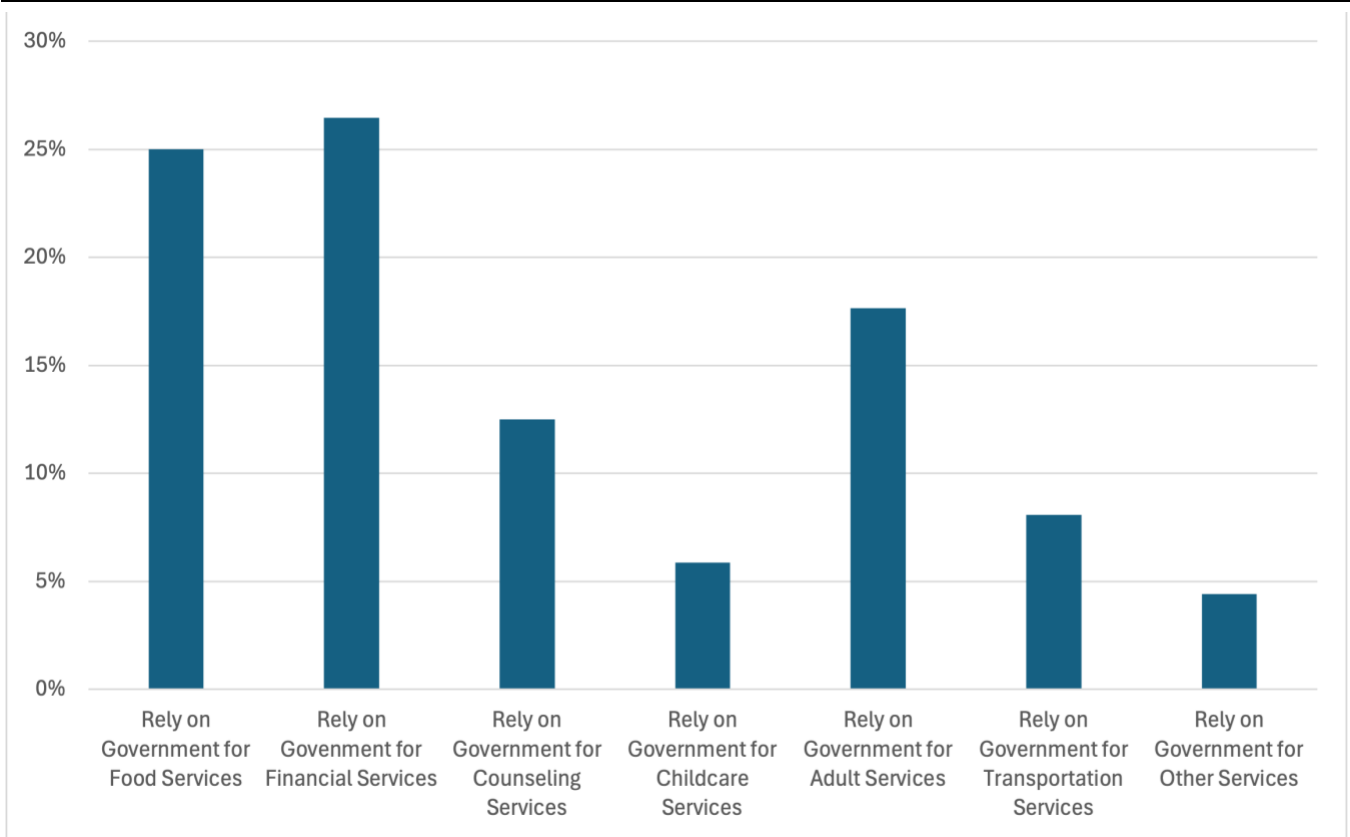


Figure 4.5 presents the types of services respondents seek from government sources. A total of 136 respondents answered this question. The most common services were financial services, reported by 36 respondents (26.47%), and food services, reported by 34 respondents (25%). A smaller but notable share of respondents reported adult services, with 24 respondents (17.65%). Fewer respondents reported counseling, transportation, childcare, and other services. These results suggest that government services are primarily used to address financial and basic needs, with less reliance on other types of assistance.

4.6 Respondents Who Do Not Seek Services

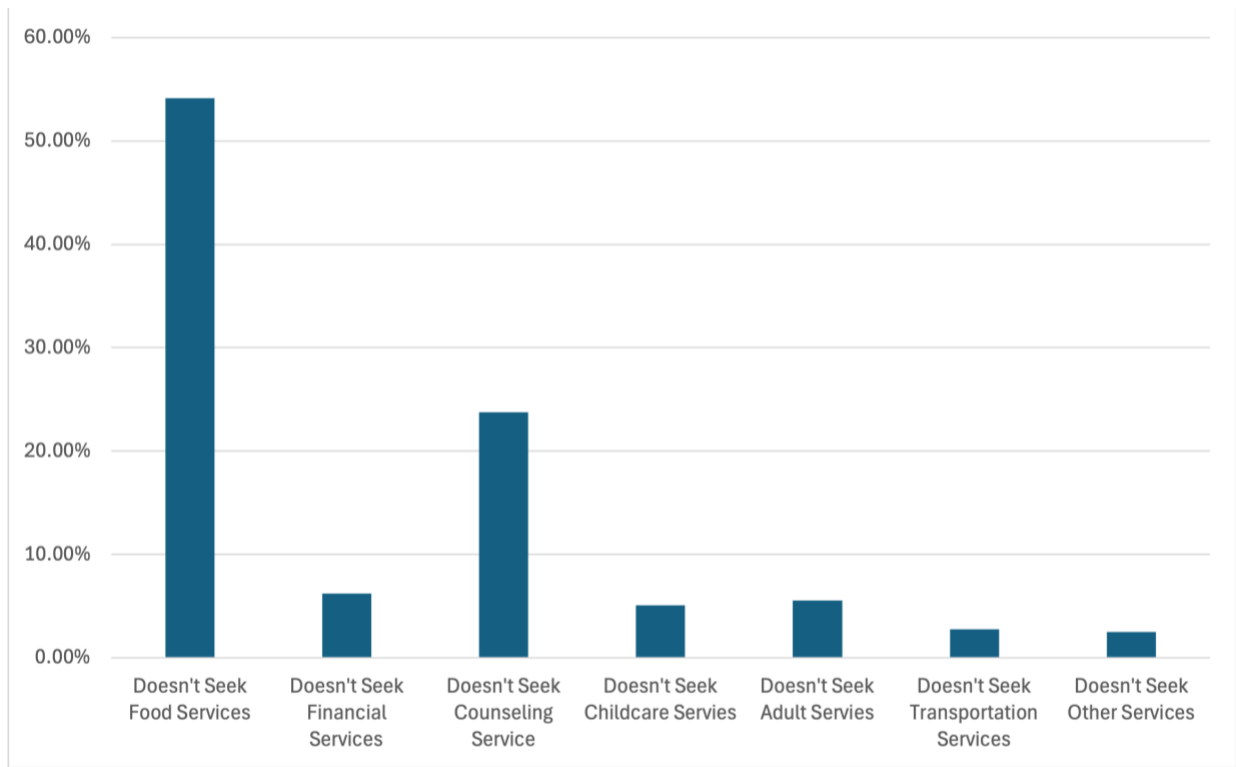


Figure 4.6 displays the types of services respondents reported not seeking. Overall, 434 respondents answered this question. Food services accounted for the largest category among those not sought, with 235 respondents (54.15%) reported not seeking food services. Counseling services were also not sought out at a notable level, with 103 respondents (23.73%) reported not seeking counseling services. All other service categories, including financial, childcare, adult, transportation, and other services were reported at lower levels. This pattern indicates that certain services, particularly those related to food and counseling, are more commonly not pursued, while other types of services are less frequently avoided.

Overall, the findings suggest that respondents more commonly relied on informal support systems (particularly family) than on formal service providers. Among formal sources, government and nonprofit services were used more frequently than faith-based organizations, though usage varied by service type. Additionally, a substantial portion of respondents reported not seeking certain services, especially those related to food and counseling services. These patterns highlight differences in how respondents access support and suggest that both availability and preference may influence service use.

V. Summary and Conclusions

By Kristina LaPlant

This section synthesizes findings from the preceding sections of the report, drawing on aggregate analysis to identify the broadest patterns in La Crosse County residents' awareness, access, and evaluation of county services, as well as their trust in local government and service-seeking behavior. We conclude with strategic recommendations and directives for future research.

Summary Assessment

Overall, awareness of La Crosse County services was highest for more universally utilized or visible services. County Libraries, WIC, and Emergency Services were the most widely recognized, with awareness exceeding 90% across each. Awareness was considerably lower for more specialized services, particularly ISRS, which fewer than half of respondents had heard of. Across nearly all services, the most common reason for non-use was a simple lack of need, suggesting that low utilization does not always indicate a service delivery problem. However, awareness and eligibility concerns emerged as the most frequently cited barriers among those who did use services, pointing to a consistent gap in public communication and outreach across multiple departments.

Figure 5.1 Percentage of Respondents Who Used Each Service and Reported at Least One Barrier

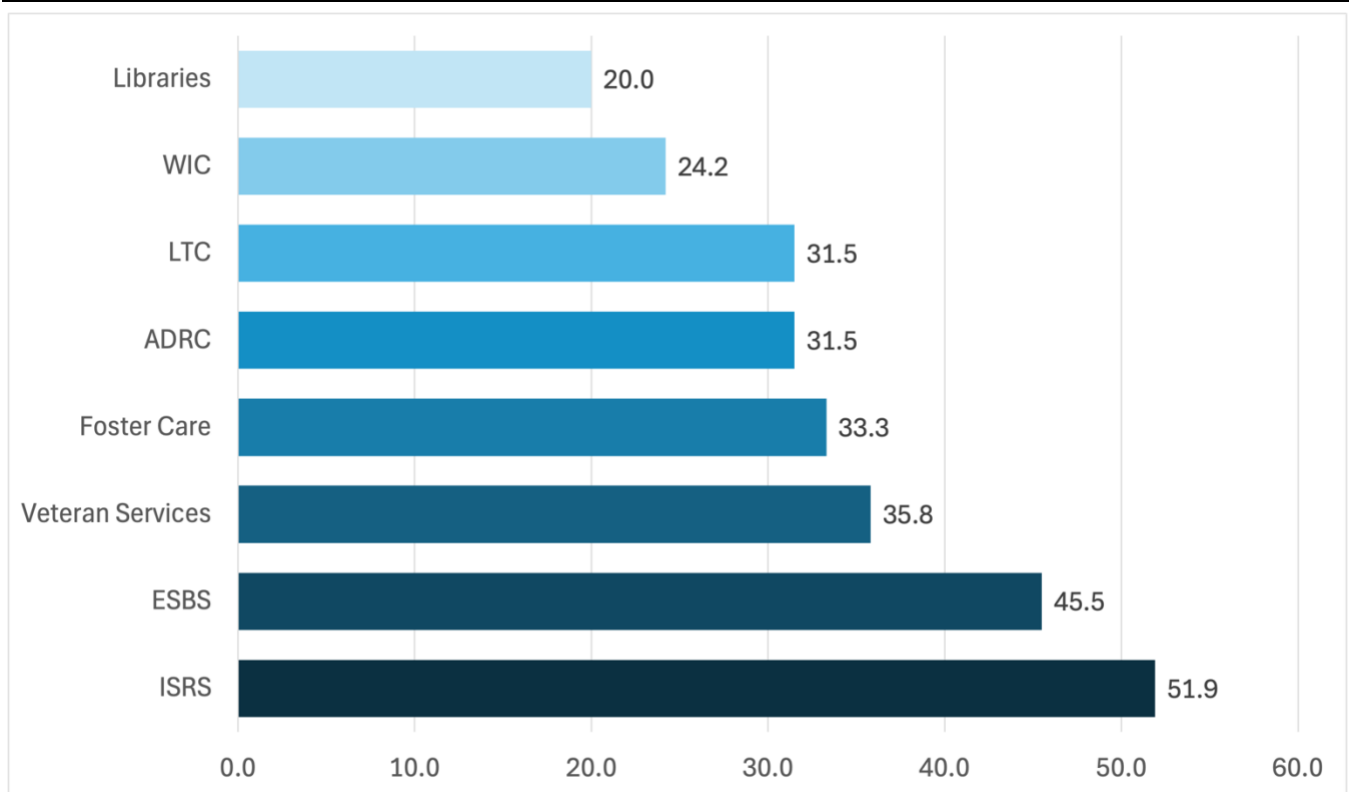
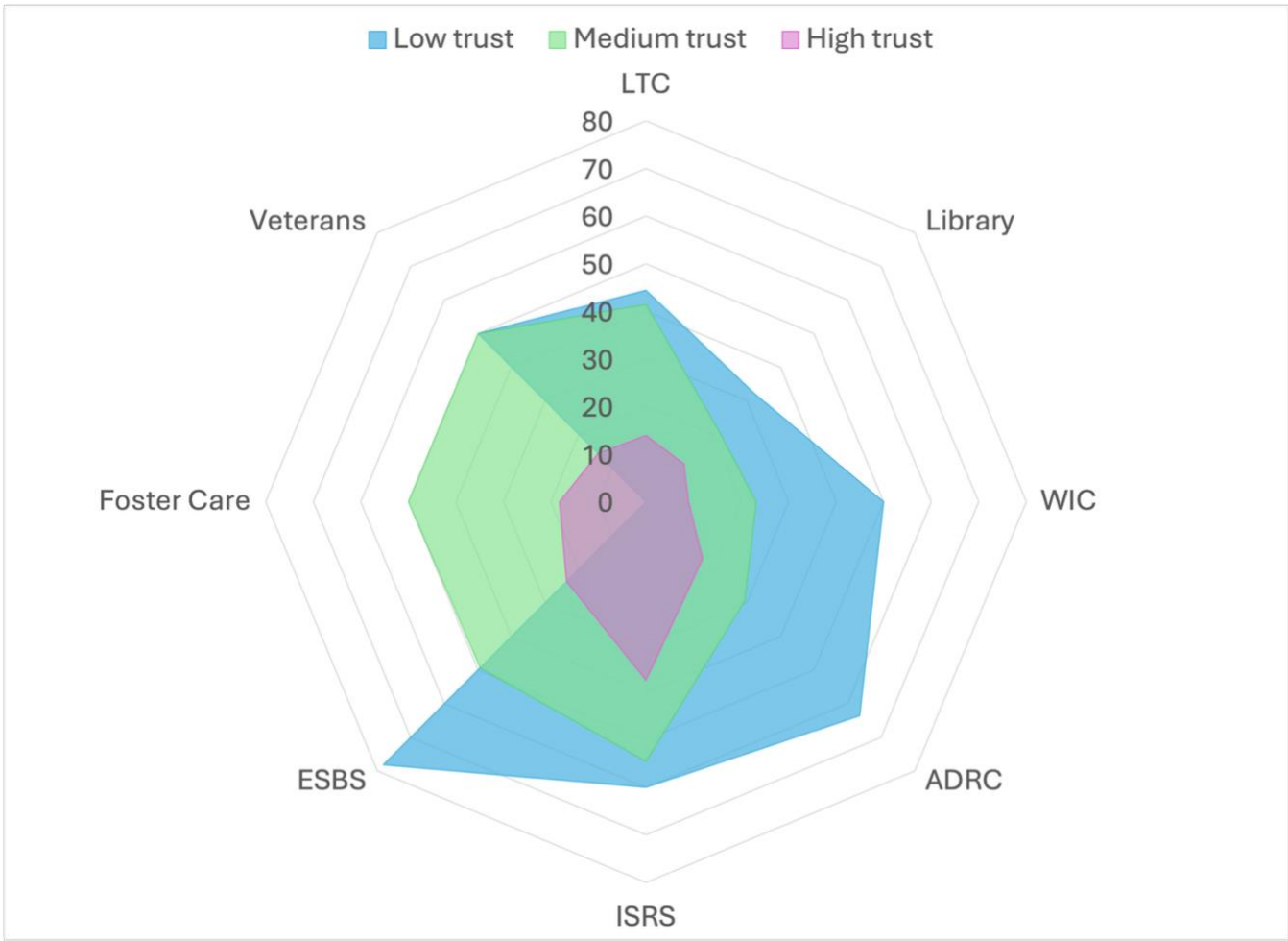


Figure 5.1 presents the percentage of respondents who used each service and reported at least one barrier to access. The data reveal a clear pattern: more specialized, needs-based services, particularly ISRS (51.9%) and ESBS (45.5%), had the highest barrier rates among users, while more universally accessible services like County Libraries (20.0%) and WIC (24.2%) had comparatively lower rates. This is an important finding because it suggests that the residents who most need county support, those seeking mental health, recovery, and economic assistance, are also the most likely to encounter obstacles in accessing it. In other words, barrier rates are not randomly distributed across services; they are concentrated precisely where vulnerability is highest.

Figure 5.2 Percentage of Respondents Experiencing Service Barriers by Trust



Figures 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4 extend this analysis by examining whether barrier rates varied by trust in local government, caregiver status, and household income, respectively. Figure 5.2 shows a consistent pattern across services: respondents with lower trust in county government reported higher rates of barriers than those with medium or high trust. This relationship is particularly pronounced for ISRS and ESBS, and suggests that barriers to access and distrust in government may be mutually reinforcing: residents who struggle to access services may become more distrustful

of government, while those who already distrust government may be less likely to seek help or navigate bureaucratic processes.

Figure 5.3 Percentage of Respondents Experiencing Service Barriers by Caregiver Status

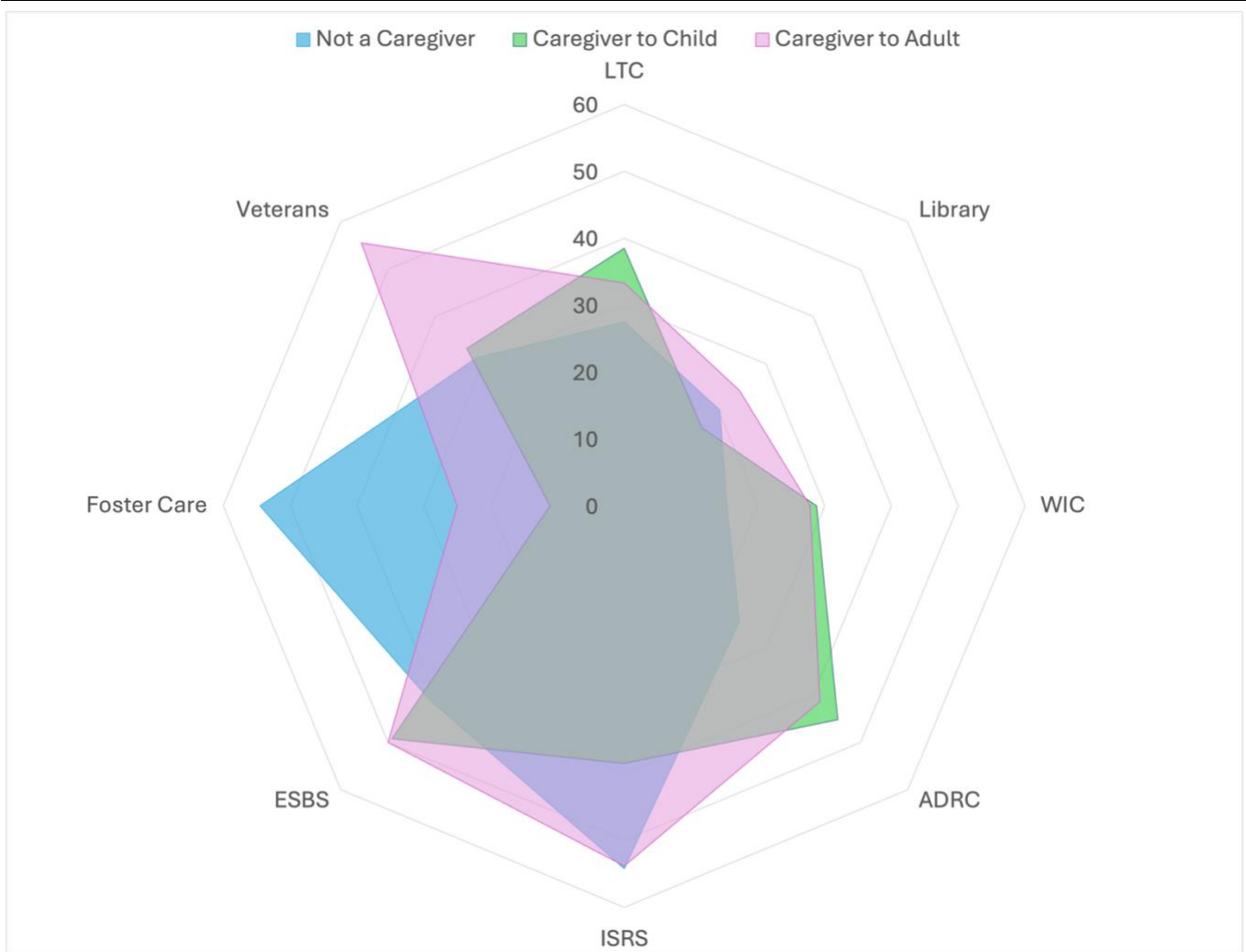


Figure 5.3 reveals that caregivers, particularly those caring for adults, tended to report higher barrier rates across most services compared to non-caregivers, with notable differences in ISRS, ESBS, and Veterans Services. This finding highlights that caregiving responsibilities may compound the difficulty of accessing services, and that this population may warrant targeted outreach. Finally,

Figure 5.4 Percentage of Respondents Experiencing Service Barriers by Income

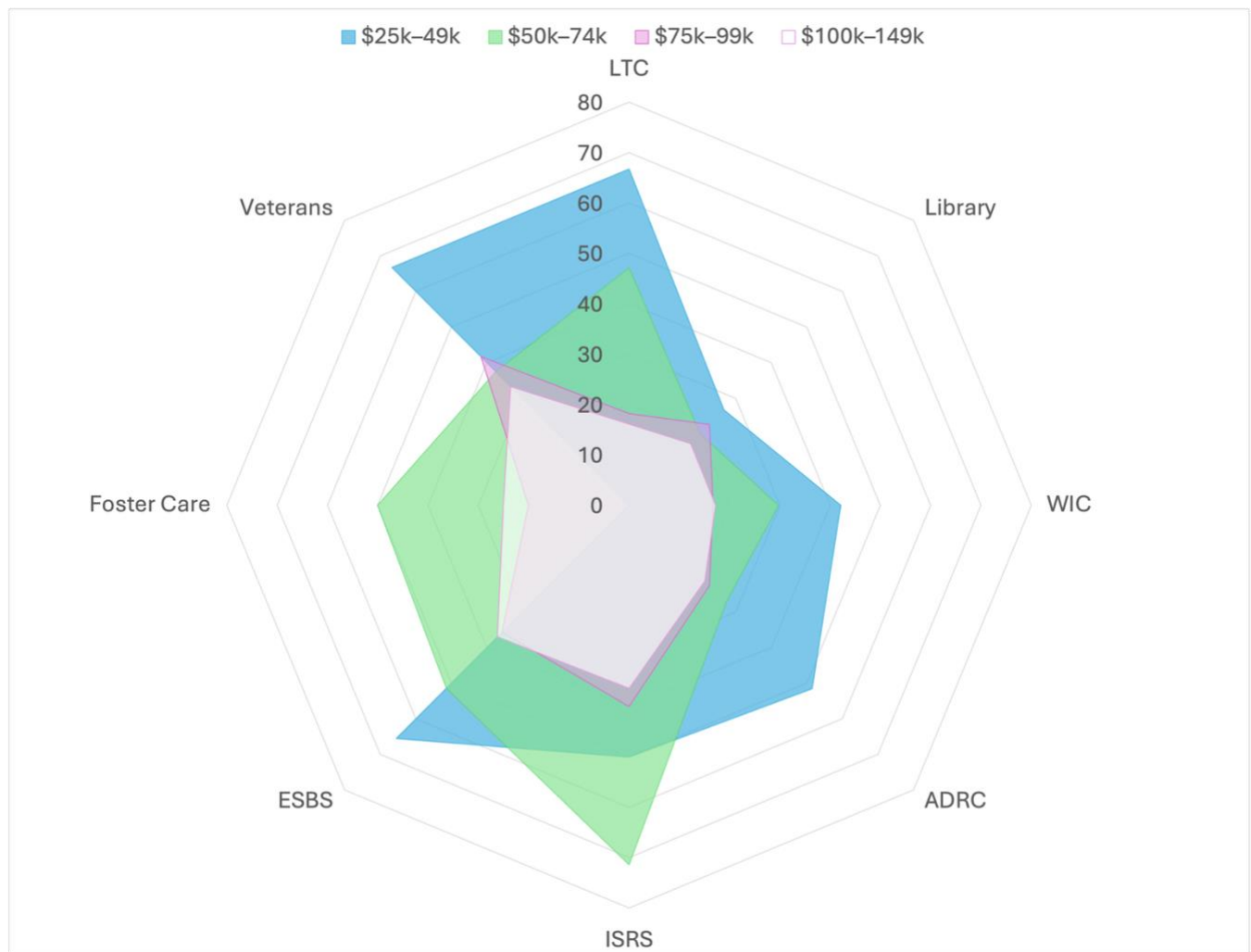


Figure 5.4 illustrates that lower-income respondents (particularly those in the \$25k–\$49k range) consistently reported higher barrier rates across nearly all services compared to higher-income respondents. This pattern reinforces a troubling dynamic: the residents with the greatest financial need are simultaneously the most likely to face obstacles in accessing the very services designed to support them.

Taken together, these summary analyses paint a coherent and concerning picture. Barriers to county services are not evenly distributed across the population they fall disproportionately on lower-income residents, caregivers, and those with diminished trust in local government. These are also the populations least likely to be well-represented in this sample given the demographic skews noted earlier, which means the true extent of these barriers in the broader La Crosse County population may be even greater than these data suggest. Addressing these disparities should be a priority for the county as it considers how to improve service delivery and outreach going forward

Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings of this report offer La Crosse County a valuable baseline understanding of how residents perceive, access, and experience county services. Taken as a whole, the data suggest that while many residents are aware of and satisfied with county services, meaningful gaps persist, particularly among those who are most likely to need them. The following recommendations are offered based on the patterns identified throughout this report.

1. Invest in Targeted Outreach for Low-Awareness Services

Services such as ISRS, ESBS, and Veterans Services had notably lower awareness and familiarity rates compared to more visible services like Libraries and WIC. The county should consider investing in dedicated public awareness campaigns for these services, particularly through social media, which proved to be the most cost-effective and high-reach recruitment channel in this study. Outreach efforts should be designed with plain language, and should clearly communicate eligibility requirements, as awareness and eligibility concerns were the most consistently reported barriers across the report.

2. Prioritize Accessibility for Vulnerable Populations

The aggregate analyses in Section V make clear that lower-income residents, caregivers, and those with low trust in government disproportionately experience barriers to service access. The county should examine whether current service delivery models, including hours of operation, physical locations, appointment systems, and communication channels, adequately serve these populations. Particular attention should be paid to ISRS and ESBS, which had the highest barrier rates of any services examined in this report.

3. Modernize Digital Infrastructure

Multiple sections of this report surfaced concerns about the county's website and online resources, particularly in Long-Term Care and ESBS. An outdated or difficult-to-navigate website creates a meaningful barrier for residents trying to learn about or access services independently. The county should audit its digital presence across all departments and prioritize improvements to usability, accessibility, and the clarity of eligibility information.

4. Address Trust as a Structural Issue

The finding that low trust in county government is associated with higher rates of service barriers, and vice versa, suggests that trust and access are interconnected challenges that cannot be addressed in isolation. The county should consider structured opportunities for community engagement and feedback that go beyond surveys, such as town halls, community advisory groups, or participatory budgeting initiatives. Demonstrating responsiveness to resident concerns is one of the most effective ways to rebuild trust over time.

5. Continue and Expand This Research

This survey represents an important first step, but the sample's demographic skews toward older, higher-income, more educated, and predominantly white respondents limit the generalizability of these findings. Future iterations of this survey should prioritize reaching underrepresented populations, potentially through partnerships with community organizations that serve lower-income residents, communities of color, and non-English speakers. Expanding the survey to include these voices would produce a more complete and equitable picture of how La Crosse County services are experienced across the full diversity of its population.