



2024 Rural Issues Survey

Each year, the Rural Maryland Council (RMC) surveys its membership to identify issues for further discussion, set legislative and funding priorities and to set strategic goals for the organization. The survey was distributed on-line with access for non-members through the Council's website, rural.maryland.gov, and at in-person events around the State.

The Council asked five basic questions on issues impacting agriculture, infrastructure, economic development, community development and health. The Council also requested input on additional issues. Respondents have the option of offering additional comments or commentary.

The Council conducted the survey during the summer of 2024, distributing the survey in July with responses due in August. A total of 68 responses were received by the deadline.

Highest Responses

Maintaining existing businesses and recruiting new employers with good paying jobs received the most responses at 42 responses, 62% of respondents.

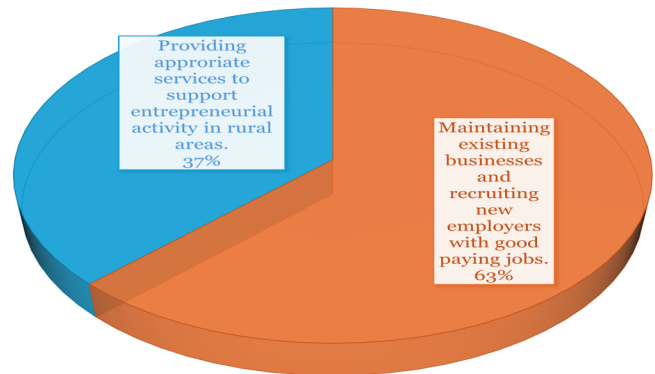
Responding to poverty and providing assistance to low-income families was the top response under community development at 31 responses, 46%.

Planning for residential growth that includes affordable housing but discourages sprawl was the top response under infrastructure at 30 responses, 45% of respondents.

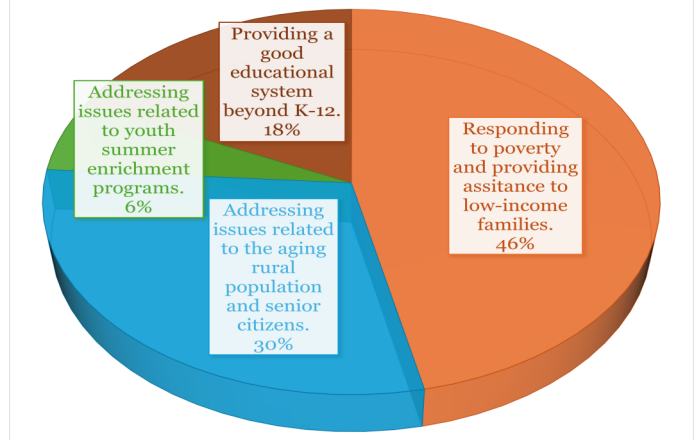
For health, **making health care more accessible and affordable** received 29 responses, 43%.

For agriculture, **preserving and conserving farm and forest land** received the most responses at 26 responses, 38% of respondents. Just under, **keeping and making farming profitable** received 25 responses, 37%.

WHAT IS YOUR TOP RURAL ISSUE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT?



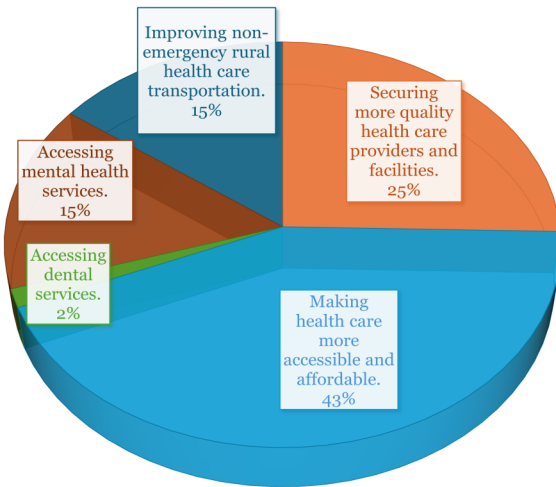
WHAT IS YOUR TOP RURAL ISSUE FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT?



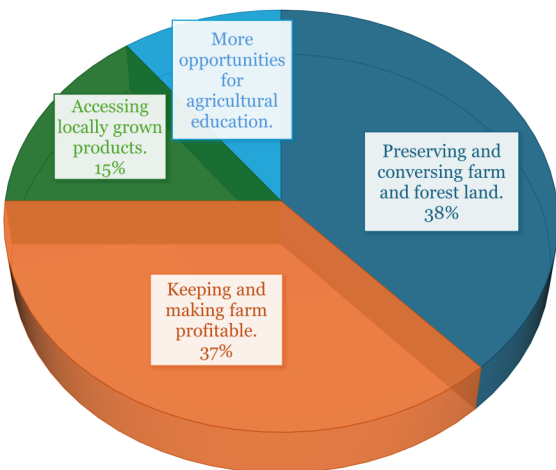
WHAT IS YOUR TOP RURAL ISSUE FOR INFRASTRUCTURE?



WHAT IS YOUR TOP RURAL ISSUE IN HEALTH CARE?



WHAT IS YOUR TOP RURAL ISSUE FOR AGRICULTURE?



Response Geographics:

Survey responses came from all four regions of Maryland, but primarily featured counties from Eastern and Western Maryland.

Additional Issues of Concern:

Responders were asked two additional questions which they could write in their own responses, those questions were “Were there any additional priorities mentioned above that you feel are important?” and “Were there any additional priorities not mentioned above that you feel are important?”

Affordable housing, or the lack thereof, was the most re-occurring write-in response received. The shortage is directly affecting communities, causing worsened economic constraints or overall population decline. In addition, many responders stressed issues with: education, transportation, skill gaps, crime, healthcare, substance abuse, job opportunity, generational poverty, and collaboration of multilevel government.

“HOUSING. HOUSING. HOUSING. We need affordable housing.”

“From a higher education perspective, we struggle to find potential students for the skilled trades, even when tuition isn't a barrier. Transportation to our rural campus is a major issue in getting unemployed folks the training they need to secure jobs in their local communities. Also, it's hard to potential employees to also balance a family demands and current employment to upskill themselves.”

“Enable the growth of agriculture and food systems to enhance farmer incomes, improve rural quality of life, and provide high quality agricultural products to Marylanders.”

“The current pay scale and the cost of housing are not in anyway compatible. It is very difficult for a young person to find safe, affordable housing.”

“Ag education for our young people grades K-12 needs to be a priority. Many of these youngsters do not have a direct connection to agriculture that they can learn from in today's world. Some of them will certainly grow to become community leaders and they will be part of decisions on taxes, regulations, ordinances, legislation and the like that will involve agriculture. How can our leaders support us and our industry if they know nothing about us and our industry. I think it was wise in past years to include aquaculture and forestry as part of the agriculture world. These components too are sometimes likely to be overcome with regulations and such that do not benefit either the producer or the consumer or the natural resource we accept stewardship of.”

-2024 Rural Issues Survey written comments