



Town of Rockport, Maine  
Climate Action Grant:  
Social Vulnerability Assessment for  
Community Resilience  
August 2024



Prepared by  
Beech Hill Research LLC



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# Executive Summary

Rockport is conducting a multi-prong vulnerability assessment funded by the state Community Resilience Partnership to inform town actions in response to climate change. This Social Vulnerability Assessment is about people: **who is more vulnerable, what they are experiencing, and who to involve and prioritize in plans and actions.** It is based on public data and stakeholder interviews, and written for everyone – Town staff, boards, committees, residents, local businesses and organizations – working toward resilience.

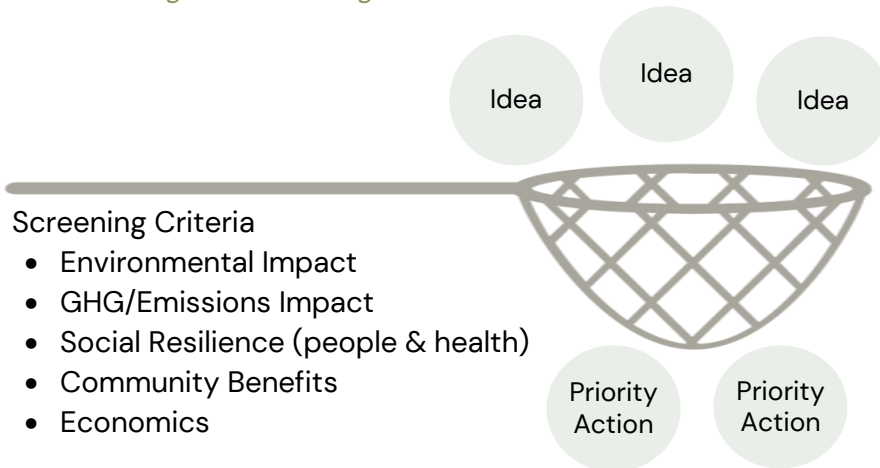
Social Vulnerability findings include:

1. Rockport has similar demographics and housing pressures as Maine overall. **The residents of Rockport are neither as high-income nor old (yet) as some people assume.** Housing and food insecurity are an increasing concern, though often invisible – placing working families and health-vulnerable neighbors at higher risk from climate and other disruptions.
2. **Knox County is in the midst of a rapid and transformative shift in the age distribution.** Climate change compounds not only the health vulnerabilities of aging but the need for healthcare, home repairs and energy upgrades. If the local workforce shrinks as Rockport ages, this may threaten community resilience.
3. **Housing insecurity is a climate vulnerability.** Buying and renting in Camden, Rockport and Rockland is increasingly out-of-reach for families at all income levels. Frontline workers who can't find housing may seek jobs elsewhere, constraining the healthcare system, city and emergency services, and businesses.
4. **Sea level rise and harbor impacts weren't top concerns among representatives of vulnerable populations.** Stakeholders talked more about (a) extreme heat and cold, (b) extreme rain and inland flooding, and (c) storms and power outages, especially for home-bound seniors, people in older homes or without A/C. Some pointed out agricultural impacts.
5. **Town and community partners sense that some groups and areas of town are under-represented in meetings, boards and committees.** Without their representation, actions and investments may not match what's needed for community-wide resilience.

## WHO TO INVOLVE AND PRIORITIZE IN DECISIONS AND INVESTMENTS?

Rockport residents, businesses, nonprofits and Town departments are already implementing a range of mitigation and adaptation strategies. As Rockport considers further resilience actions – and expands who is included in planning – social resilience is one of several factors to consider, alongside environmental or emissions impacts, cost, and more (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Screening Framework for Climate Actions



We propose three questions to screen climate actions for **social resilience**:

1. Who does the action serve? (including people or natural systems)  
Among people: What Priority Populations does it serve?
2. How were Priority Populations involved in developing the strategy/action?
3. What needs or vulnerabilities [of Priority Populations] does it address?  
How will it increase resilience of Priority Populations?

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOCIAL RESILIENCE

While specific climate strategies and actions are to-be-determined, several ideas for social resilience may apply across strategies, including but not limited to:

1. **Proactively invite a representative mix of residents into public processes** – seek out renters, frontline workers, parents, and others from all areas of town for public input and boards/committees.
2. **Work with regional partners and nonprofits** to share town events and invite/recruit community members to get involved.
3. **Find and promote programs and partnerships for safe and healthy aging**, including home repairs, energy upgrades, meals, transportation and social connections.
4. **Continue pursuing all mechanisms and partnerships to increase the housing supply**, including rental and owner-occupied units, and water/wastewater infrastructure.
5. **Support and strengthen local food production and distribution networks**, ranging from more visible or pop-up food share sites to incentives for agricultural production.
6. **Don't give up on public transportation and paratransit** – Continue evaluating the need and opportunities for alternative transportation.
7. With public input, **find a balance between mitigation, adaptation and resilience investments**.

## TERMINOLOGY

**Adaptive Capacity** refers to the social and technical resources, skills and strategies that are collectively available for individuals and communities to build resilience to climate change hazards.

**Climate Adaptation** is the suite of responses to prepare, adapt, respond and recover to climate change – for example, what homeowners, businesses or a town do about the increased risks associated with flooding or storm surge.

**Climate Mitigation** refers to a range of human interventions to reduce the rate of climate change by limiting greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere through natural processes, technological processes, or behavior change.

**Community Resilience** refers to a community’s capacity to anticipate, confront, repair and recover from a disaster. Community resilience reflects a community’s capacity to “bounce forward” after an event. While events such as hurricanes may reduce a community’s resilience, strengthening social infrastructure (the number and types of organizations that help vulnerable populations) or investing in physical infrastructural improvements can increase community resilience.<sup>1</sup>

**Priority Populations** are people, workers communities and businesses to prioritize in climate action, either because of their vulnerability to climate change impacts, limited resources or capacity to respond and adapt, or because of intersections between these vulnerabilities.<sup>2</sup>

**Social Vulnerability** relates to the circumstances of a person or community that affect their capacity to anticipate, confront, repair, and recover from the effects of a disaster.<sup>3</sup> Factors could include age, income, health, family/social supports, language, housing conditions, transportation access, financial resources or stressors, job security, and more.

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<sup>1</sup> Johnson, Eileen, Elizabeth Herz, and Jeremy Bell. [What is Social Vulnerability?](#) Developed for the Social Resilience Project (2021).

<sup>2</sup> Source: Maine Climate Council, [Equity Subcommittee Final Report, March 2023](#).

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

# 1. Introduction

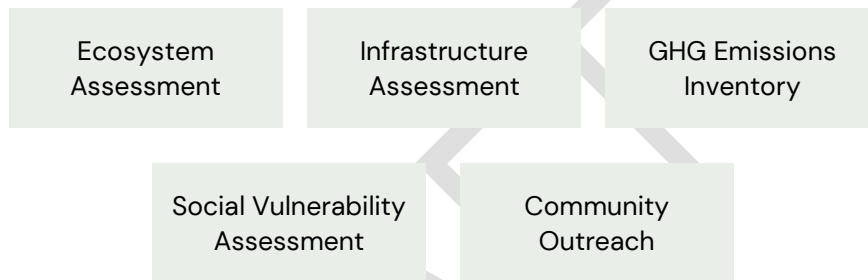
## Community Resilience through Climate Action

*Maine Won't Wait* (MWW) emphasizes community-wide resilience to respond, adapt and thrive in a changing climate,<sup>4</sup> and equity in state and local climate action climate response.

In 2022, the Rockport Conservation Commission (RCC) applied for and received a \$50k grant from the Community Resilience Partnership (CRP) to collect and synthesize baseline data from a variety of sources to identify and communicate climate vulnerable infrastructure, populations and ecosystems. Community input (a public meeting at the Opera House in 2022, and discussions between the RCC and the Town) informed grant activities.

The CRP grant funds several assessments and community outreach.

*Figure 2. 2023-2024 Rockport Community Action Grant Activities*



The assessments will be used to generate discussion and prioritize Town efforts on climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience. Outcomes may include but are not limited to: (a) Rockport Climate Action Plan, (b) Resilience chapter of the Comprehensive Plan, (c) applying for grants or funding.

## Social Vulnerability Assessment Approach

In line with the CRP (Figure 1), the Social Vulnerability Assessment (SVA) identifies (a) socially vulnerable and Priority Populations, (b) the challenges and climate impacts they (and we) are experiencing, and (c) Community Resilience considerations for Rockport. Sources include:

- **In-depth interviews with health, service and housing providers and Town staff** (16 people) to understand who is at greatest risk from adverse impacts from climate change and extreme weather, why, and potential actions.
- **Demographic, health, housing and transportation data** from national and state sources.
- Analysis of **Rockport's Tax Assessment data** to create indicators and counts of property and ownership characteristics and conditions.
- State and other town's **reports on climate vulnerability and priority populations**

<sup>4</sup> Source: Maine Climate Council, [Equity Subcommittee Final Report, March 2023](#).

## Priority Populations in Rockport

*Maine Won't Wait* considers individuals, households, workers, businesses and communities who will be “first and worst” impacted – because they face disproportionate impacts or have fewer resources to prepare, respond or adapt to climate change – to be Priority Populations. Through in-depth interviews, service providers and Town staff frequently identified the following groups as **Priority Populations** for Rockport to consider, involve and serve through climate action:

*Table 1. Priority Populations for Rockport to Consider in Climate Action*



**Elders of all income levels** – particularly those living alone or with limited mobility, reduced capacity for storm response/recovery, or ability to maintain or fix homes.



**Essential workers** in healthcare, schools, emergency response and services are unable to take open jobs due to a housing shortage. Rockport workers may endure long commutes and miss work during extreme weather.



**Housing-insecure workers, families and youth** juggling housing search/stress and transportation costs. They are more likely to live in substandard housing that may exacerbate (a) health sensitivities and (b) rising energy costs.



**Low-income and fixed-income residents** making trade-offs among housing, energy costs, transportation and health. Often live in inefficient and unsafe homes, with higher utility bills and deferred maintenance.



**Teens and young adults** experiencing the mental health burden of unstable housing, food insecurity, and/or climate uncertainty.



**Farmers and farmworkers** facing production loss from prolonged rain or drought, increased infrastructure repair/replacement costs, and pressure for farmland conversion – risking local food production and farmer/farmwork economy stability and health.

Image Sources: The Noun Project (see Appendix for credits)

While the above experiences were mentioned most frequently, Rockport is home to people and businesses with each of the characteristics or experiences identified by the state as Priority Populations.

## Invisible Experiences

Numerous stakeholders talked about the invisibility of some people's experiences in Rockport:

### **Aging at home** in older homes (especially elders living alone):

*"A lot of our patients are in and out of the hospital and we are seeing them on and off, you know, for years and years."*



### **Unsafe housing or heating**

*"And then you have folks living in what's just really not adequate housing...homes that are not outfitted for four-season living, with inadequate heat or they don't have heat or electric - they might be heating with propane tanks and things like that. So again, not really visible, people don't see it."*



*"A lot of what we see for folks who are living in poverty are...homes in need of structural repair...a driveway or front steps that are not safe, flooring that is peeling up...A common one that we see challenges with is cooling and heating."*

### **Lower-income community members**

*"The under-resourced community is invisible - people don't see it. There are some groups that are focused on it, but everyone else doesn't even notice."*



*"We have folks who are lower income, certainly in Rockport."*

### **Housing insecurity** and homelessness (especially teens and young adults)

*"A lot of the youth that we serve...are housing insecure rather than homeless...couch surfing...living in places that are unfit for habitation...but we are seeing more people living outside."*



*"And then we do have folk living in cars, vehicles, for sure. And depending, you know, where they're parking, you might not notice them either."*

Chapter 3 contains more on these topics.

Note: All quotes in this report are from stakeholder interviews, unless noted otherwise.



## Climate Impacts and Consequences

Community service providers and Town staff each described how climate change and extreme weather are impacting their constituents. The table below describes climate impacts and experiences that were top-of-mind among community organizations.<sup>5,6</sup>

*Table 2. Top-of-Mind Climate Impacts (Among Stakeholders)*



**Extreme storms and flooding** – bringing heavy rain that can flood basements, wash out roads and infrastructure, impair travel, and cause erosion and run-off.



**Housing affordability and insecurity** was mentioned by nearly all stakeholders as either a result of climate change (e.g., pressure from immigration) or a community vulnerability.



**Deferred home maintenance** – of, for example, a basement, roof, trees, or weatherization that results in increased storm damage, exposure to environmental contaminants (e.g., mold/mildew) and impaired accessibility.



**Rising energy costs** (and home energy demand) – paired with older, inefficient heating/air systems that incur high use costs may lead to unsafe heating practices or equipment (and increased fire or health risks).



**Business disruptions/closures** (during extreme weather or from storm damage) – impacting shift and service workers and access of essential services (e.g., from building damage or impaired travel conditions).



**Food supply disruptions** – occurring when storms delay out-of-state food deliveries and heavy rain or drought reduce local food production.



**Temperature stress** (extreme heat and cold) – impacting people with health vulnerabilities, heat-exposed workers, and those living in inefficient and older homes (compounded by rising energy costs and lack of A/C).



**Mental health** – impacts resulting from climate change concerns and loss associated with extreme weather, and often exacerbated by stressors of rising housing and energy costs and housing insecurities. Youth and socially-isolated elders experience greater vulnerability.

Image source: The Noun Project (see Appendix for credits)

<sup>5</sup> This is not intended as a scientific ranking of climate impacts, but rather observations from community organization leaders.

<sup>6</sup> Less-commonly mentioned were shorter winters, tick-borne illnesses and coastal/harbor buildings.

These impacts align with experiences highlighted by statewide climate resilience efforts and in several coastal community vulnerability assessments or plans.<sup>7</sup>

## Climate Change and Housing Pressure

As noted by almost all stakeholders interviewed, climate change and housing pressure are inextricably related and of top concern. Some saw climate change as one of several causal factors in increased housing costs and insecurity— that is, increased home sales and/or short-term rental conversions by out-of-state investors as a cause of high housing costs, displacement, and evictions among workers and families, pushing them into lower-quality housing and/or housing insecurity:

*“Bangor Daily News had an article that over 1/5 of home sales in Maine are going to out-of-state investors because they see the lower cost of housing. Now people are also moving in here. It’s not just California...with the increasing heat on the East Coast, the other states people are moving from are Massachusetts and New York.”*

*“So, the erratic weather patterns in California coupled with the cost of living there...They look at Maine that doesn’t have any huge national disasters like California has weather-wise, and our price of housing makes it easy for them to make cash offers. And that is not the situation of the average person in Knox County, that they can make an all-cash offer.”*

Others do not attribute housing pressure directly to climate, although they see **housing as a primary vulnerability** for the community and individuals of Rockport. Without housing that is affordable for local workers and business owners, essential workers are pushed from Camden/Rockport/Rockland area schools, hospitals and businesses – increasing staffing costs, decreasing business hours and services, and posing a vulnerability in extreme weather (e.g., healthcare and emergency personnel).

*“If we can’t house those people, every business is gonna struggle to get employees. That affects everyone’s business. I mean, the hospital is one of the biggest employers around here and they struggle to get people to come up here because there’s nowhere for them to stay?”*

*“There’s a doctor, [they] just moved here from Texas, [they’re] living in a camper because [they] can’t find a house. I mean, it’s a very nice camper, but [they’re] living in a camper.”*

*“[nearby town] hired a Chief of Police who took the job and then turned it down because they couldn’t find housing.”*

Several stakeholders named workforce and affordable housing as a top priority for Rockport towards climate resilience.

In addition to housing, chapters below cover age, health, income and transportation.

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<sup>7</sup> See, for example: [Portland One Climate Future Vulnerability Assessment](#), [Kittery Climate Action Planning](#), [Freeport Climate Hazards](#), [Climate Change Impacts in Southern Maine](#).

## 2. Priority Populations and Climate Vulnerability

According to the US Census American Community Survey (ACS), Rockport is home to 3,636 people in 1,421 households.<sup>8</sup> The IRS has a similar estimate of the number of individuals represented by 2021 tax returns: 3,640 people.<sup>9</sup>

This section describes Rockport’s Priority Populations and climate vulnerability on seven dimensions:

Aging and Health	Youth and Families	Income and Poverty	Housing Costs and Supply	Home Energy Systems	Employment and Transportation	Race, Ethnicity and Language
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The US Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS) is the primary source of housing and demographic estimates. Note that all ACS estimates are based on self-report to an annual survey the Census Bureau sends to a small sample (2-4%) of addresses per year and aggregates over five-year periods. Thus **most estimates are not from a true “census” and should be interpreted as approximate estimates.**

### A. AGING AND HEALTH

Older adults and people with pre-existing health conditions are (a) more sensitive to a range of threats within and outside of their homes, (b) may have reduced ability to prepare, respond or adapt in response to natural hazards and climate change, and (c) may face multiple intersecting factors (e.g., age, home conditions, mobility).

*Table 3. Aging and Health Summary Statistics*

	Rockport Estimate	Statewide Estimate
<b>Rockport</b>		
Individuals Age 65+ <sup>a</sup>	21%	22%
Households with at least 1 person age 65+ <sup>a</sup>	38%	36%
Households with 1 person age 65+ living alone <sup>a</sup>	11%	14%
People with Disabilities <sup>a</sup>	12%	16%
People without Health Insurance <sup>a</sup>	10%	7%
<b>Knox County</b>		
Adult Diabetes <sup>b</sup>	7.4% (county)	9.6%

<sup>8</sup> US Census American Community Survey, 5-year estimates 2018–2022.

<sup>9</sup> Source: IRS [Individual Income Tax Statistics by ZIP Code](#), 2021.

High Blood Pressure <sup>b</sup>	31% (county)	33%
Adult obesity <sup>c</sup>	31% (county)	29%
14+ days of work lost due to physical health	9.4% (county)	12.8%
Asthma ED Visits (per 100,000) <sup>b</sup>	60.8 (county) (per 100,000)	67.3 (per 100,000)
Lyme disease new cases	304.2 (county) (per 100,000)	83.8 (per 100,000)
Cardiovascular Disease deaths <sup>c</sup>	205.1 (county) (per 100,000)	193.9 (per 100,000)

<sup>a</sup> Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 5-year data 2018-2022

<sup>b</sup> Source: Maine Department of Health and Human Services Surveillance Indicators, County-at-a-Glance

<sup>c</sup> Source: Maine Department of Health and Human Services County Health Profile

While some see Rockport as an older town, **about the same number of people in Rockport are 65+ (21%) as under age 20 (20%).**<sup>10</sup>

Rockport has a similar percentage of older adults (age 65+) as the state. About 20% of older adults in Rockport live alone, comprising about 11% of all households. Stakeholders identified social isolation among elders as an additional risk factor for responding to climate change. Statewide, women age 65+ are twice as likely as men to live alone.<sup>11</sup> Social isolation is associated with poorer health outcomes, mental health and recovery after a heart attack or illness. People 65 and older are more vulnerable to heat-related illness, which is exacerbated by social isolation.<sup>10</sup>

More people in Rockport are **without health insurance** than the state (~10% vs. ~7%), though fewer households report a member **with a disability** (~12% vs. ~16%). Lacking health insurance is correlated with a range of vulnerabilities including lower income, less preventive, primary and specialty healthcare, skipping medications due to cost, and greater health consequences from air pollution. People with disabilities are less likely to have health insurance.<sup>12</sup>

Health conditions are not reported at the town level in Knox County, numerous disease indicators are similar or lower for Knox County (by a small margin) than Maine overall.<sup>13</sup> One exception is Lyme disease, with three times higher prevalence in Knox County than Maine overall. Of ticks that Rockport residents sent to University of Maine for testing (voluntary), 51% were positive for Lyme (compared with 43% in Knox and 41% statewide).<sup>14</sup>

Older adults are also more sensitive to climate change health risks due to increased likelihood of preexisting conditions.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>10</sup> US Surgeon General, [Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community](#), 2023

<sup>11</sup> [Maine Department of Health and Human Services Surveillance Indicators, County-at-a-Glance](#)

<sup>12</sup> Source: Headwaters Economics, [Populations at Risk](#)

<sup>13</sup> Source: [Maine Department of Health and Human Services County Health Profile](#)

<sup>14</sup> Source: Maine Public Health Tracking Network, [Tickborne Disease Town Data \(2016-2020\)](#).

<sup>15</sup> Source: US EPA, [Climate Change and Health of Older Adults](#)

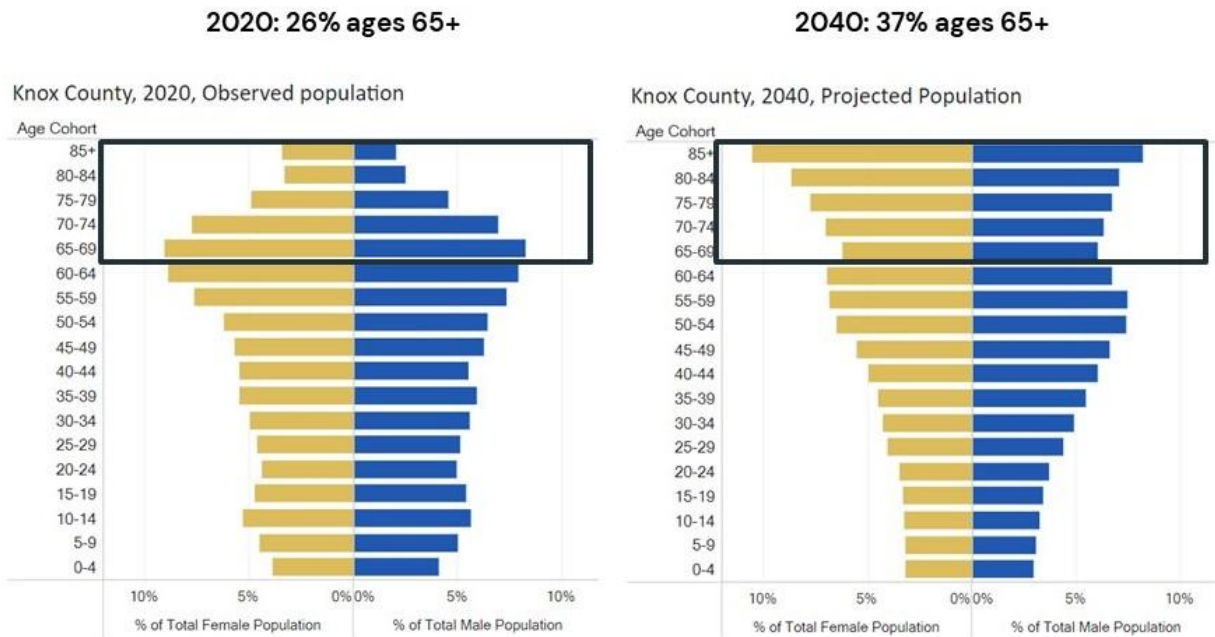
“Winter storms are always a challenge in home care because it does create a barrier to providing care to people in their homes. Of course, we can’t safely get to them. And all of those things really create a challenge for us to either get to them or for them to be able to get out to, to get emergency care and it all kind of reacts down the chain or of the health care system.”

“A lot of [older] people really don’t have the help to shovel or to clear snow and it can be a barrier to get out safely for a [medical] appointment.”

## Demographic Projections

The number of older adults living in Knox county will increase – the State Economist’s Office forecasts that the Knox County population ages 65+ will increase by 33% between 2020–2030, and an additional 3% from 2030–2040 (i.e., most of change before 2030). **Notably, our older population is growing faster** than statewide– Rockport’s population ages 65+ grew by 10% since 2010, double the statewide rate.<sup>16</sup>

Figure 2. Knox County age projections, 2020–2040  
(38% increase in adults 65+)



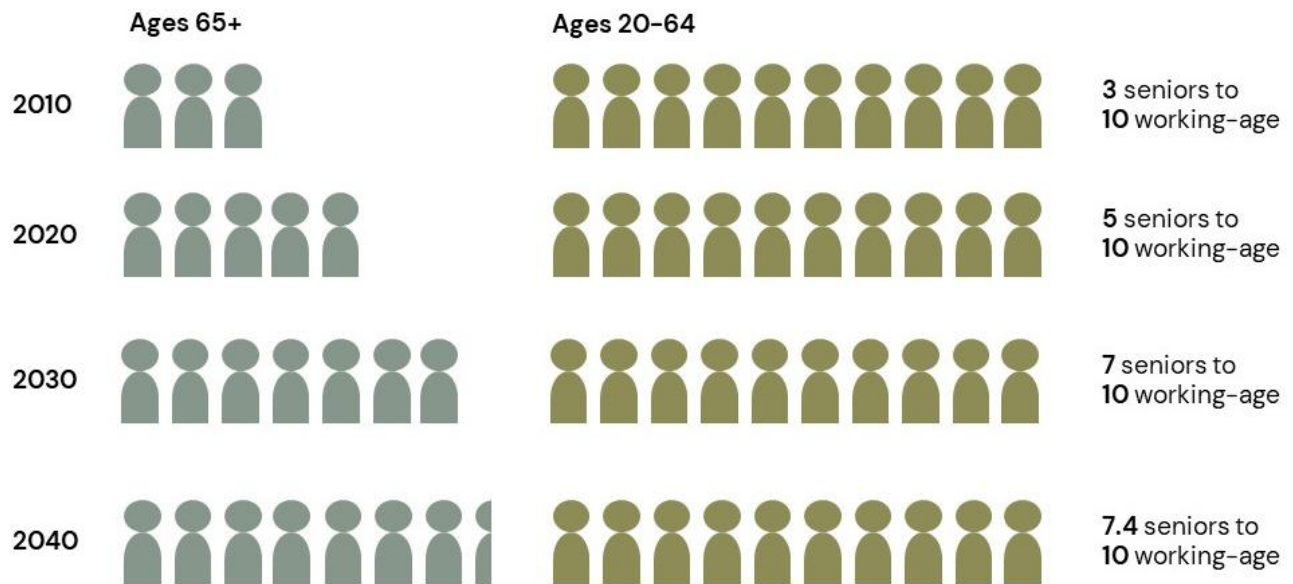
Source: Maine State Economist Office, demographic projections.

In addition to the considerations above, the shift in the distribution means fewer workers for home and health services – while healthcare and service needs will likely grow as the age distribution shifts. This underscores the importance some stakeholders noted of keeping and/or attracting essential workers. The chart below shows the “old age dependency ratio” for Knox County (town-level projections are not available).

<sup>16</sup> Source: Headwaters Economics, Populations and Risk Profile. From ACS 2017–2021 data.

*“Last year’s kindergarten enrollment dropped 40%; that’s worrisome and this year will tell us more about whether this is a trend or a blip.”*

Figure 3. Old Age Dependency Ratio, Knox County, Maine



Source: [Maine State Economist Office Population Projections](#) (June 2023) and ACS 5-year data; Beech Hill Research Analysis.

These estimates primarily reflect current residents aging – the State Economist predicts only a slight increase in Knox County’s population from 2020–2030 (1.3%). Per the State Economist: *“These projections incorporate one-time migration effects from the COVID-19 pandemic without carrying the higher rate forward indefinitely by applying pre-pandemic (2015–2019) rates to 2021 population estimates. However, caution should be used in interpreting these projections as the full extent of the demographic impacts from COVID-19 is still being explored.”*<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Maine Office of the State Economist, [Maine Population Outlook 2020 to 2030](#), June 2023.

**Climate change vulnerabilities** for aging adults and people with health conditions include:

- **Sensitivity to heat and cold** – More difficult for older adults, people with chronic illness or medications to regulate body temperature in extreme temperatures, compounded by a lack of air conditioning (or where cannot afford to run) or insufficient heating sources.<sup>18</sup>
- **Sensitivity to allergens and environmental contaminants** within and outside the home – e.g., mold, mildew, humidity, dust, pollen, browntail moth, vehicle emissions, and wildfire smoke.
- **Limited mobility** – Reliance on others for transportation and/or feel unsafe driving at night or in storms.
- **Medical access needs** – More medical appointments, compounding mobility needs in extreme weather.
- **Property maintenance and repair** – Age and health affect homeowners’ ability to maintain a property (e.g., assess or address foundation or structural damage) or fix a property after a storm (e.g., pump basement).
- **Fixed incomes** – People with disabilities and older adults on a fixed income are less able to increase spending on energy costs, food, etc. in response to weather or climate disruptions.
- **Decline in workforce** as population ages, impacting healthcare, construction/repair, emergency and other services

## B. YOUTH AND FAMILIES

Children’s and adolescents’ developing bodies make them particularly sensitive to health problems and environmental stresses associated with climate change. Living situation, family income, health care access, diet, and other factors can increase a child’s vulnerability.

*Table 4. Youth and Family Summary Statistics*

	Rockport Estimate	Statewide Estimate
Rockport		
Individuals under age 20 <sup>a</sup>	20%	21%
Individuals under age 10 <sup>a</sup>	9%	10%
Households with at least 1 child under age 18 <sup>a</sup>	27%	24%
Single parent households <sup>a</sup>	13%	17%
Average household size <sup>a</sup>	2.5	2.23
Children living below federal poverty line <sup>a</sup>	9%	11%

<sup>18</sup> Source: [US CDC, Emergency Preparedness for Older Adults](#)

Knox County		
High school graduation <sup>°</sup>	91% (county)	87%
Youth obesity rates <sup>b</sup>	12% (county)	15%
- High School students	16% (county)	15%
- Middle School students		
Youth feeling sad/hopeless for 2 weeks <sup>°</sup>		
- High School students	29.0% (county)	32.1%
- Middle School students	25.1% (county)	24.8%
Youth seriously considered suicide <sup>°</sup>		
- High School students	14.0% (county)	16.4%
- Middle School students	21.1% (county)	19.8%

<sup>a</sup> Source: ACS 5-year data, 2018–2022

<sup>b</sup> Source: [Maine CDC Knox County Health Profile](#)

<sup>°</sup> Source: [Knox County Maine Shared Community Health Needs Assessment Report 2022](#)

According to US Census data, there are 673 children under age 18 in Rockport (724 under age 20), and about 27% of households have at least 1 child (under age 18). Of households with children, 13% are led by single parents. Fewer than 10% of children are living below the poverty line; children in single female-headed households are more likely to live in poverty and experience food insecurity.<sup>19</sup>

Caring for young children incurs added expenses<sup>20</sup> and/or time constraints for parents—reducing a family’s availability of resources towards less priority needs. In addition to childcare’s impact on families, from a town perspective, this reduces the local workforce as potential employees stay home to care for children and may restrict parents’ ability to participate in town meetings, committees and planning.

### Climate Anxiety and Mental Health

Young people are experiencing disproportionate **mental health impacts** of climate anxiety or dread resulting from a variety of triggers.<sup>21</sup> Combined with the growing mental health impacts of housing insecurity on children and young adults, several stakeholders emphasized the increasing need for **mental health services within and outside of schools**.

Mental health indicators in Knox County youth are generally about the same as state levels, although suicide ideation in high school students is significantly lower in Knox County than

<sup>19</sup> Source: Headwaters Economics, [Populations at Risk](#)

<sup>20</sup> At the YMCA, 1 week of infant care is \$260/week and pre-school is \$225/week; private costs are higher.

<sup>21</sup> See studies, including: [Understanding youths’ concerns about climate change](#); [Eco-anxiety in children](#); [Anxiety and the Ecological Crisis](#)



statewide.<sup>22</sup> Stakeholders have also observed an increase in social isolation in youth spurred by the COVID pandemic, which may coincide with ongoing mental health issues.

One high school student (and member of the Wind Planners) shared their perspective:

*“Kids are thinking about climate change. A majority of people know about it and are interested but don’t want to change behavior. We’re impacted by these issues and will be for a lifetime and actions done in the past and now will impact them the most. It’s frustrating that we don’t get a say in a lot of this.”*

Youth taking action towards a resilient future can provide a sense of agency and hope. Camden–Rockport students are actively learning about and engaging in climate–related actions, including sixth and seventh grade curriculum and numerous high school activities. The high school has an active environmental club, the Wind Planners. Aldermere Farms supports hands–on experiences in partnership with schools for students to learn about local food systems and the impacts of climate change.



Source: [Knox Village Soup](#), 2019

### Housing Insecurity

Several stakeholders highlighted the tie between children/teens and housing insecurity as seen in a recent rise in homelessness, housing insecurity, temporary housing, and couch surfing for youth and young adults. Homeless and housing insecure people of all ages, but especially youth, are more susceptible to weather, heat, and pollutants from living in cars, outside, or in poorly maintained or inadequate homes. Stakeholders believe the drivers for housing insecurity have changed and are now primarily affordability and availability, whereas in the past it was more related to health issues or job loss. Repeated housing stress and moving can make it challenging for families to address healthcare, education, and other basic needs. Families may experience lost work or missed school while juggling a housing search and transportation needs.

#### Climate change vulnerabilities for children and young adults include:<sup>23</sup>

- **Extreme heat and cold sensitivity** because their bodies are less able to adapt. Youth living in homes without air conditioning (or households who cannot afford to run A/C) or with insufficient heating are more susceptible to temperature-related illness.
- **Sensitivity to allergens and environmental contaminants** within and outside the home – e.g., air/water pollutants, mold, mildew, dust, pollen, browntail moth, vehicle emissions, and wildfire smoke.
- **Reliance on adults** for care, safety, and transportation – elevating risk during emergencies.

<sup>22</sup> Knox County Maine [Shared Community Health Needs Assessment Report 2022](#)

<sup>23</sup> US EPA [Climate Change and Children’s Health](#) and Headwaters Economics [Populations at Risk](#)

- **Food insecurity** can be exacerbated by weather events and food supply disruptions that reduce the availability or affordability of nutritious foods for children/youth.
- **Emotional sensitivity** to major storms, extreme temperatures, a loss surrounding winter activities (because of reduced snowfall), and climate-driven ecological changes.
- Risk of **lost work/income** when businesses close due to flooding or other weather events (especially working teens or parents earning hourly wages).
- **Insect bites and vector-borne illness** are a greater risk to youth with high exposure through outdoor activities.
- Reduced **local and regional representation** in town committees/meetings by adults (especially working and/or single parents) with family responsibilities. Additionally, there are few direct paths to political/governance participation for middle and high school students.

### C. INCOME AND POVERTY

Income (from any source, not limited to employment) is correlated with a range of social and health outcomes and the resources (e.g., money, time and attention) that people have for climate preparedness or response. Low income is one of the strongest predictors for compromised health and ability to recover from disruptions.<sup>24</sup> People living in poverty may lack the resources to meet their basic needs across the span of food, housing, health care, education, vulnerability to natural disasters, and emotional stress. Overlapping vulnerabilities with other categories, such as age, compounds one’s risks.

*Table 5. Income and Poverty Summary Statistics*

	Rockport Estimate	Statewide Estimate
Median Household Income <sup>a,b</sup>	\$83,700 - \$86,200	\$68,300 - \$70,700
People living below 200% of Federal Poverty Line (FPL) <sup>b</sup>	17%	27%
Households making under \$50,000/year <sup>b</sup>	25%	37%
Households with Cash Public Assistance <sup>b</sup>	5%	3%
Households with food stamps/ SNAP benefits <sup>b</sup>	3%	12%
Food Insecurity <sup>c</sup>	11% (county)	12%

<sup>a</sup> Source: MaineHousing [Housing Affordability Indexes](#)

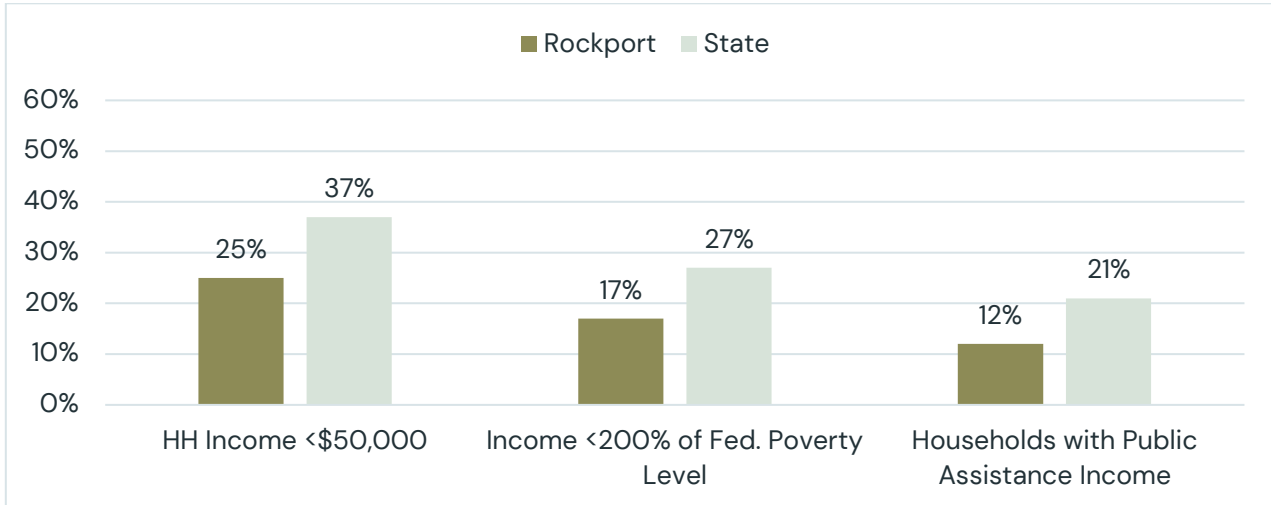
<sup>b</sup> Source: ACS 5-year estimates, 2018-2022

<sup>c</sup> Source: [Maine CDC Knox County Health Profile](#)

<sup>24</sup> Headwaters Economics Report, “Populations at Risk.”

Median household income in Rockport is 118–125% of the state median, and Rockport has relatively fewer low-to-moderate income households than the state. Still, 25% of households report less than \$50,000 annual income, 17% of people report incomes less than 200% of the federal poverty line (~\$50,000 for three people) and 7% live below the 100% federal poverty line (~\$25,000 for three people).<sup>25</sup>

Figure 4. Selected Income Statistics



Source: ACS 5-year estimates (2018–2022) and Headwaters Economics Demographic Profile

Locally, lower incomes appear to affect more children and families than older adults. In Rockport, people under age 18 are more likely than those over age 65 to live below the poverty line (9% versus less than 1%). A representative from the school district reported that about 24% of Camden/Rockport families are now considered low socio-economic status – a significant increase over the past 30 years.

This is counter to statewide trends, where the likelihood of living in poverty increases with age and is more likely for females than males age 65+ (11% vs 7%). However, in Rockport, only about 1% of people over age 65 live in poverty, compared with 9% statewide.<sup>26</sup>

Stakeholders noted that while some of Rockport is higher-income, there are gaps in hyper-local services for those with lower income – including free food distribution (currently available at PenBay, though stakeholders suggested other locations) and public transportation (to jobs along Route 1, grocery and medical care).

*“We are an affluent community mostly, so we don’t have the stuff (shower, laundry, etc.) that a super low-income community would.”*

*“There’s a gap in Rockport for, in terms of food system, there is no food pantry in Rockport...but Pen Bay Medical Center’s technically in Rockport and they do have a pantry. Having maybe a more of a soup kitchen option...what’s becoming more common are share sites or share tables that pop up in community centers like libraries, churches and that’s been really effective at meeting people who wouldn’t typically go to a food pantry.”*

<sup>25</sup> US Department of Health and Human Services, [2023 Poverty Guidelines](#).

<sup>26</sup> Source: ACS 5-year data, 2018–2022

Several stakeholders noted **limited representation** in Rockport public processes among lower-income residents and renters, as well as among West Rockport residents. Unequal representation may reduce the reach of Town resilience efforts, e.g., if a small but vocal group of citizens advocates for funding one area or facility when a broader group may benefit from investments elsewhere.

Climate vulnerability associated with lower incomes include:

- **Health conditions** associated with deferred preventive healthcare, lower health insurance coverage, increased pollutant exposures, and chronic health conditions.
- **Housing quality, health and safety** – Lower ability to access updated and climate-resilient housing. Homes may have water damage, mold/mildew, and be more susceptible to storm damage – with resulting health and financial consequences.
- **Deferred home maintenance or energy upgrades** – including structural repairs (e.g., basement or roof) or property maintenance (e.g., trees) that increase storm damage or accessibility. Less likely to make HVAC repairs/updates to more energy-efficient heating, improve weatherization/insulation, or have air conditioning.
- **Sensitivity to rising energy costs** – More likely to cut back on heating or cooling or use unsafe heating sources, which increases fire and health risks.
- **Homes in flood-vulnerable areas** – including mobile homes (e.g., Clam Cove) and are less likely to carry home insurance.
- **Housing instability** – More likely to move/relocate due to rental building sales (evictions when property is sold), rising rents or living in temporary/seasonal housing.
- **Sensitivity to food supply disruptions** – More sensitive to rising food costs, which may be disrupted by storms and supply chain issues (with few organizations providing free or emergency food within town lines).
- **Local and regional representation** – Less likely to participate in town meetings, committees and planning due to time constraints/work schedules.

## D. HOUSING COSTS AND SUPPLY

About 1,823 parcels have at least one housing unit, and considering multifamily, we estimate at least 1,900 potential housing units. This aligns with the US Census American Community Survey (ACS) estimate of 1,885 housing units.

According to the ACS, about 1,421 housing units were occupied (75%) at the time of annual surveys by an owner or renter, while 25% were vacant or seasonal. About 75% of occupied homes are owner-occupied and 25% are renter-occupied. Housing occupancy in Rockport is similar to Maine overall.

While there isn't definitive data on which homes are primary residences vs. secondary/seasonal, tax assessment data shows ~1,367 residential properties<sup>27</sup> (75%) where the owner's mailing address is the same as the property or a PO Box in town, and ~948 with a

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<sup>27</sup> Developed residential parcels with some type of housing, including single-family, mobile homes, duplexes, multifamily and condos (including Eastward and Harbor Village).

homestead exemption (which requires primary residence). About half (52%) of residential properties have claimed a homestead exemption.

*Table 6. Housing Occupancy and Housing Cost Summary Statistics*

	Rockport Estimate	Statewide Estimate
Seasonal Status <sup>a</sup>		
- Vacant or seasonal homes	25%	22%
- Occupied homes	75%	78%
Occupancy (among occupied homes) <sup>a</sup>		
- Owner-occupied homes	75%	73%
- Renter-occupied homes	25%	27%
Number of Units <sup>a</sup>		
- Single-Family Detached	83%	70%
- Single-Family Attached	6%	2%
- Multifamily	5%	8%
- Mobile homes	7%	19%
Households with High Housing Cost Burden (35% or more of income) <sup>a</sup>		
- Owners with a mortgage	26%	20%
- Renters	47%	36%

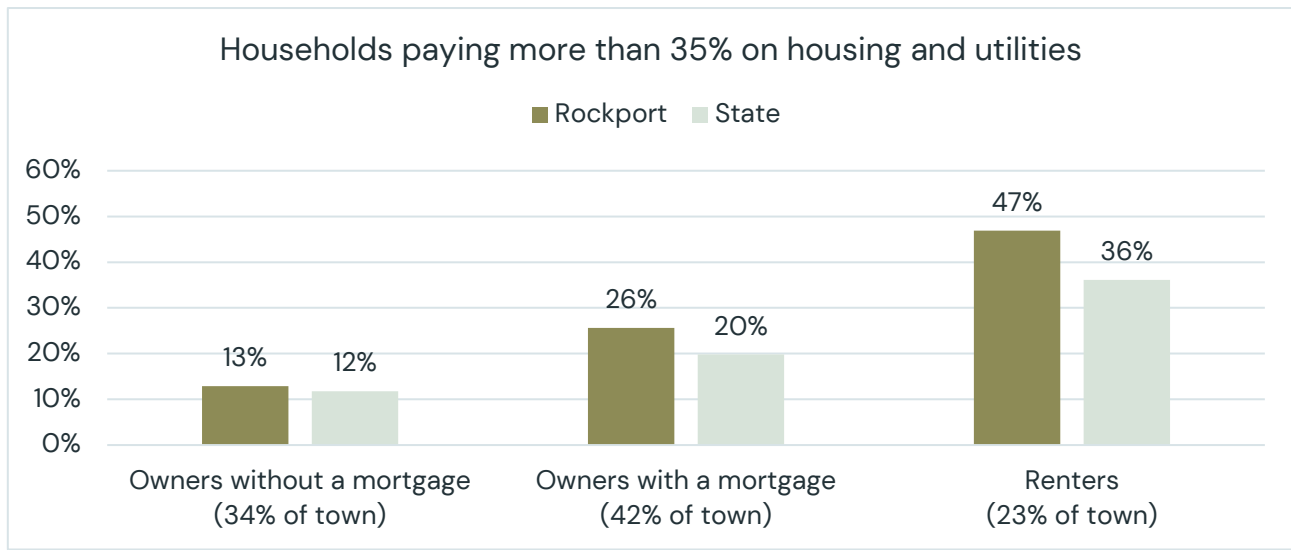
<sup>a</sup> Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2018–2022

While incomes are higher in Rockport than statewide, housing costs are even higher. More Rockport renters and owners with mortgages pay over 35% of their income on housing (compared to state levels).<sup>28</sup> Per interviews, *“working people/families are often paying over 50% of their income for housing & utilities,”* and are more likely to become encumbered by debt as a result.

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<sup>28</sup> Including mortgage, rent, taxes, insurance, energy/utilities. In Rockport, 34% of households own a home without a mortgage, 42% with a mortgage, and 23% rent.

Figure 5. Housing Cost Burden



Source: ACS 5-year data, 2018–2022. Housing costs for owners include mortgage, taxes, insurance, condo fees, and utilities; for renters, costs include rent and utilities.

How are housing costs and supply related to climate vulnerability? While a few stakeholders attribute housing costs and insecurity with climate-driven migration into Maine, nearly all see it as an economic and social vulnerability affecting businesses, healthcare and services, and community connections as well as the direct impact on housing-burdened individuals.

*“If we can't keep a workforce here because they can't afford the housing, then none of these industries will be successful in the long run.”*

The cost and availability of home construction and repairs – marked by high labor costs and challenges finding carpenters, plumbers, electricians and other skilled trades – is another dimension of the housing crunch impacting Rockport residents’ ability to build homes or prepare existing homes for more extreme weather and high and volatile energy costs. Coupled with scarce housing for skilled tradespeople and local business owners (per interviews), and an increased need for services among an aging population (per statewide projections), stakeholders urged solutions to repair homes, house workers, and build more housing accessible to people across low to moderate incomes:

*“Any frontline service workers, restaurants, hospitals and things, particularly the health care industry, teachers, public schools, landscaping, construction, farming, agriculture – It's just getting harder and harder for those workers to live here.”*

### Affordability of Residential Real Estate

Midcoast Maine and Camden/Rockport are becoming increasingly unaffordable for those looking to move or downsize. MaineHousing data shows that median home prices are three times what a Rockport household with median income (\$83,700) can afford.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> MaineHousing defines “affordable” as spending less than 28% of gross income on housing, including mortgage (or rent), utilities, property tax and insurance. For a household with ~\$84,000 gross income (Rockport median) this threshold is \$1,960/month.

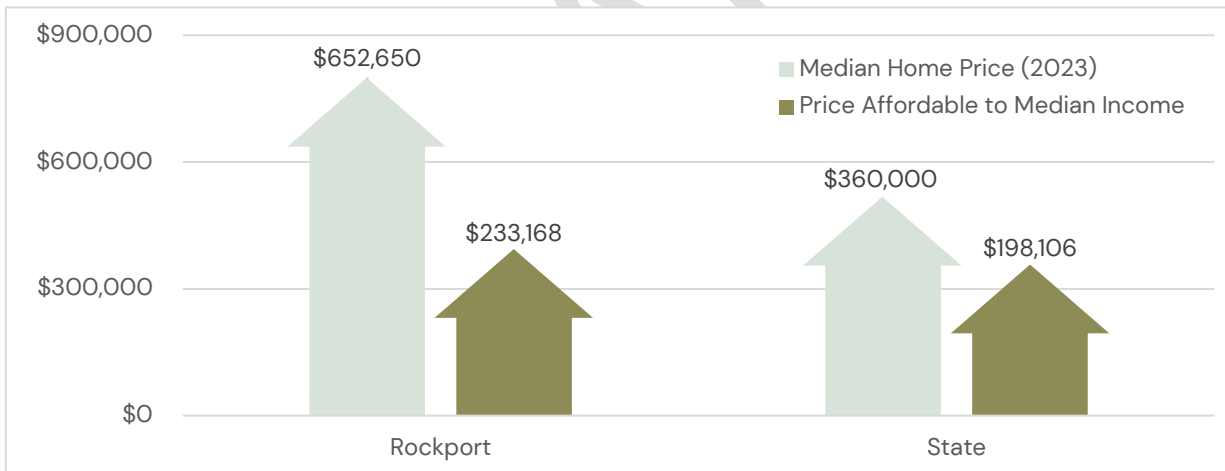
Table 7. Affordability of For-Sale Homes <sup>a</sup>

	Rockport	Camden	Maine
Median vs. Affordable Home Price – Median Home Price (2023) – Home price affordable to median income (2023)	\$652,650 vs. \$233,168	\$698,044 vs. \$223,792	\$360,000 vs. \$198,106
Housing Affordability Index (2023)	0.36	0.32	0.55
Median Income vs. Income Needed – Median Household Income – Income needed to afford median-priced home	\$83,698 vs. \$234,275	\$78,534 vs. \$241,802	\$70,652 vs. \$128,390
Households unable to afford median home sale price (2023)	91%	91%	79%

<sup>a</sup> Source: MaineHousing Research, [Housing Affordability Indices](#).

<sup>b</sup> The Affordability Index is the ratio of Home Price Affordable to Median Income to Median Home Price – For Rockport, \$233k to \$653k. A lower index is less affordable.

Figure 6. Housing Affordability Gap, 2023



Source: MaineHousing Research, [Housing Affordability Indices](#).

The gap between incomes and prices is greater in Camden/Rockport than the state overall. Several stakeholders described challenges attracting healthcare workers – including high-salary nurses and doctors – as well as teachers, town staff, business owners, and builders.

MaineHousing estimates an historical **underproduction of 1,100 units** in Knox County, and a need for **1,400–1,700 additional housing units by 2030** (through a combination of new construction or converting existing structures to full-time occupancy.<sup>30</sup> Knox County Homeless Coalition places the need for unhoused families at 200–250 units:

<sup>30</sup> Source: [State of Maine Housing Production Needs Study](#), 2023.

*"With the number of unhoused families we have [in Knox County], we need 200–250 affordable housing units today."*

## **Housing Insecurity**

Housing insecurity and homelessness was a common theme in stakeholder interviews. This is neither tracked by the US Census nor the state, and even organizations like Knox County Homelessness Coalition are unable to uniformly track clients' last address or current living arrangements. However, several stakeholders noted the rise of housing insecurity, which often goes unnoticed.

*"We are an affluent community mostly, so we don't have the stuff (shower, laundry, etc.) that a super low-income community would."*

*"People work for the YMCA that live in seasonal housing and jump around, who make \$70k/year, who can't afford housing."*

*"We have people working in the boatyard living in RVs – they're employed, their kids are in school and they are living in RVs."*

*"There are encampments of folks who are experiencing homelessness, but you don't see them because they're not really visible from the street."*

Over time, these health and safety risks can translate to strains on healthcare and emergency services. See the [Youth & Families](#) section for more on housing insecurity and mental health.

Climate change vulnerability associated with housing costs and insecurity include:

- **Housing quality and health** – Individuals in, for example, old/drafty homes, mobile homes, and rentals may incur high utility bills, and suffer from poor indoor air quality (such as from heating sources or mold) – with associated health impacts.
- **Financial stresses** – Lack of available housing impacts employment options and income. High housing cost burden means fewer available resources for other needs—such as health, home repairs, or upgrades to heating systems.
- **Stress of housing insecurity and risk of displacement** has family and mental health impacts (trading off secure housing with being close to local support systems)
- **Seniors unable to downsize** are forced to age in larger, older homes, which means higher energy costs and maintenance, with implications for health and safety.
- **Limited housing available for essential workers** decreases ability to fill healthcare, fire, police, teaching, construction, trades, agriculture, service and other jobs.

## **E. HOME ENERGY SYSTEMS AND COSTS**

Rockport homes use a variety of fuel systems and old heating systems, and few have air conditioning. The combination of extreme cold snaps and heat waves with rising energy costs was a theme in interviews.



Table 8. Energy Cost Burden Summary Statistics

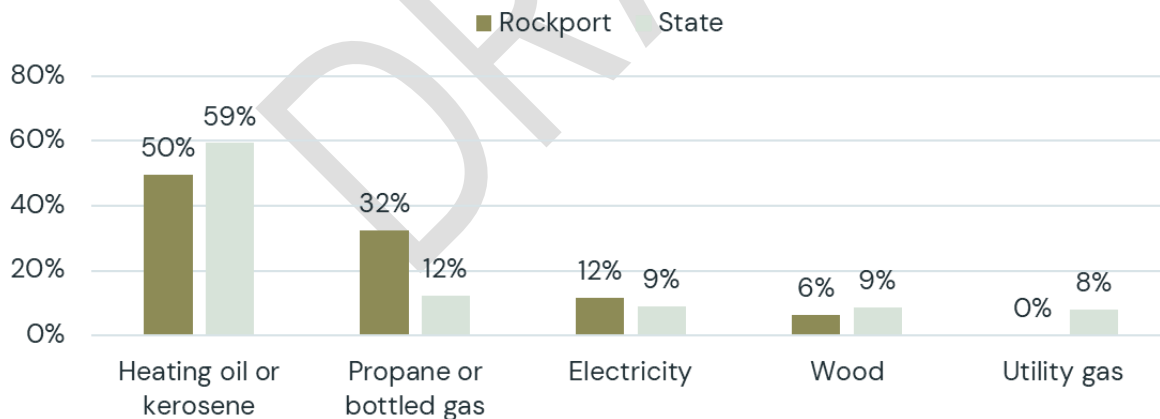
	Rockport Estimate	Statewide Estimate
Energy costs as % of income (average) <sup>b</sup>	4.4%	5.0%
Have air conditioning	n/a	70% (10% central air)

<sup>b</sup> Average cost of home energy as percentage of income. Source: NREL [State and Local Planning for Energy \(SLOPE\)](#)

On average, Rockport households pay ~4% of their income for energy (energy burden greater than 6% is considered unaffordable). While energy burden for lower-income homes is not available at the town level, statewide, energy burden averages 19% for households below 150% of the federal poverty line. Statewide, energy burden is significantly higher for low-income households heating with propane – where energy costs can be 40% of income – compared with other fuels.<sup>31</sup>

According to ACS 5-year estimates, about 50% of homes use oil as their primary fuel, and nearly one-third use propane or bottled gas, while 12% primarily use electricity (including electric resistance or heat pumps). Each fuel has benefits and vulnerabilities – oil, propane or wood may work in power outages, but have greenhouse gas, indoor air quality and health impacts; heat pumps can improve indoor air quality and provide cooling, but require backup power in outages, may incur heating conversion costs (depending on prior fuel type), and performance will depend on the level of home insulation and air tightness.

Figure 7. Primary Heating Fuel



Source: American Community Survey, 2018–2022.

The physical work of heating with wood can be a burden for seniors:

*“Senior people who use wood burning stove...we’ve had lots of people who, that’s their only source of heat, and if they’re elderly and recovering from an illness, and they don’t have the support of family or can’t hire support, they can really struggle to heat their homes.”*

<sup>31</sup> Source: [Maine Low Income Energy Burden Study, 2019](#) (updates underway)

Some stakeholders described immediate benefits among seniors and healthcare patients from air conditioning with heat pumps. A home healthcare provider said:

*“That’s a common one that we see – challenges with cooling and heating. People were seeking assistance with either heating or cooling costs. A lot of people do not have air conditioning.”*

Maine’s Climate Action plan calls for increased weatherization/insulation and heat pumps, though statewide there is lower participation in programs that offer these services among lower-income homeowners and those living in rental housing, who may benefit most. Few lower-income homeowners have participated in weatherization/insulation programs or installed heat pumps – with implications for home energy use and costs.<sup>32</sup>

Housing weatherization and heating/cooling sources can also influence air quality (ie from mold and mildew) which a health provider associated with health impacts:

*“if there’s mold that we might not even see or, a lack of ventilation, proper ventilation, you notice it right away...the difference in, in air quality.”*

Climate change vulnerabilities associated with energy include:

- **Health and safety risks in extreme heat and cold** for people in homes without adequate heat, cooling, air sealing and insulation, particularly older adults, people with health vulnerabilities and young children.

**Exposure in power outages** for homes without safe backup heat, cooling or cooking

- **Higher energy costs** for heating or cooling in homes (a) without updated weatherization/insulation or HVAC systems, (b) with delivered fuels subject to price fluctuations (oil, propane, kerosene)
- **Foregoing heat** for other bills such as rent, car repairs, food, healthcare (with negative health outcomes for vulnerable populations)
- **Physical burden of heating with wood** among mobility-impaired individuals
- **Increased structural damage and deterioration** from extreme precipitation and storms

**Indoor air pollutants and allergens** from mold, mildew, pollen etc. exacerbated by extreme rain, building envelope infiltration or basement flooding

## F. EMPLOYMENT AND TRANSPORTATION

Economic resilience impacts climate resilience – that is, how businesses and workers can prepare, adapt and recover from natural hazards, economic or supply chain disruptions. Stakeholders expressed economic diversity (a mix of workers and skill levels) and ability of businesses to attract/retain workers as indicators of economic health.

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<sup>32</sup> Source: [Maine Won’t Wait Progress Report](#), December 2023

Table 9. Labor Force and Education Summary Statistics

	Rockport Estimate	Statewide Estimate
Labor Force Participation (in population age 16+) <sup>a</sup>	69%	62%
Unemployment Rate (among those in labor force) <sup>b</sup>	2.7%	2.9%
Households with employment earnings <sup>a</sup>	84%	73%
Jobs classified as “Service” jobs <sup>a</sup>	21%	16%
Self-employed (not incorporated) (as % of employed population) <sup>a</sup>	10%	8%
People age 25+ without high school degree <sup>c</sup>	6.9%	6.3%

<sup>a</sup> Source: ACS 5-year estimates (2022)

<sup>b</sup> Source: <https://www.maine.gov/labor/cwri/laus2.html>

<sup>c</sup> Source: [Headwaters Economics Neighborhoods at Risk](#) profile, accessed December 2023.

Labor force participation in Rockport is higher than Maine overall (69% vs. 62%), and unemployment among those in the labor force is similar. There are more households with earnings from labor, and relatively more people are in service occupations or self-employed (and fewer in management, arts, or sales).

Census data on agricultural and natural resource workers is limited at the town level – American Community Survey data shows no workers, though we know there are workers for farms and fishing. Stakeholders in the agricultural sector expressed concern about housing pressure on farming families, land values, and the importance of maintaining working farmland for food and climate resilience. Maine Won’t Wait prioritizes natural resource jobs, farming, and agriculture in light of increased climate shocks and stressors due to weather, storms, disease/pests, and shifting habitat.

### Economic Impacts of Housing Availability

Community stakeholders repeatedly noted that it is increasingly hard to find workers because people cannot find and/or afford nearby housing. They are concerned that **essential and service workers are pushed further from town** – leading to longer commutes, or to potential employees turning down jobs due to commuting time or costs. Service workers may live 10–25 miles inland (e.g., workers at the new hotel commuting from Searsmont (~15 mi) per one stakeholder).



Source: [PenBay Pilot](#) (by Lynda Clancy)

With fewer workers, businesses may only open on limited days/hours and may close in bad weather if employees cannot safely commute. Business hours have direct impacts on community residents and the local economy.

*“If you had workers that actually lived nearby and could walk to work, you’d be open...People know that but just don’t see it until it impacts them.”*

*“Many organizations and businesses in this region really struggle finding help and then the help that they hire can’t afford to live here.”*

*“Any frontline service workers, restaurants, hospitals and things, particularly the health care industry, teachers, public schools, landscaping construction, farming, agriculture – It’s just getting harder and harder for those workers to live here.”*

### Transportation and Commuting

American Community Survey responses (5-year estimates from 2017–2022) indicate transportation and commuting burdens were marginally lower in Rockport than elsewhere in the state, with more people working within Knox County, and lower commute times. Note that transportation of Rockport residents were less of a concern for stakeholders than non-resident workers, since residents live closer to Rockport employers.

*Table 10. Transportation and Commuting Summary Statistics*

	Rockport Estimate	Statewide Estimate
Households without a vehicle <sup>a</sup>	5%	7%
Transportation Cost Burden (average) <sup>b</sup>	3.2%	3.6%
Used car, truck or van to get to work	81%	82%
Work in county of residence <sup>a</sup>	91%	78%
Mean travel time to work <sup>a</sup>	12 minutes	22 minutes
Worked from home <sup>c</sup>	14.1%	12.3%

<sup>a</sup>Source: [Headwaters Economics Neighborhoods at Risk](#) profile, accessed December 2023

<sup>b</sup> Average cost of transportation as percentage of income. Source: NREL [State and Local Planning for Energy \(SLOPE\)](#)

<sup>c</sup> Source: ACS 5-year estimates (2022)

While only about 5% of Rockport households do not have vehicle access, about half of housing-insecure individuals/households seeking case management or assistance do not have cars.<sup>33</sup> Stakeholders emphasized that **since there is no public transportation, it is challenging to live or work in the Rockport area without a vehicle.** No vehicle access limits accessible jobs and one’s ability to respond to emergencies, such as evacuating or seeking

<sup>33</sup> According to KCHC, last year 51% of adults coming into services did not have access to a reliable vehicle.

medical care. For lower earners, the high costs of car payments, fuel, and insurance<sup>34</sup> may lead to compromises elsewhere – stakeholders mentioned debt, missing a rent or a mortgage payment, not spending money on home repairs, energy or healthcare:

*“An unexpected repair can often be the difference between losing the job, which means losing the house, or the apartment.”*

*“Sometimes [funding] a \$300 car repair could prevent somebody from cycling back into homelessness.”*

Rockport does not have public transportation options if one’s personal vehicle isn’t working, which could result in possible missed work or reduced access to food and services.

**Climate change vulnerabilities** related to transportation and employment include:

- **Job access** generally, but especially due to storm damage – such as washing out roads, flooding, and trees or other debris blocking streets. This impacts all residents, especially those with essential travel (e.g., to reach work or medical care), driving longer distances, and near/through flood-prone areas (including one-way access, such as Robinson Drive where flooding blocked access for 29 homes).
- **Loss of income** when businesses are unable to open or employees cannot get to their workplace due to heavy storms.
- **Employees to sustain local businesses/services** – Fewer local workers and community diversity for new businesses and growth and a diverse economy (with long-term impacts on services and tax base).



Source: Town of Rockport

## Electric Vehicles

Several stakeholders recognized electric vehicles (EVs) as an action towards climate resilience but noted adoption challenges. Some expressed that, for many people, just affording a gas car is a stretch, so the rebates are insufficient to make an EV affordable for lower earners. Some people are aware of rebates but don’t understand how they work. For those who could afford an EV, some expressed concerns about performance in extreme cold/snow. Additionally, some perceived our area as having few EV charging stations.

<sup>34</sup> For example, a monthly car payment up to \$500–600/month plus \$300/month in fuel.

## G. RACE, ETHNICITY AND LANGUAGE

Fewer than 4% of respondents to the ACS reported a race other than White ( $\pm 2\%$ ), and fewer than 1% reported Hispanic/Latino origin ( $\pm 1\%$ ). About 1.5% of residents may speak a language other than English at home – most commonly, an Asian or Pacific Island language.

Table 11. Race, Ethnicity and Language

	Rockport Estimate	Maine Estimate
Non-White or White in combination with other races	3.4%	7.7%
Hispanic/Latino Origin	0.7%	1.9%
Speaks language other than English at home	1.5%	5.9%

Maine is becoming more diverse – the Black and African American populations grew 31% from 2017 to 2021, and the Latino population grew by 41%.<sup>35</sup> The State Economist reports that from 2021-2022, 61% of the state’s 8,000+ population gain came from populations other than white, non-Hispanic, and *“to be successful, Maine must not only welcome racially and ethnically diverse communities to the state, but also work consistently to make its economy more equitable and inclusive for these populations.”*<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Source: Bangor Daily News, [New Census Reports Maine's Diversity](#), December 2023.

<sup>36</sup> Source: Maine State Economist Office, [Population Outlook 2020-2030](#), June 2023.

### 3. Representation, Outreach and Engagement

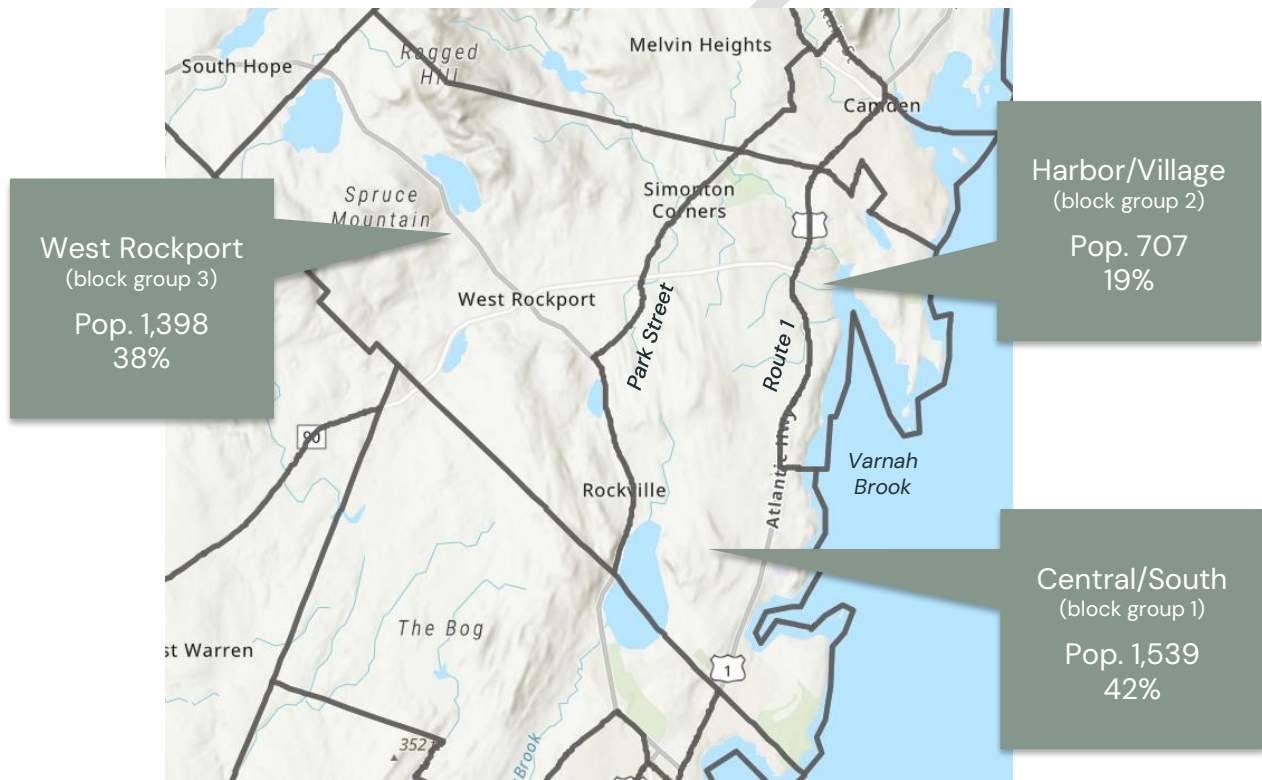
While the town does not collect characteristics of participants in meetings, boards or committees, state and national resilience efforts urge broad representation to ensure equitable investments. This section provides ideas and benchmarks for equitable engagement.

#### GEOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION

The US Census Bureau breaks Rockport into three block groups, shown in Figure 3.

- West Rockport (west of Route 17, Meadow St and Park St)
- Central and South Rockport (incl. Glen Cove and Samoset area)
- Harbor/Village District (east of Route 1 and north of Madelyn Lane)

Figure 8. Population by US Census Block Group

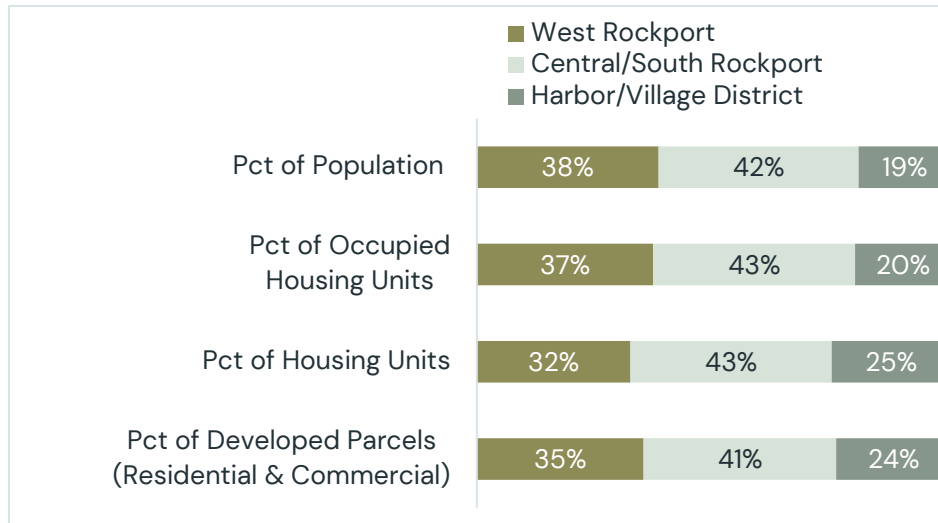


Map: [US Census TIGERweb map viewer](#); Data: US Decennial Census (2020).

The boundaries of the Harbor/Village area (block group 2) are Route 1 and Varnah Brook (between Madelyn Lane and Roxmont Road).

The area containing Central Rockport (between Park St and Route 1) and South Rockport (east of Route 1 below Varnah Brook) has about 43% of occupied housing units and Rockport's population. West Rockport is similar, with 37–38% of occupied housing units and population. While the Harbor/Village district holds about one-quarter of developed parcels and housing units, fewer people live there – about 20% of the population and occupied housing units. Relatively more housing units are classified as “vacant” by the Census Bureau.

Figure 9. Share of Population and Housing Units by Block Group



Population Source: ACS 2018–2022. Housing Unit source: US Decennial Census (2020).  
Developed Parcels count: Rockport Tax Assessor Data (2024).

In stakeholder interviews, representation from all areas of town came up as priority for climate and infrastructure decisions – i.e., participation in public meetings or submitting public comments; who is on Town committees, Planning, Zoning and Select Boards. Town Planner Orion Thomas often brings a map board with pushpins to town meetings for attendees to mark where they live, as an approximate gauge of representation. These block groups (and proportions) could be used to understand, for example, the balance of meeting attendance, committees and boards.

## OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

*Maine Won't Wait* and the [Community Resilience Partnership](#) urge equitable engagement in climate-related planning, program design, decision-making and funding – seeking input and meaningful participation from all Maine's people.

- **Outreach** includes sharing information, resources, alerts, education or training – including outreach to invite people to provide input.
- **Engagement** involves two-way communication including seeking input, involvement, and collaboration on plans and action.

This section contains ideas for how to reach and include Priority Populations in plans and actions, based on stakeholder and service provider interviews.

### Outreach (Sharing Information)

All residents and businesses benefit from outreach on programs and resources through people and sources they already use or trust, and in accessible language/terms. Outreach strategies could include but not limited to:

- **Continue and expand town channels** – Town & Fire Dept. Facebook pages; Rockport CivicReady; outreach from Boards or committees to individuals about meetings/events



- **Outreach through Community Partners** – Contact community partners directly about upcoming plans, decisions or meetings in their area of work (e.g., “there’s a Select Board discussion about culvert replacement where I think your perspective would be valuable.”)
- **In-person events** – e.g., through partners (e.g., Rockland volunteer fair or ReCharge Rockland event); lunch and learn; school events; intercept surveys; community dinners
- **Traditional Media channels** – Articles, press releases and calendar events about important meetings or public input.

Table 12. Potential Outreach Channels (to share information or invite to provide input)

Message Distribution	In-person
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media (post more from Town Facebook)</li> <li>• Emails from nonprofit partners*</li> <li>• Post flyers and leave cards in local businesses around town</li> <li>• QR link or text messages/campaign</li> <li>• Rockport Resource</li> <li>• Free Press &amp; other newspapers</li> <li>• Church bulletins</li> <li>• School digital dashboards (direct communication to parents)</li> <li>• Share info via Primary Care offices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Door-to-door</li> <li>• Workplaces (e.g., Hammond, Rockport Marine, Route 90 businesses)</li> <li>• Mom’s groups</li> <li>• Children’s reading group (library)</li> <li>• Senior living centers</li> <li>• High school weekly assemblies</li> <li>• Middle School Conference for Change</li> <li>• YMCA, including Senior Lunch and Learn</li> <li>• Election day/voting</li> <li>• Intercept flyers or surveys (e.g., at transfer station)</li> </ul>

\*e.g. Senior living centers and AIO (Area Interfaith Outreach) food pantry, YMCA, Maine Coast Heritage Trust (Erickson & Aldermere Farms), land trusts

We heard interest in a **checklist of easy and medium-effort actions** that individuals/ households can do along with resources for where to get help. The table in the Suggested Actions section includes other potential topics for education.

### Engagement (Meaningful Involvement)

Thinking about how to engage people for input or action, stakeholders noted that renters, parents, and residents of West Rockport are often underrepresented in Town and local processes, such as:

- Town Committee, Planning Board, and Select Board membership
- Meeting attendance and public comments
- School district meetings
- Nonprofit volunteers and committees/boards (e.g. Habitat for Humanity encourages Habitat homeowners on their committees)
- Community surveys

The table below presents opportunities to increase access, inclusion, and involvement in Town processes, planning, and decision-making.

Table 13. Access and Inclusion Considerations for Town Meetings, Planning and Processes

Access to Public Processes



Schedule meetings at different times (and duplicate meetings for important topics)

- Hold meetings/events outside of Rockport Village
- Online option to participate in meetings, with opportunity to ask questions or provide input after meetings
- Promptly post meeting materials (presentations) and minutes
- Offer/coordinate transportation for key meetings
- Consider childcare for key meetings (or hold meetings in places that children can attend)

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion



- Proactively invite less-represented groups to (a) join a committee, (b) provide public comments

- e.g., renters, new homeowners, working parents, essential workers, West Rockport residents, students
- Ask partner organizations for help recruiting
- Offer compensation to join or participate in a Town committee or planning process
- Invite nonprofits and partner organizations into planning (e.g., involve land trusts after storms/flooding)
- Track geographic representation of Town boards, committees, task forces and participation in key meetings (e.g., by Village)

With respect to access, work and childcare schedules make challenging to meaningfully engage with the diverse range of people who work and/or live in Rockport.

With respect to inclusion, some stakeholders referenced under-representation in public meetings, committees and the Select Board among demographic/economic segments (e.g., renters, working parents) as well as geographic areas.

*“More of the people in the Village or your retired people that have the ability to serve on the Select Board. So they want to see their area fixed....And it’s been like that, it’s route one to the ocean and route one to the mountains. That’s always the divide.”*

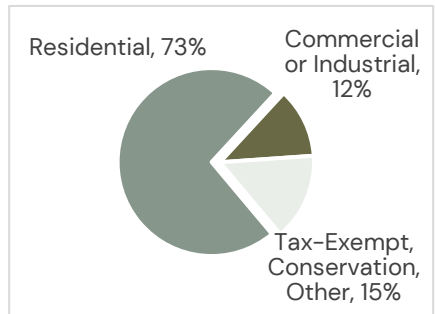
In response to a question about what perspectives are missed by not including as many people in West Rockport, one stakeholder said, *“infrastructure, 100% infrastructure, the road systems out there...and sewage.”* Per Figure 8, Rockport could purposefully seek and track proportional representation in meetings, input or committees/boards by district/area.

## 4. Flooding, Inundation and Sea Level Rise

Based on tax assessment data, Rockport has 2,590 tax parcels, and the majority (~90%) can accommodate housing (residential, multifamily, condo or undeveloped land) – about 2,245 parcels. Of residential parcels, about 81% (1,823 parcels) are developed.

By land area, residential parcels are a relatively smaller share (though still a majority). About 15% of land is considered tax-exempt or conservation land, including land owned by the town, nonprofit organizations or land trusts.

Figure 10. Land Area in Rockport



The Knox Emergency Management Agency (Knox EMA) identified tax assessor parcels that intersect three climate-related hazard areas, including:

- (a) FEMA special flood hazard areas (coastal and inland)
- (b) National Hurricane Center inundation areas (primarily coastal)
- (c) Sea Level Rise scenarios (primarily coastal)

These layers represent a limited range of hazards that stakeholders are concerned about. Further, they are limited in representing storm impacts: they capture coastal and riverine flooding risk associated with Rockport’s water bodies and topography, though none of these layers are designed to represent pluvial flooding (flash flooding or localized surface flooding that can occur from extreme rainfall independent of an overflowing water body).<sup>37</sup>

The maps below show risk areas for each of these three natural hazards.

[INSERT MAPS FROM KNOX EMA WHEN AVAILABLE]

Close to 20% of developed residential parcels intersect a FEMA flood hazard area, while relatively fewer are at risk from major hurricanes or sea level rise (6–7%).

Table 14. Parcel Intersection with Coastal and Riverine Risk Areas

	Pct of All Parcels at Risk	Pct of Developed Residential Parcels at Risk	Pct of Developed Comm./Ind. Parcels at Risk
FEMA Special Flood Hazard Areas	18%	17%	20%
National Hurricane Center Category 4 Inundation Risk (category 1-3 risk is lower)	6%	7%	4%
Moderate Sea Level Rise Scenario (+3.9 ft in 2100 above 2000 sea level)	6%	6%	3%

<sup>37</sup> Sources: Zurich Insurance Group, “[Three common types of floods explained](#)”, 2024; Washington Post, “[America underwater: Extreme floods expose the flaws in FEMA’s risk maps](#)”, 2021.

Sources: Parcel map and classification from Rockport Tax Assessor; Hazard Area maps and analysis from Knox EMA.

Drinking water quality and waste management are also risks in extreme rain, flooding or inundation. Among parcels where tax assessment records contain water/waste information, about 50% are served by public water while 50% have private wells, and about 68% have private septic while 32% have public sewer service.

## 5. Ideas to Increase Social Resilience

While this assessment was not designed to propose ideas or recommendations for the Town of Rockport, residents, businesses or service providers, interviewees offered several (a) examples of what's underway or working well and (b) suggestions to consider, involve and/or benefit priority populations.

### WORK UNDERWAY

The health and service providers in Knox County are skilled at reaching the people they serve, assessing needs, and connecting them with services. For example, MaineHealth Care at Home staff conduct complete assessments, and work through primary care offices to connect patients with adjacent services (e.g., transportation, heating, food assistance). Housing organizations provide case management to understand related needs such as transportation (vehicle repairs), energy costs, childcare, health or mental health care. Food from Aldermere Farms and local farms are distributed through PenBay Medical Center, Area Interfaith Outreach (AIO) food pantry, and others.

The Town of Rockport – Town Manager, Planning, Public Works, the Fire Department and others) have been centering climate change in infrastructure plans [since the October 2021 storm \(~6 inches of rain\) brought nearly \\$1.5 million in damages](#). Road repairs since then consider increased extreme weather, and the Town is assessing and pursuing funding for culvert replacements throughout the town, including restoring fish crossings. The Planning Department and Planning board continue to propose and enact zoning ordinance changes toward density and infill development. Multiple departments are using [CivicReady](#) SMS notifications to share public meetings and emergency alerts (in addition to alerts posted on the Town and Fire Department Facebook pages).

Appendix C lists more work underway by the Town of Rockport and local organizations.

### POTENTIAL ACTIONS

This section lists **ideas based on social vulnerability data and interviews** on actions that the Town, community members or local organizations could take to strengthen social and community resilience in the face of climate change. ***They are not intended as final recommendations*** – ideas from a social vulnerability perspective, are one dimension to consider in identifying and prioritizing Town actions. Further, some actions may be better-led by community organizations or citizens than by municipal government.

*Some of these ideas are underway – See Appendix for work underway.*

## Planning and Decision-Making



- Diversify committees and directly invite underrepresented groups to join – e.g., renters, new homeowners, and residents of West Rockport.
- Contact community partners directly about upcoming plans, decisions or meetings in their area of work (e.g., “there is a Select Board meeting next week about .....”).
- Plan post-storm rebuilding in consultation with Land Trusts.
- Share grant opportunities with nonprofits/other agencies who could benefit.

## Housing Supply



- Mechanisms to encourage lower-cost workforce and middle-income housing of all sizes.
- Locate workforce housing closer to work and services to reduce transportation burden.
- Build small housing developments on sewer line.
- Manage short-term rentals (e.g. cap or multi-year tax waiver).
- Enable a program for individuals to donate land to a regional housing trust.
- Promote incentives for energy efficiency that are accessible with low/middle incomes.
- Adjust zoning for housing density (maintain necessary habitat/wetland protections to safely site housing developments away from flood-prone areas)

## Home Energy and Costs



- Support aging population in older, drafty homes – including home repairs, energy costs, meals, transportation.
- Climate-ready home safety assessments including mold/mildew damage/risk, foundation damage/risk, roof damage/risk, tree risk or removal.
- Mobilize paid or volunteer home repair assistance for seniors
- Help seniors, year-round rental owners, and low-income homeowners use weatherization/insulation and heat pump programs and rebates.
- Education to make solar energy easier to understand and access by households.

## Infrastructure and Transportation Investments



- Update wastewater infrastructure to ensure capacity for hospital and housing along existing and new sewer lines (and long-term reduce run-off from failing septic) (as well as water and sewer lines)

- Consider nature-based solutions to reduce stormwater damage (in addition to road repairs and culvert enlargements town is already making with future storms in mind)
- Make use of available federal funding for infrastructure (stormwater, roads, etc.)
- Continue building walk/bike paths (e.g., Village Partnership Initiative Task Force)
- Revive regional transportation initiatives like Route 1 bus/shuttle.
- Town of Rockport leads the way by improving the energy efficiency, safety, and resilience of Town buildings, switching to EVs, or installing an EV charging station.
- Find funding for farm infrastructure upgrades (including natural solutions) for more extreme weather and droughts.

### Food and Local Goods/Services



- Maintain tax incentives for agricultural production.
- Encourage community gardens and a community orchard.
- Pop-up food-share sites or tables in community centers (e.g., libraries, churches)
- Increase local and regional capacity for food production and distribution (incl. farmers markets and local food in schools, hospital, businesses).
- Incentives for local purchasing and production.
- Incentives to re-use materials (waste diversion; deconstruction).

### Emergency Preparedness and Response



- Encourage things people can do now:
  - Get a free fire safety inspection and smoke detector from Fire Department.
  - Clean out storm and perimeter drains around your home; install basement pump
  - Make an emergency plan (e.g., American Red Cross training).
  - Support neighbors with food/water/generators.
- Location(s) for warming/cooling or temporary shelter (YMCA named as potential resource (showers, charge phones, etc.)
- Provide Information on where flood zones are located.
- Build connections across ages and income levels.

### Ecosystems

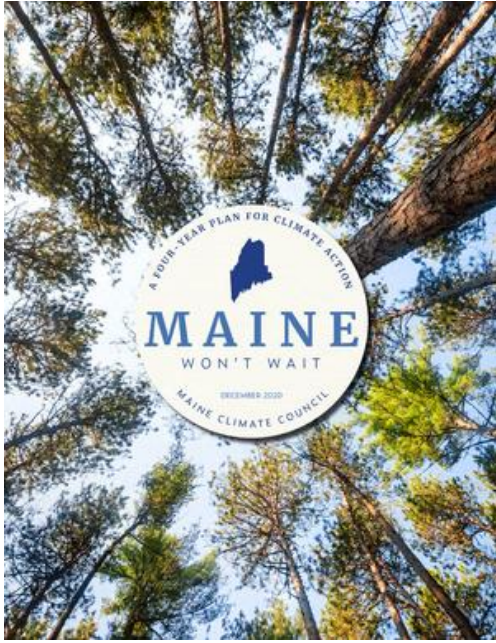


- Encourage property owners to plant more trees and native vegetation and reduce chemical lawn treatments. Educate on invasive plants and management practices.
- School programs for kids to experience applied, hands-on learning, such as food systems.
- Infrastructure projects that preserve or increase natural buffers like trees, diverse plantings, and wetlands.

## 6. Appendix

### A. PRIORITY POPULATIONS

Figure 11. Priority Populations in Maine's Climate Action Plan



**Individuals and Households:** Households with low-income individuals, older adults (age 65+), people with asthma or other health vulnerabilities, people with disabilities, people with limited access to transportation, Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), people with limited English proficiency, low-income residents of rental housing (especially multifamily), mobile home residents, low-income homeowners, unhoused individuals, and families. Individual worker characteristics include employment and work authorization status, students, people with limited English proficiency including New Mainers, gender, people transitioning from prison or in recovery, and/or migrant workers.

**Geographic Areas and Communities:** Low-income communities, rural communities, small towns with limited staff capacity, disadvantaged communities, climate-frontline communities, and/or Tribal and Indigenous communities.

**Businesses:** Businesses in the natural resource industries like agriculture, forestry, and fishing, clean energy industry (including energy efficiency), small businesses, minority- or women-owned business enterprises (MWBES).

Source: [Equity Subcommittee Final Report, March 2023](#)

### B. DATA RELIABILITY FOR SMALL AREA SAMPLES

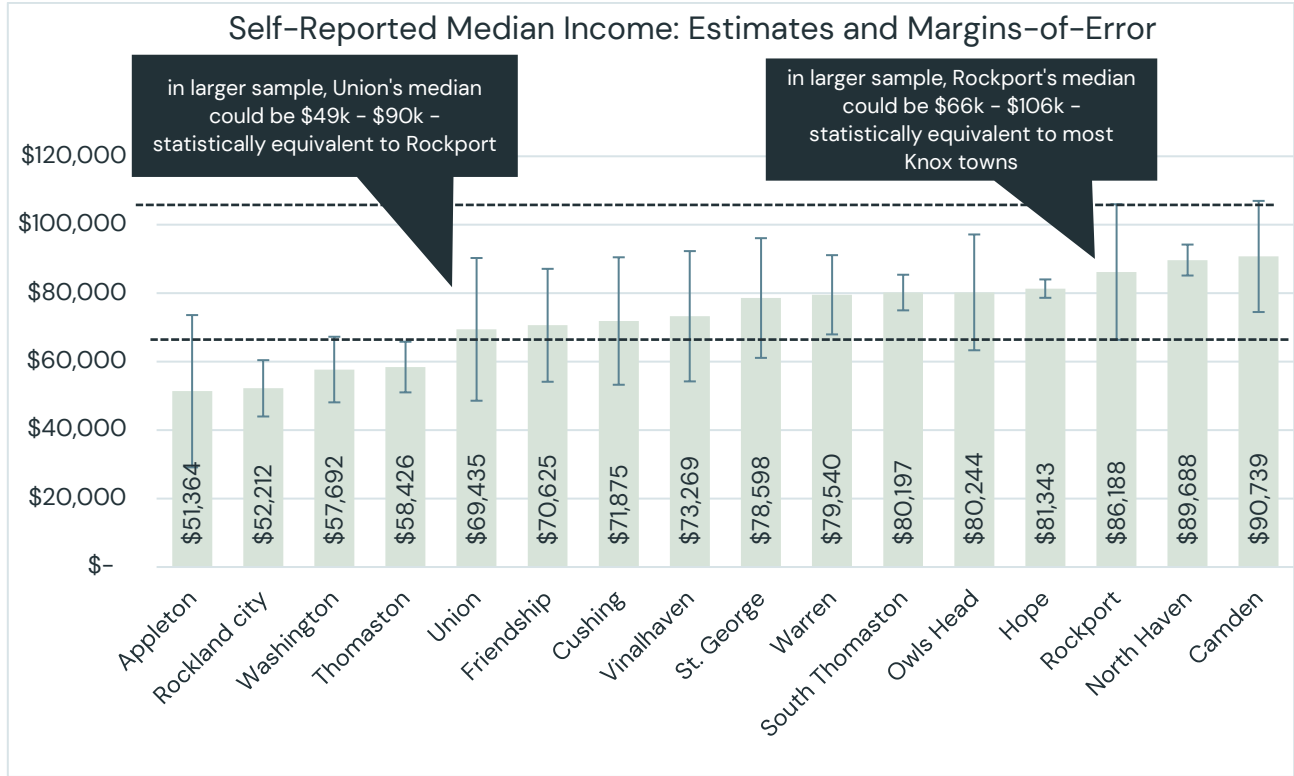
The term “census data” is used for data collected by the US Census Bureau, though most demographic data comes from small samples. The Decennial Census is the only “census” that attempts to reach each household – in 2020, it counted people, households, and race/ethnicity. Most demographic, income, housing and transportation data comes from the American Community Survey (ACS), which sends annual surveys to 2–4% of an area’s housing units. Surveys are sent around April of each year, and data are aggregated into 5-year periods.

ACS data in this report (and most reports with similar metrics) are 5-year totals from the ACS, e.g., 2017–2021 or 2018–2022. Across 5 years, through sampling, the American Community Survey may reach 10–15% of an area’s housing units. As such there is considerable sampling error and wide margins-of-error around most estimates from the ACS. This means that a statistic such as 10% could be anywhere from 5%–15% (or a wider range) if we knew it for everyone. *This improves for larger areas (e.g., county).* Further with seasonal residences and rentals the surveys sent April 1st may not reach all residents and/or occupants may not feel they can respond.

Margins-of-error around income are significant – Rockport’s median household income of ~\$86,000 could be anywhere from \$66,000 – \$106,000. And, this only accounts for sampling error. Income is subject to measurement error, if people report income and benefits

inconsistently. Studies have shown that different groups such as self-employed individuals or those living on retirement income or benefits self-report income differently than salaried employees,

Figure 12. Margins-of-Error around Median Household Income Estimates in Knox County



Source: American Community Survey (ACS), 2018–2022 5-year estimates.

If the margins-of-error of two towns overlap, it means there is no statistically significant difference between them.

Given high margins-of-error for most most-level estimates, *we suggest caution in interpreting small differences between towns or compared with Maine overall* – for example if an estimate for Rockport is 11% and the state is 13%, and the margin-of-error is 3%, Rockport could actually be at or above the statewide level. Further, this report does not provide economic or sociodemographic estimates below the town level, with the exception of population by block group which is collected in the Decennial Census.

### C. ACTIONS UNDERWAY IN ROCKPORT AND KNOX COUNTY

This section lists Town and community programs and initiatives with resilience components. It was developed in early 2024 and is not intended as a comprehensive list of actions.

#### TOWN PLANNING AND DECISION-MAKING

- Rockport Planning Department brings physical maps to public meetings to show visually who attends
- Rockport Planning Department utilizes CivicReady to share public events
- Town utilizes Facebook though does not have staff dedicated to social media



- Town staff write press releases for newspapers and website
- [Village Partnership Initiative Task Force](#) – A community-led group formed around Main Street bridge replacement and the Town created a Task Force that led to public input, MDOT discussions and a transportation study to (a) assess walk and bike accessibility to downtown and schools, and (b) increase multimodal options.
- Town Staff interested in ideas and partnerships for broader outreach and engagement

#### HOUSING AND ENERGY

- Zoning ordinance changes proposed for June 2024 include (a) reducing lot size minimums to promote infill development, and (b) density bonuses for Planned Unit Development with affordable housing
- In 2023, the Town modified zoning ordinance in accordance with LD 2003 to allow Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) on residential and commercial lots (and up to 4 dwelling units on single-family lots)
- Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) legislation in 2023
- Midcoast Habitat for Humanity builds well-insulated homes with heat pumps and energy efficient construction so homeowners benefit from lower costs to heat/cool.
- Knox County Homeless Coalition provides shelter, transitional living, emergency youth shelter and the Rockland Youth Center for housing insecure and homeless persons.

#### ENERGY

- Library hosts educational sessions about home energy and Efficiency Maine rebates
- Heating assistance provided through AIO food pantry and firewood from Waldo County Woodshed.
- Town converted Town Office building to heat pumps (with oil as secondary) and installed generators at two additional buildings
- Town is considering plug-in hybrid for next Code Enforcement vehicle

#### TOWN INFRASTRUCTURE

- Town of Rockport is pursuing water resource recovery infrastructure and Route 90 sewer expansion to increase wastewater capacity and provide alternative to aging septic systems
- Town of Rockport pursuing funding for culvert replacements (enlargements).
- After October 2021 storm event, climate became primary for how Town considers road reconstruction and culvert replacement.
  - In addition to addressing deferred maintenance, town makes road repairs with climate impacts in mind.
  - Following repairs, Town is re-seeding and mulching disturbed areas to cut down on erosion under roads
- Town is assessing all major culvert crossings and assessing the need for larger culverts or live-bottom box culverts, and may be pursue grants for culverts or fish crossings from Maine DOT (and/or bonds)

## HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH

- MaineHealth Care at Home conducts assessments and works through primary care offices to connect patients with services (e.g., transportation, heating, food assistance).
- PenBay representatives have attended Select Board meetings and spoken with Planning Department about their challenges recruiting nurses, due to housing shortage

## FOOD SECURITY

- Local food production and distribution with Aldermere Farms and partner organizations (e.g. PenBay Medical Center, Salvation Army, and Knox County Food Council)
- MCH (Making Community Happen) Meals on Wheels serves hot meals to home-bound seniors over 60 who reside in Knox County.
- Tax incentives for agricultural production

## 360<sup>0</sup> ASSISTANCE

- Rockport General Assistance fund provided 68 awards in 2023, more than prior years.
- Nonprofits provide 360 services and assessment for people seeking housing support – including finances, transportation costs, energy costs, and health/mental health needs.
- Knox County Homeless Coalition provides transportation support (e.g., helps find cars, car repair fund, and transportation to appointments).

## EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT

- Aldermere Farms provides students with hands-on learning about local food systems through partnerships with schools.
- Rockport Conservation Commission climate speaker series at library
- The American Red Cross works with Knox EMA to co-deliver education and training.

## STORM PREPARATION AND RESPONSE

- Rockport's new [CivicReady alert system](#) to send texts or calls about storms/emergencies and public meetings
- Rockport's Emergency Management Director works with the Knox County Emergency Management Agency (EMA).
- Rockport Fire Department has several emergency generators that they set up for elderly and health-sensitive households during power outages.
- Rockport Fire Department provides basement pumping resulting from flooding.
- American Red Cross provides shelter, food, and direct financial assistance following disasters. The Red Cross trailer is at Knox EMA office and can be mobilized quickly.

## SEA LEVEL RISE

- As part of 2024 budget proposal, Town is proposing in a Harbor task force and public process to assess and plan for sea level rise
- Town Staff participated in a Sea Level Rise scenario-planning workshop hosted by the Gulf of Maine Research Institute (2023)

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