



Affordability for All Work Group Meeting

(working title)

Children & Youth Community Plan
August 6, 2026





WELCOME

& Introductions



Introductions

Please share your name, role or organization, and answer:

What's something from your childhood that brought you a lot of joy but didn't cost much?



Agenda

Welcome, Introductions & Purpose

15 min

Identify Key Population-Level Indicator(s)

20 min

What's the Story Behind the Curve? What Is Contributing to Financial Instability?

20 min

What Young People, Families, & the Literature Say Is Driving Financial Stress

Discussion

25 min

Next Steps and Closing

5 min



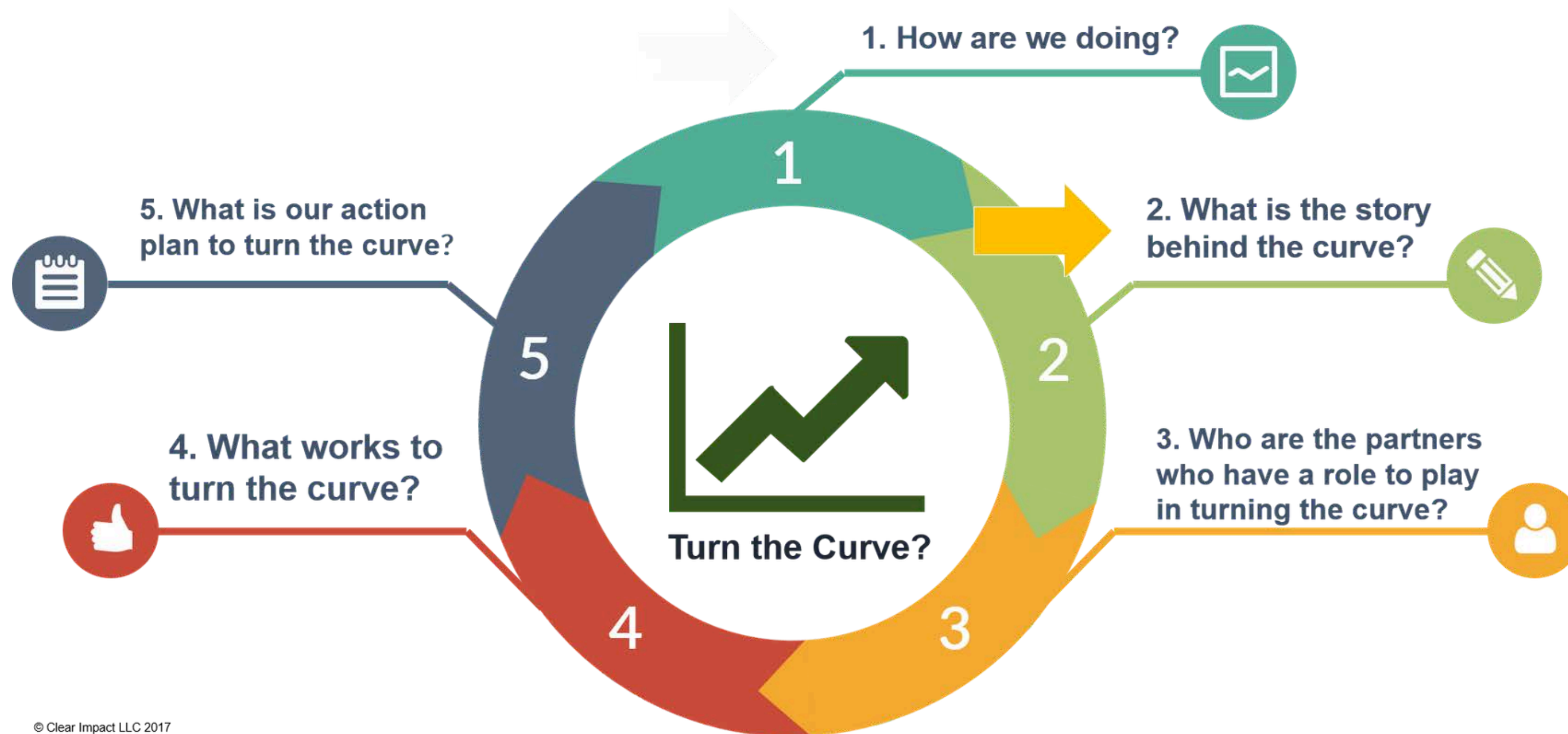
Meeting Purpose

To ensure we're measuring the right things and explore the factors contributing to financial instability among Alexandria families



Results-Based Accountability: Turn the Curve Thinking

A structure for moving from shared concern to measurable action.



© Clear Impact LLC 2017



Start with the Result

The condition of wellbeing we want for children, youth, and families.



Result

Every family has what they need to live with stability and thrive in Alexandria.

Guiding question for this work group

How can we better align and strengthen community efforts that help families build financial stability, reduce economic stress, and access pathways to economic mobility?



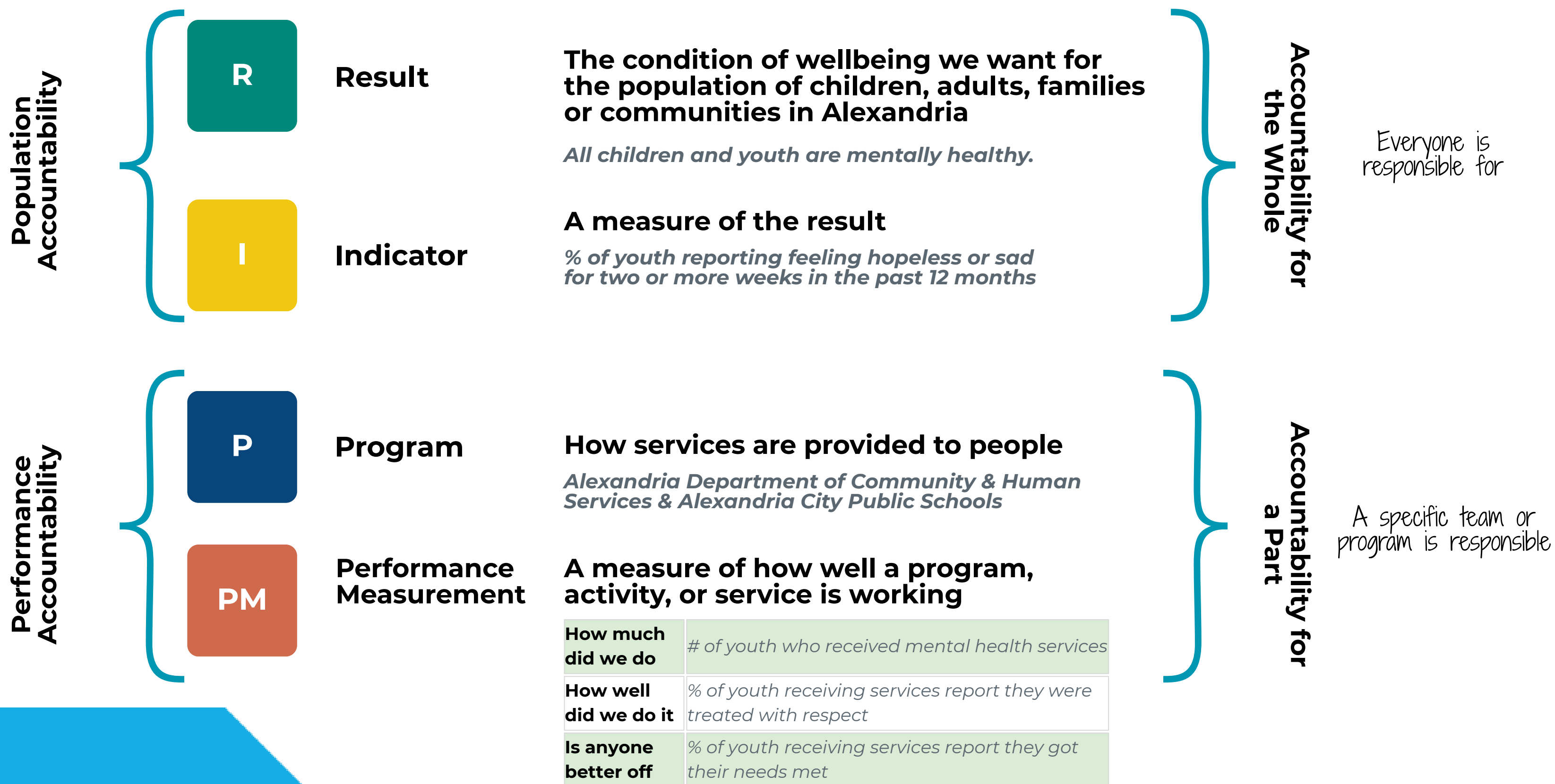
What Will Be Our Key Population Indicators?





Accountability Framework

Results-Based Accountability separates accountability into two levels:





What makes a useful indicator?

According to [RBA Guide Clear Impact](#)

Communication Power

Is it clear and meaningful?

- Can people understand it quickly?

Proxy Power

Does it get to the heart of the result?

- Would improvement in this measure suggest that families are genuinely better off?

Data Power

Can we track it reliably over time?

- Is the data available consistently?
- Can it be disaggregated to show who is most affected?

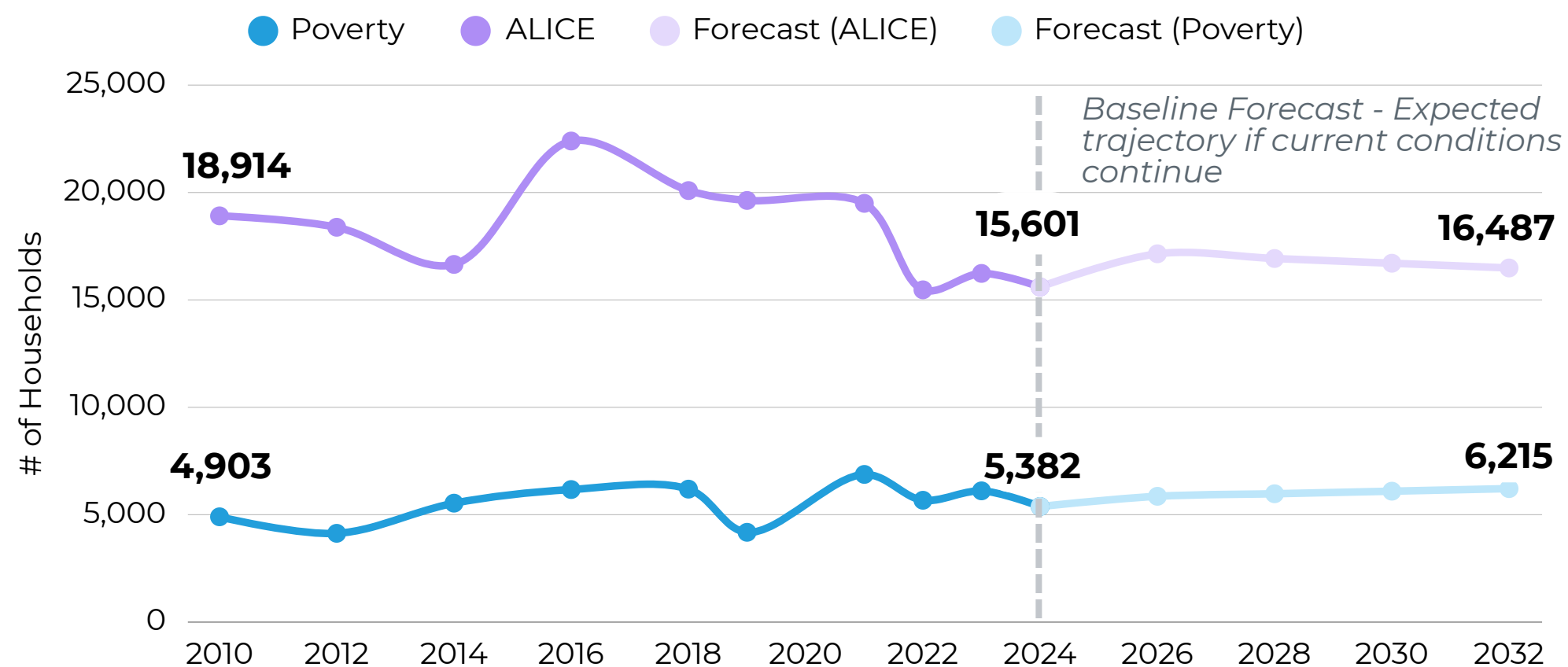




ALICE* in Alexandria

**ALICE is an acronym for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed - households that earn more than the Federal Poverty Level, but less than the basic cost of living for the county. Households below the ALICE Threshold can't afford the essentials (housing, child care, food, transportation, health care, and a basic smartphone plan).*

Alexandria Households below the ALICE Threshold

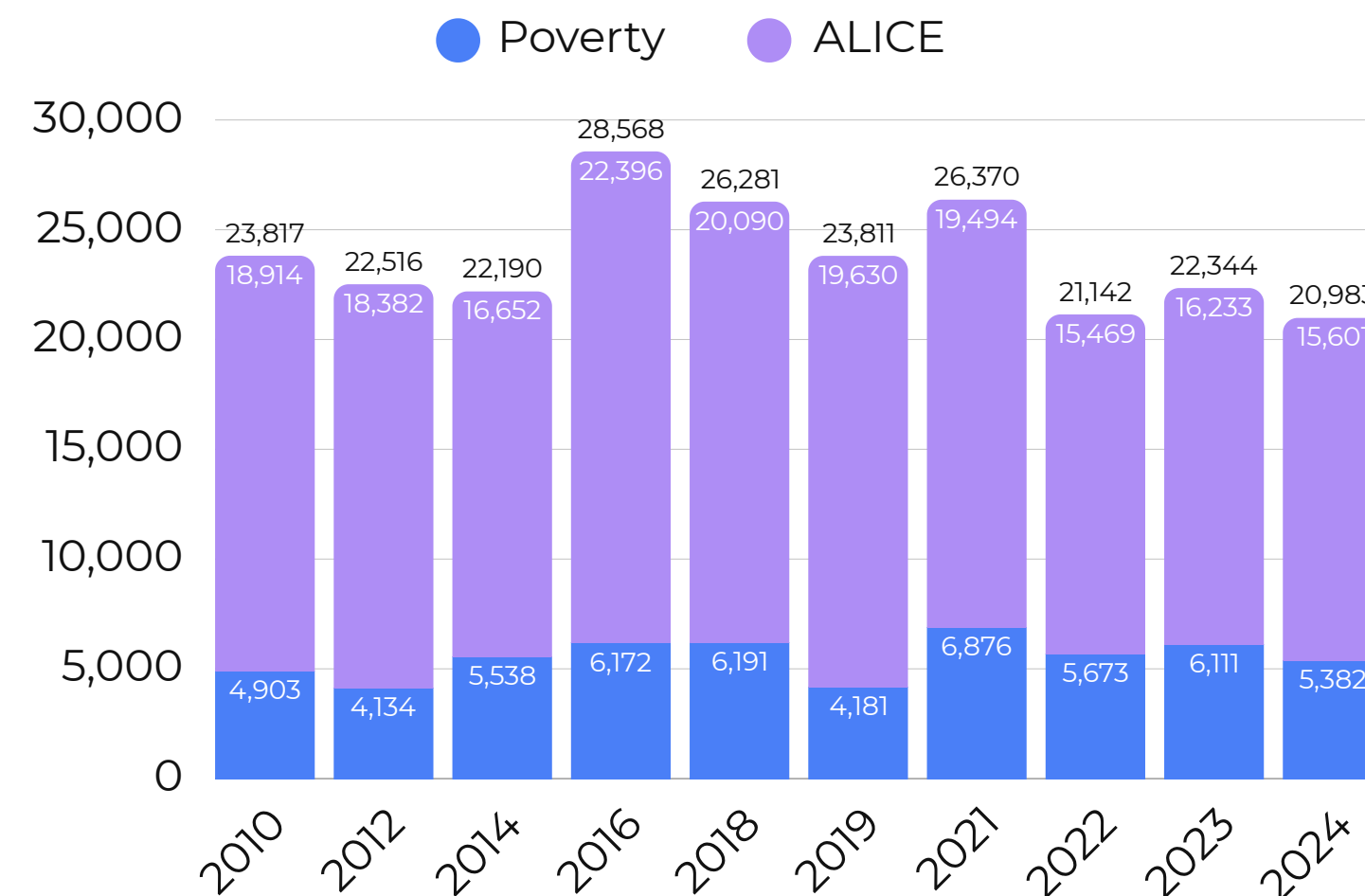


[ALICE Threshold, 2010-2024; American Community Survey, 2010-2024](#)

Historical Trend & Forecast for ALICE Households:

- **Historical Trend:** Since 2010, ~16,000-22,000 Alexandria households have remained below the ALICE Threshold each year. In 2024, an estimated 15,601 households still could not afford the basic cost of living.
- **Baseline Forecast:** Without changing current conditions, more than 16,000 households are projected to remain unable to afford basic needs through 2032.

Cumulative # of Households below the ALICE Threshold



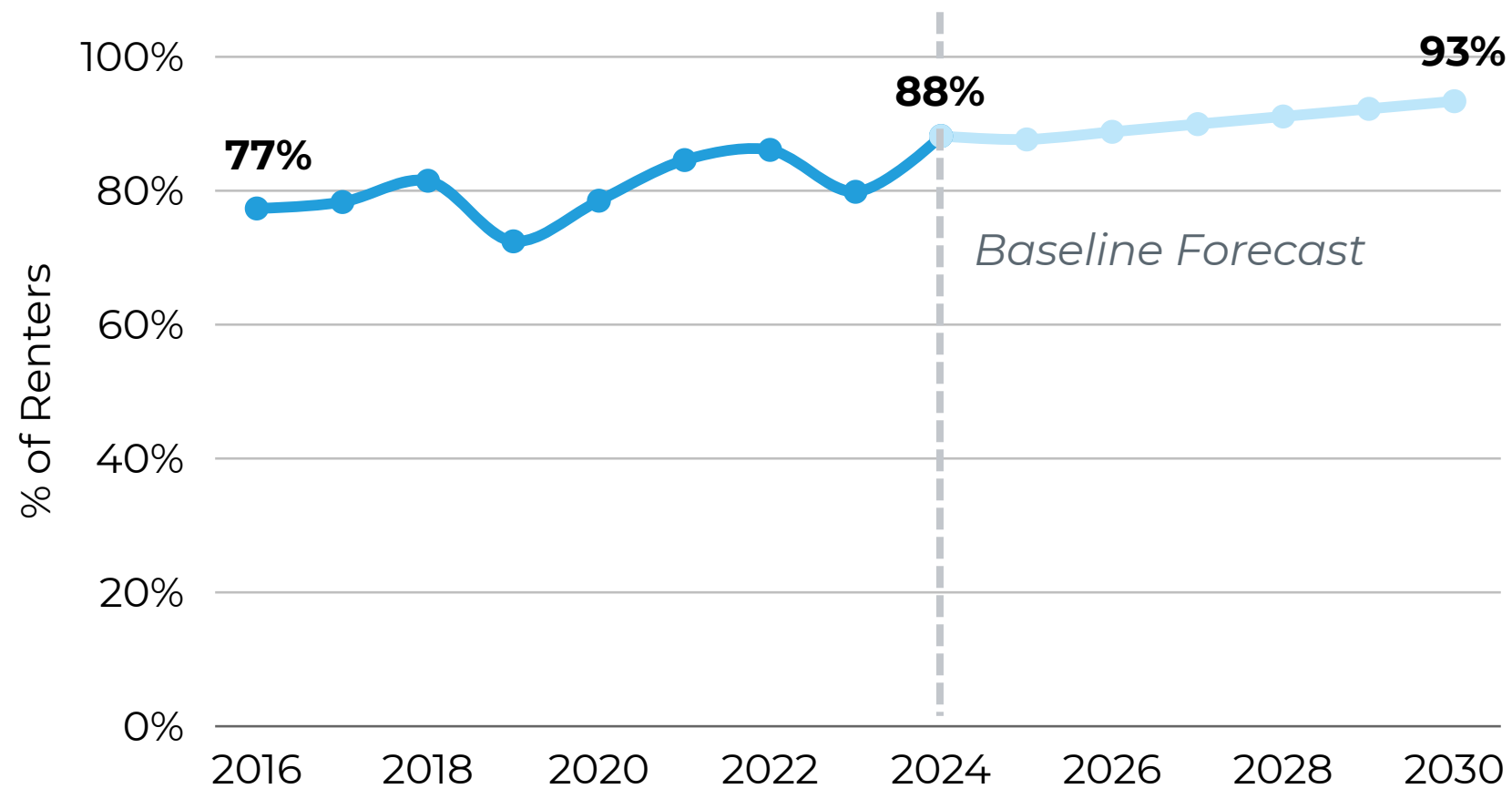
Historical Trend & Forecast for Households in Poverty

- **Historical Trend:** The number of households living in poverty has fluctuated between ~4,000 and 6,900 over the past decade, with 5,382 households living below the federal poverty line in 2024.
- **Baseline Forecast:** The number of households living in poverty is projected to remain relatively stable at ~6,200 households through 2032 if current trends continue.



Housing Cost-Burden in Alexandria

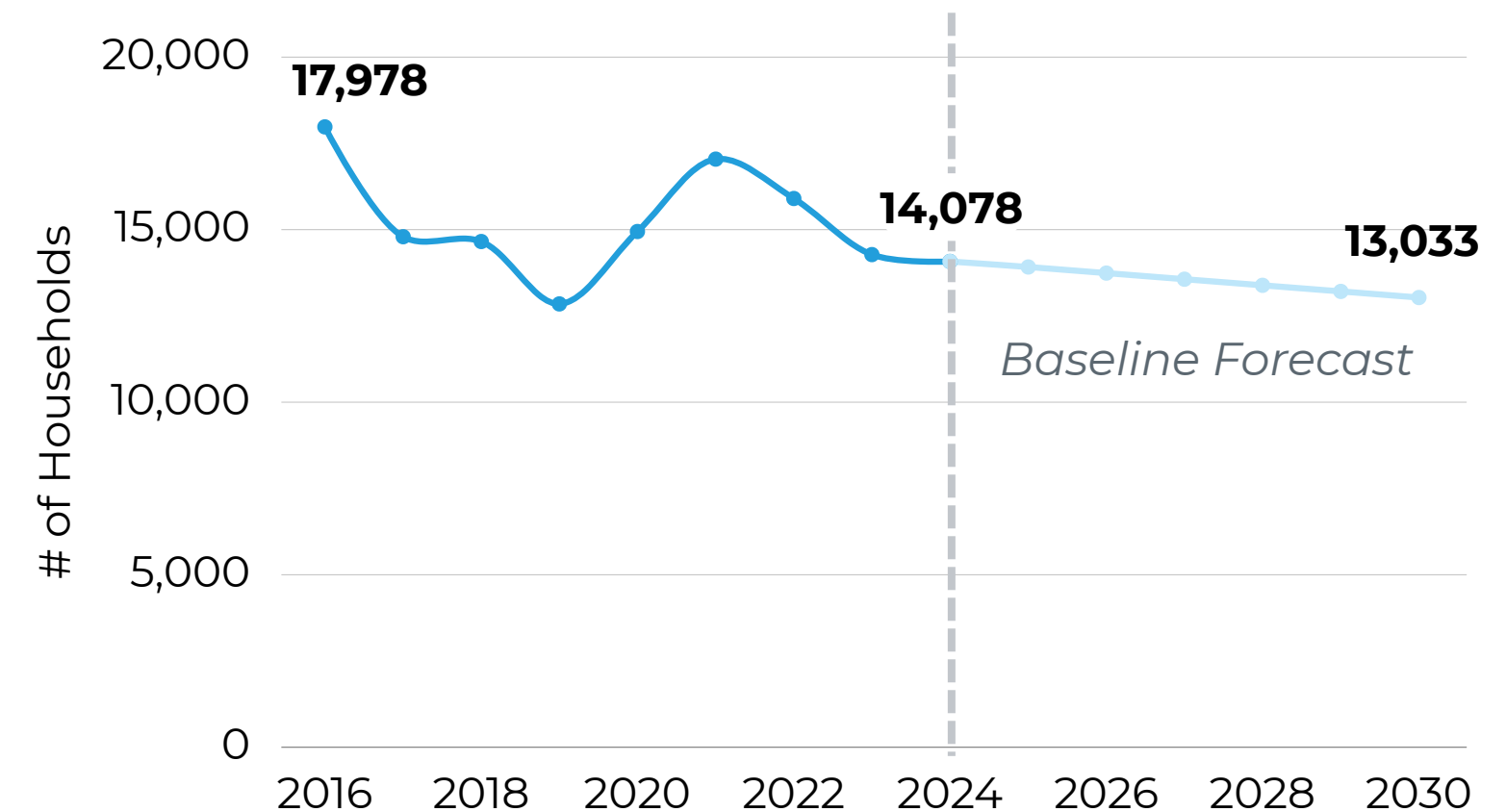
Renter Households with incomes below \$75K Who Are Housing Cost Burdened



Historical Trend & Forecast:

- Since 2016, the percentage of lower-income renter households that are housing cost burdened has increased by 14%. If the current trend continues, about 93% could be housing cost burdened by 2030.

of Renter Households with incomes below \$75K in Alexandria, VA



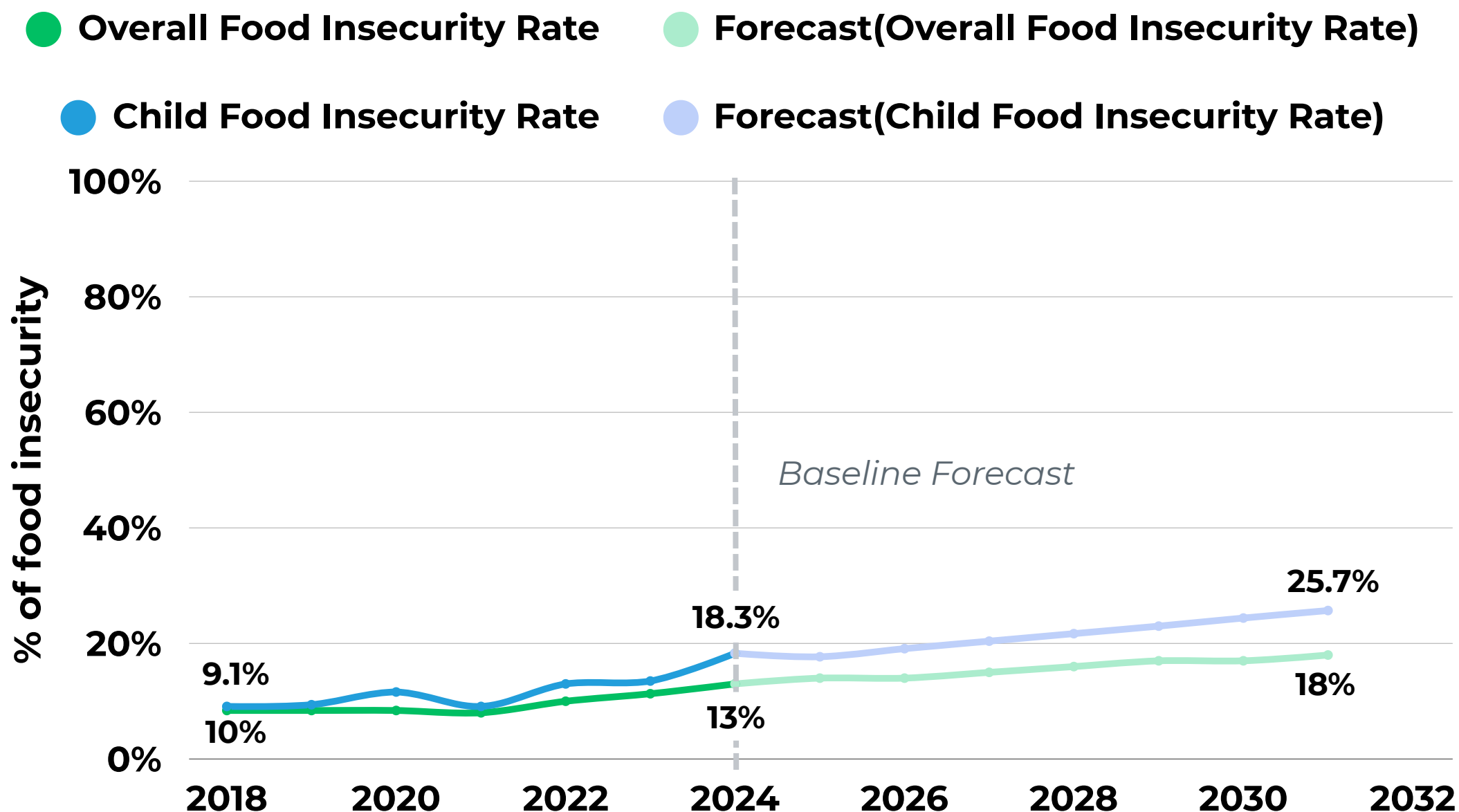
Historical Trend & Forecast:

- Since 2016, the number of renter households earning less than \$75,000 living in Alexandria has declined by ~ 22%. This number could fall to approximately 13,000 by 2030 if the current trend continues.



Food Insecurity in Alexandria

Prevalence of Food Insecurity in Alexandria



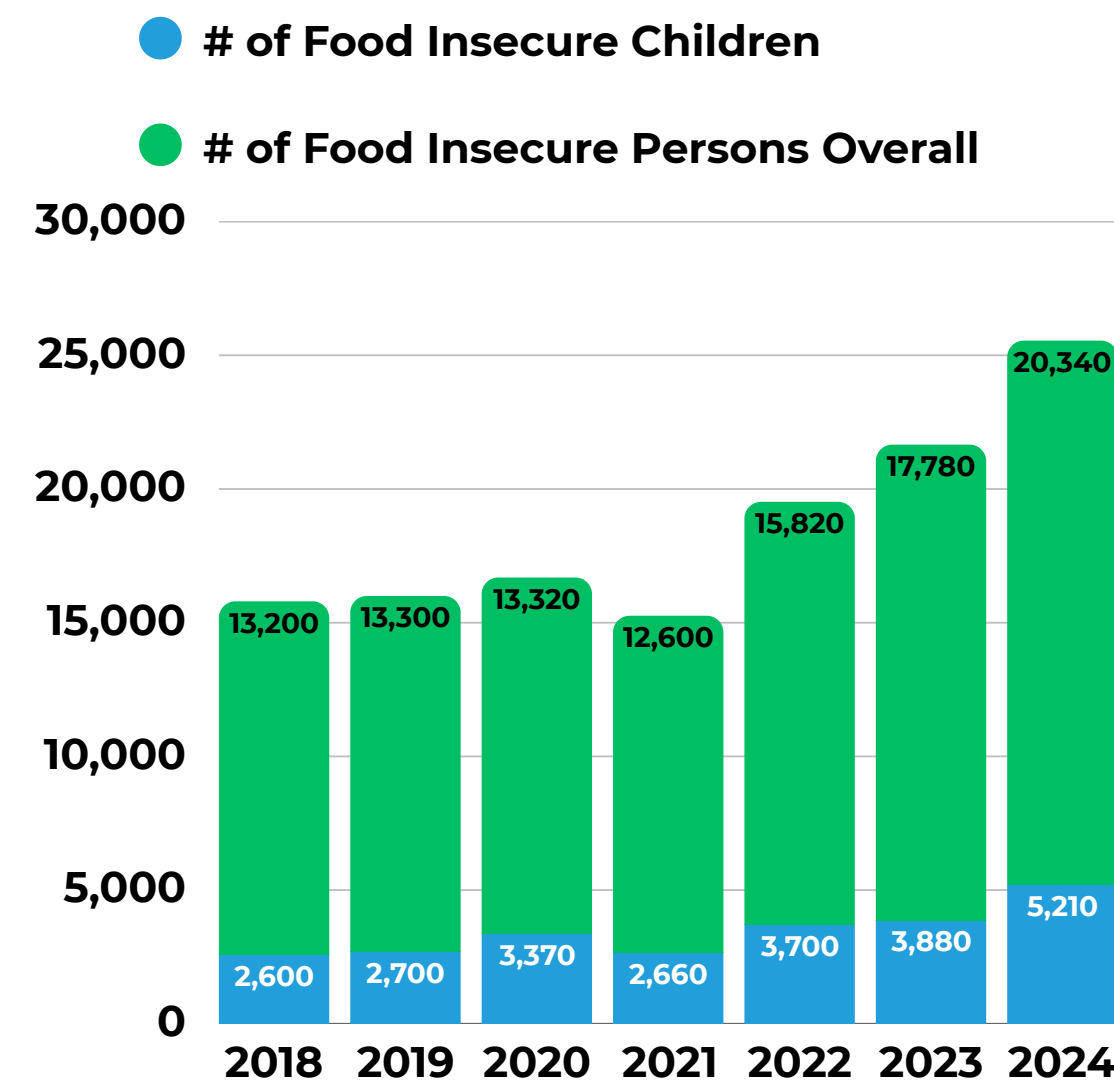
Historical Trends

- Since 2021, Alexandria's overall food insecurity rate has increased by 62.5%.
- Since 2021, Alexandria's child food insecurity rate has increased by approximately 101%, meaning it more than doubled.

Baseline Forecasts

- The baseline forecast suggests that, without a meaningful change in current conditions, **nearly one in five Alexandria residents** and **one in four children** could experience food insecurity by 2031.

of Alexandrians experiencing Food Insecurity

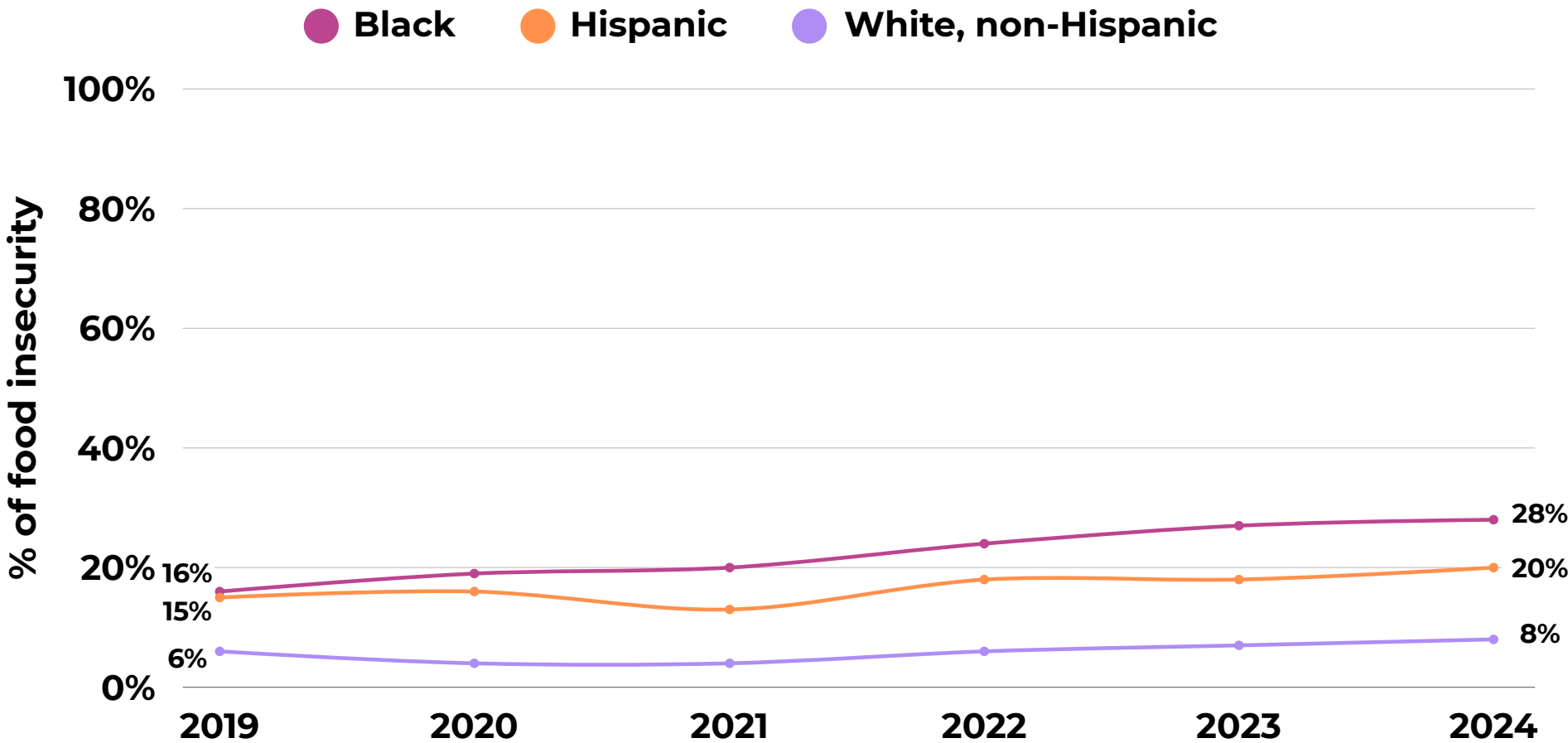


Source: Ribar, D.C., Harris, V., Dewey, A., Dawes, S., Hilvers, J., and Engelhard, E. (2026). Map the Meal Gap: An Analysis of Local Food Insecurity and Food Costs in the United States in 2016-2024. Feeding America National Organization.



Food Insecurity in Alexandria

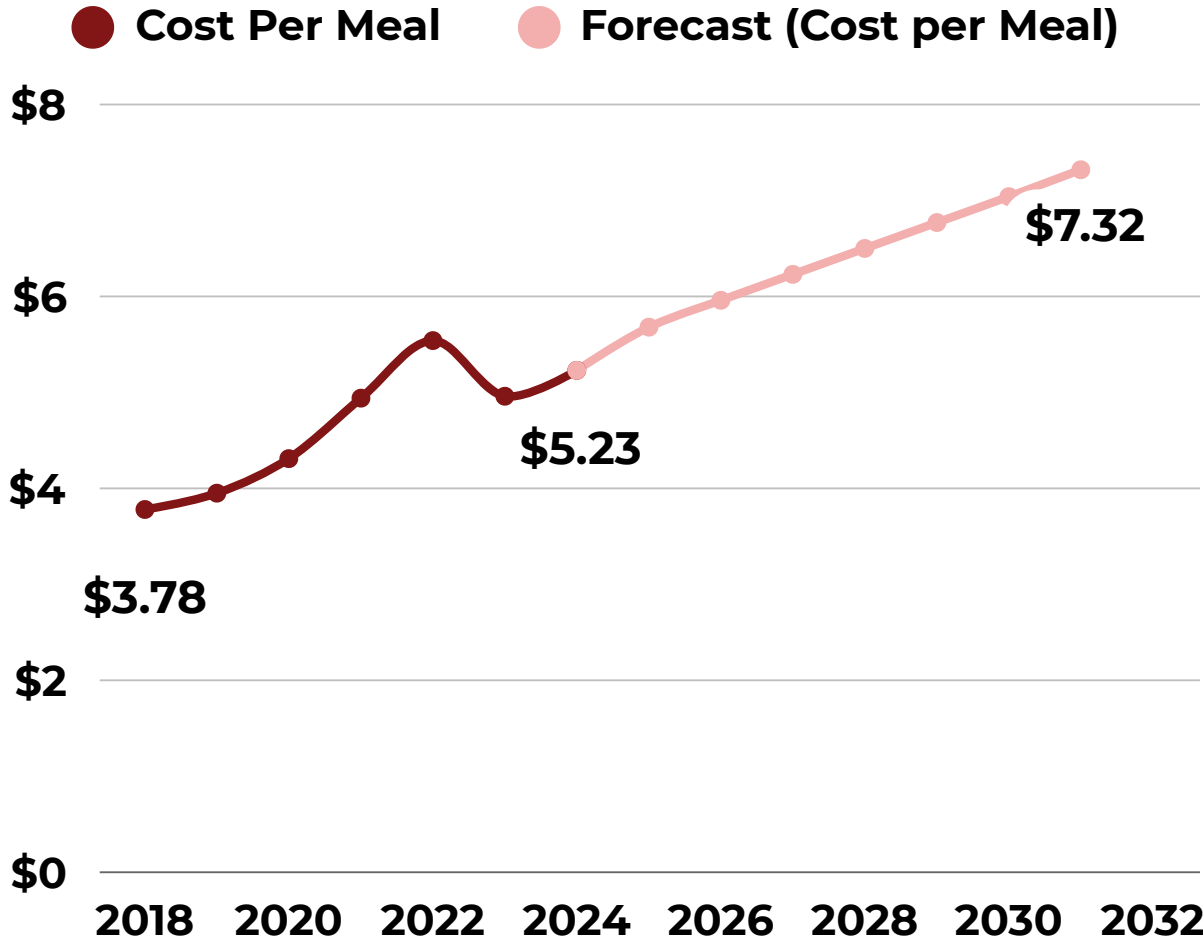
Prevalence of Food Insecurity in Alexandria, by Race/Ethnicity



Equity Trends

- Food insecurity has increased across racial and ethnic groups, but inequities remain pronounced. Black residents were approximately **3.5 times** as likely as White residents to experience food insecurity.

Cost per Meal in Alexandria



Cost per Meal Trends

- The estimated cost per meal increased 38% since 2018 and could reach \$7.32 by 2031 if current trends continue.

Source: Ribar, D.C., Harris, V., Dewey, A., Dawes, S., Hilvers, J., and Engelhard, E. (2026). Map the Meal Gap: An Analysis of Local Food Insecurity and Food Costs in the United States in 2016-2024. Feeding America National Organization.



Discussion

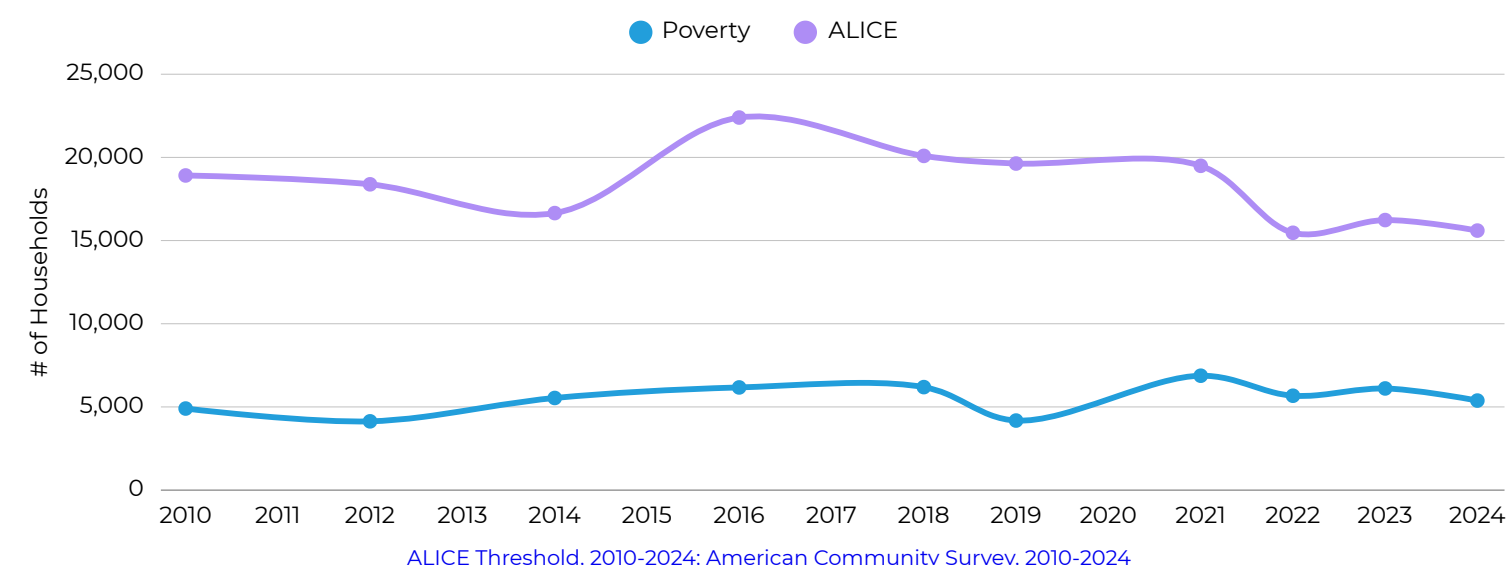




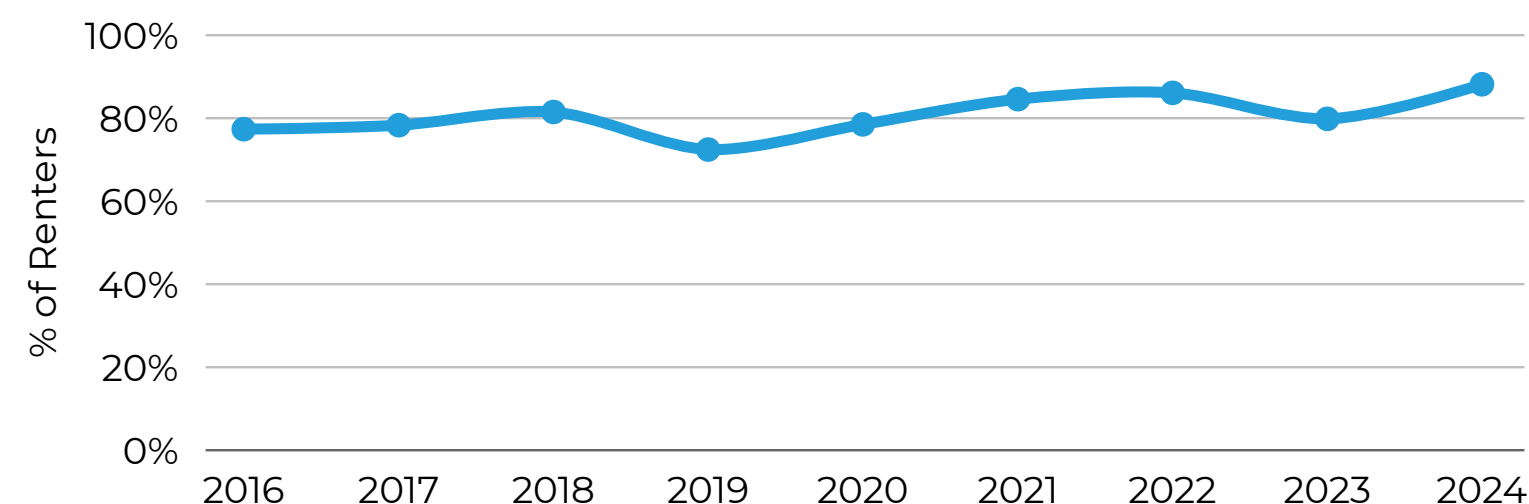
What Will Be Our Key Population Indicators?

- Do these indicators give us a meaningful picture of whether families can afford basic needs and live with stability?
- Is anything essential missing?

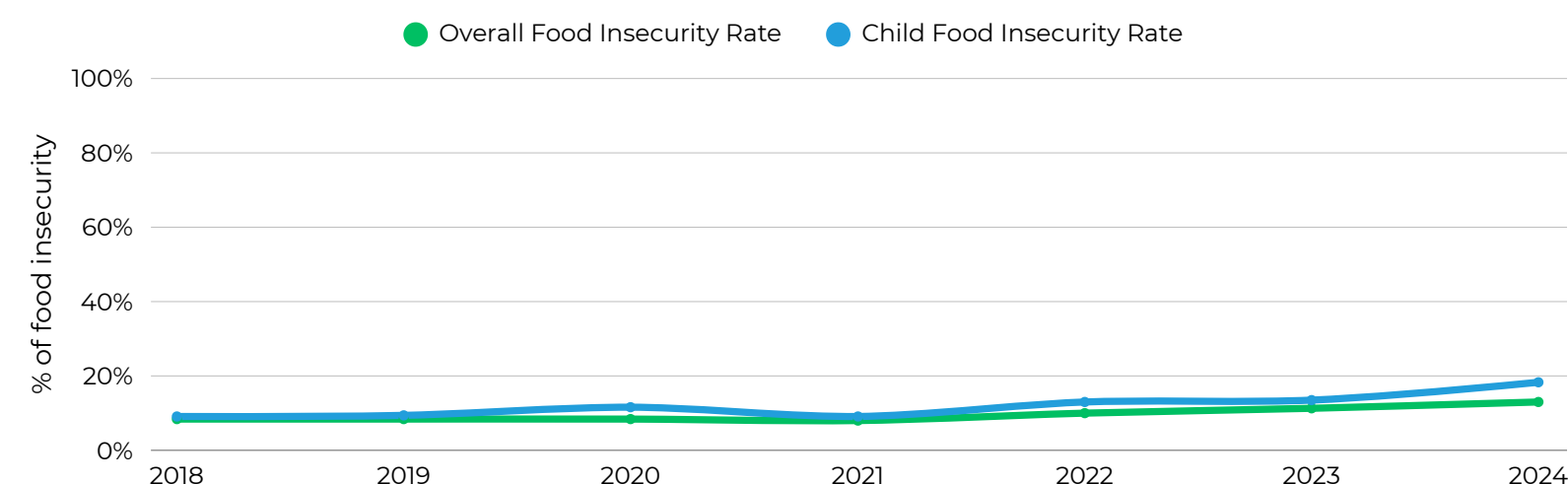
Alexandria Households below the ALICE Threshold



Renter Households with incomes below \$75K Who Are Housing Cost Burdened



Prevalence of Food Insecurity in Alexandria





What's the Story Behind the Curve?





**(Important context, but
outside our control)**

Economic Forces Beyond our Control

- Inflation
- Pandemic disruptions
- Supply chain shortages
- Housing market trends
- Interest rates
- Wars affecting energy and food prices
- Federal policy
- Globalization
- Corporate pricing/market concentration

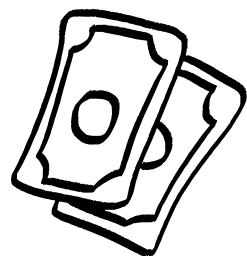
These (and probably other forces) help explain why families are under greater pressure today than they were six years ago.



What Youth, Families, & the Literature Say Is Driving Financial Stress

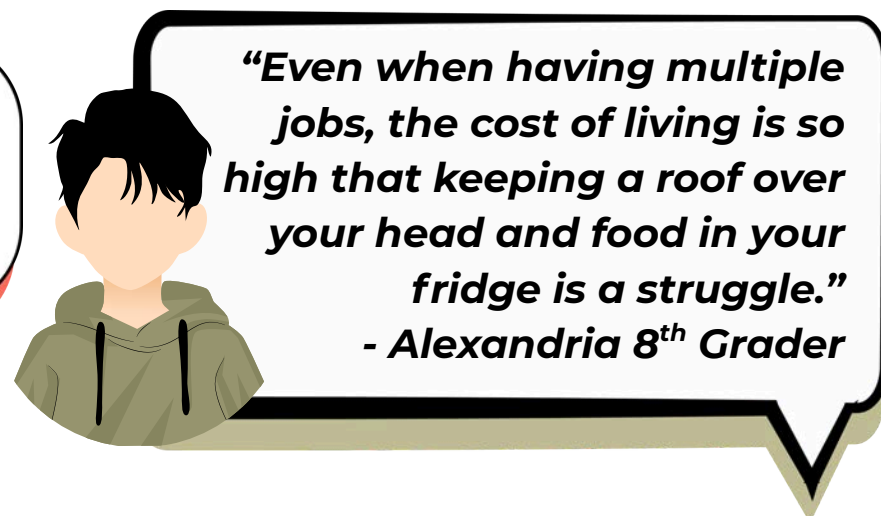


What Young People & the Literature Say Is Driving Financial Stress



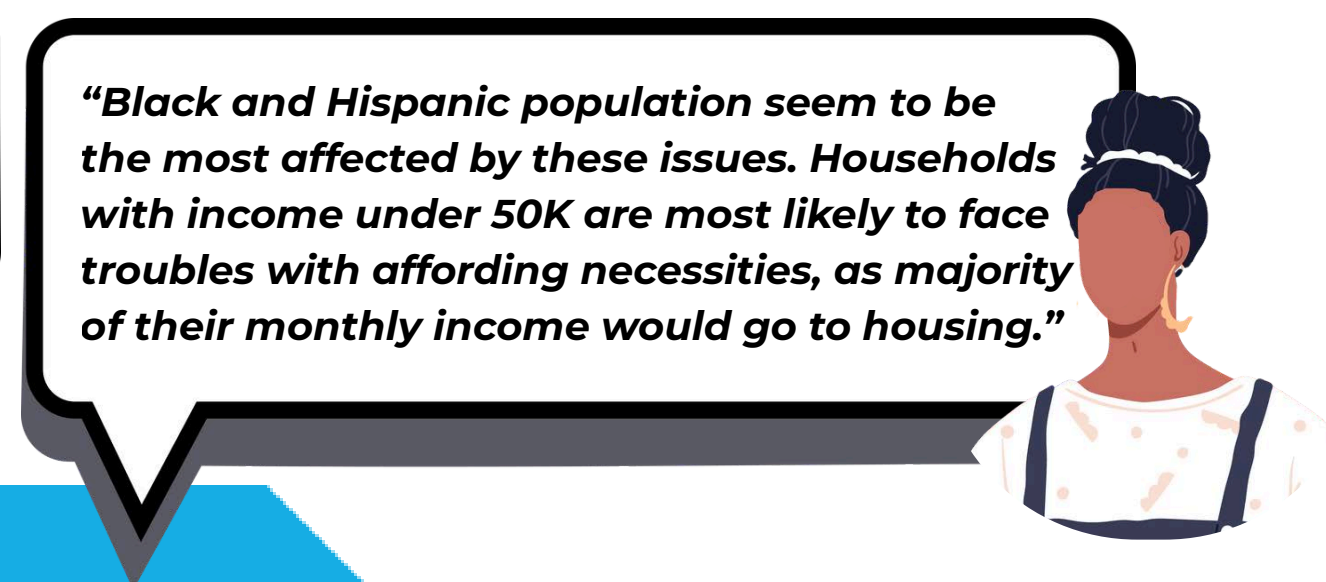
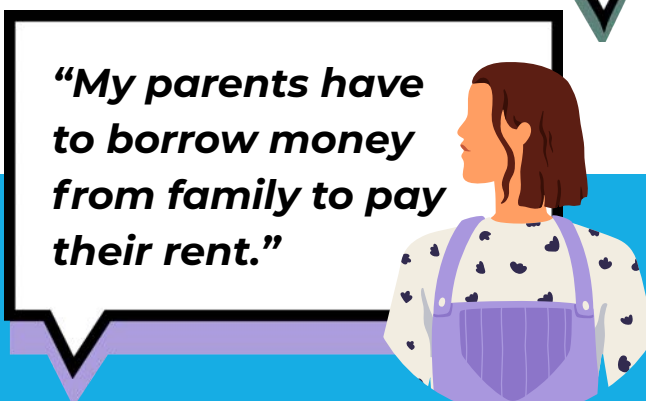
Wages Have Not Kept Pace with the Cost of Living

[Brookings, 2026](#)



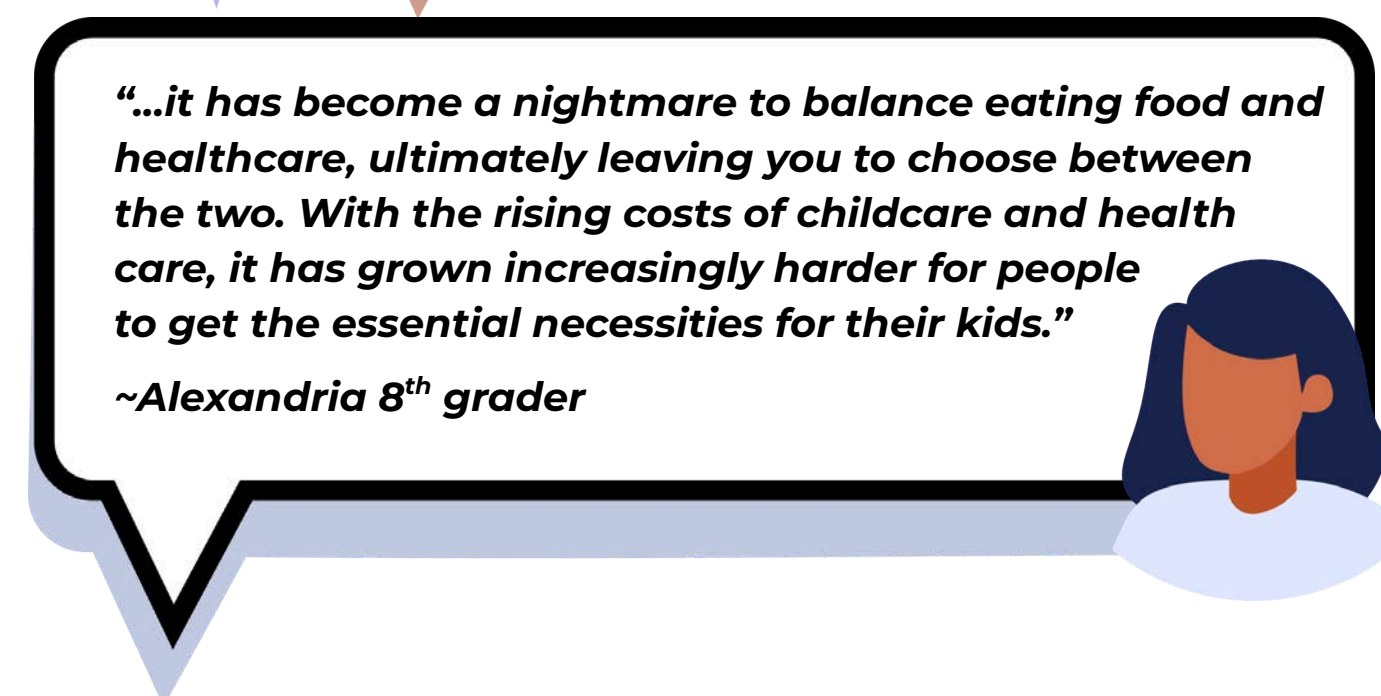
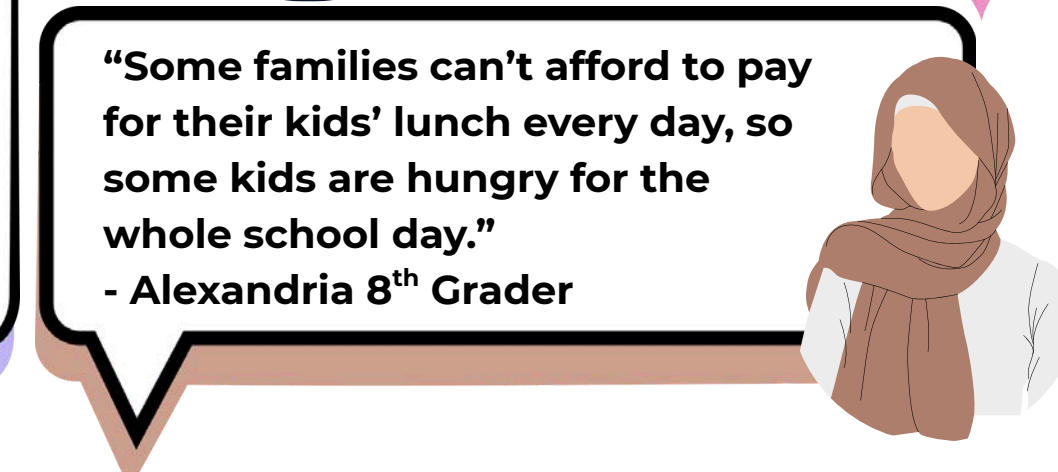
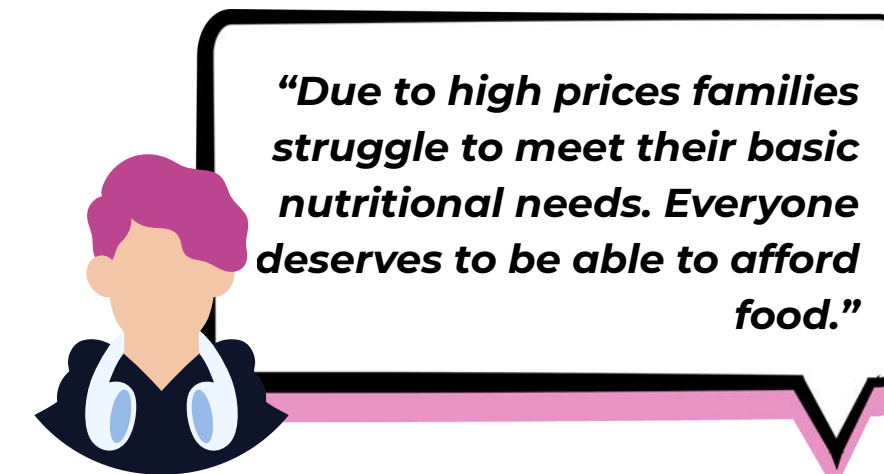
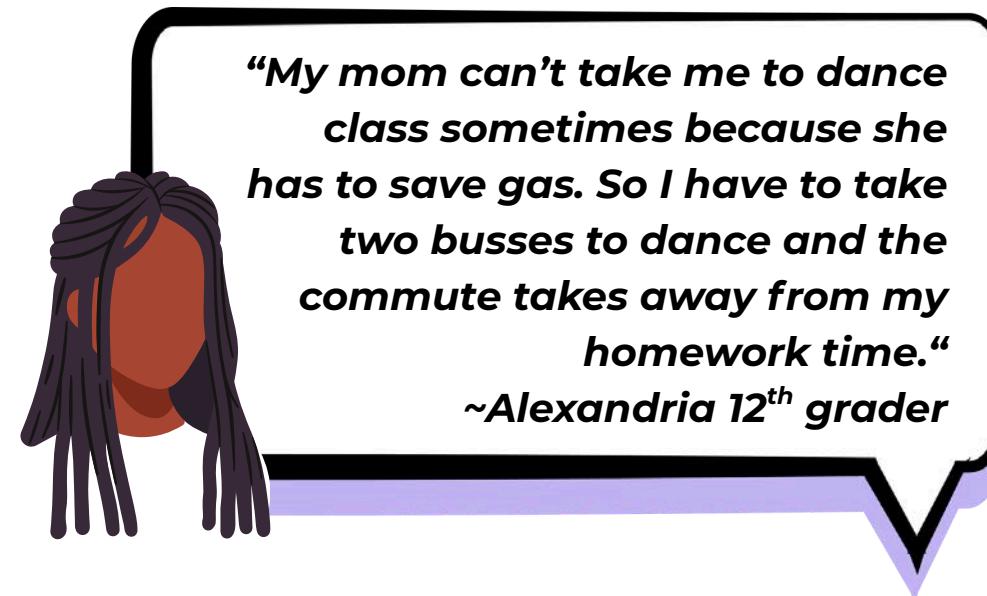
High Housing Costs Drive Instability

[National Alliance to End Homelessness,](#)



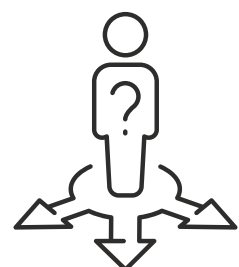
Rising Costs of Healthcare, Transportation, Food, and Childcare Force Impossible Tradeoffs

[Brookings, 2026](#)





What Young People & the Literature Say Is Driving Financial Stress



Fragmented systems make financial instability harder to navigate

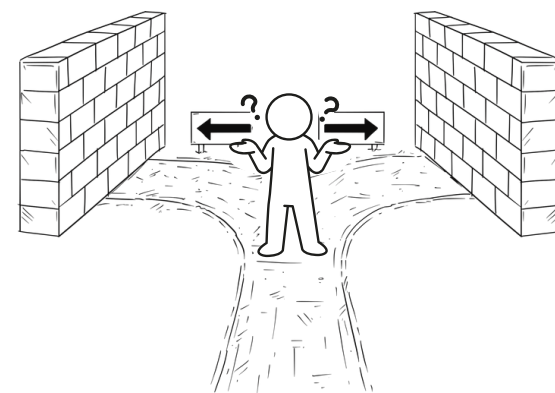
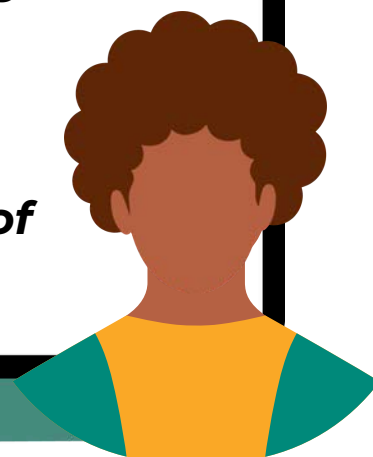
"Families are often unaware of existing resources and assistance programs."

~Alexandria 12th grader



Structural racism & inequitable access to wealth-building

"I would say the data accurately represents what I know about the conditions in my community. It is predominately White people who own houses in Alexandria in the nice areas or live in luxury apartments, while Black and Hispanics make up the majority of renters in the less desirable part of Alexandria."



Low wages & limited access to college & career pathways & good jobs

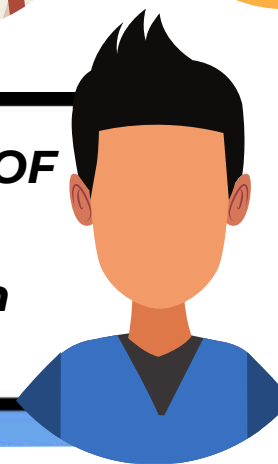
"I think another important issue is students not being aware of the many resources that we do have."



"More help with college applications and scholarships. Some teachers don't really explain how to apply... They always assume everyone knows what they are doing."



"People have to pay A LOT OF MONEY for college, causing people to end school at 12th grade."



"Not much chances for employment."





What Families & the Literature Say Is Driving Financial Stress



Benefits access, cliffs, & administrative burden

[Herd & Moynihan \(2025\)](#), [Crandall & Ojelabi \(2021\)](#)

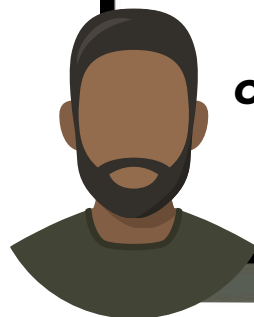


Eligibility Gaps - families needing help before a crisis

[United for ALICE](#)



Income & Employment Shocks, & Lack of an Emergency Buffer



*"You psychologically feel terrible about yourself. It's like...I'm a criminal or something. Like, I'm trying to scan the system."
~ARISE Participant*

*"If I can't go to human services and you can't give me a referral, where do I go? So until you...actually need some help, you find out there's no help for you."
~ ARISE Participant*



*"My daughter got critically ill - she was hospitalized for almost a month. I couldn't work for a year - she needed round-the-clock care...I was drowning with unpaid rent and court notices. Then I won the \$500. It kept us afloat."
~ ARISE Participant*

*"I got to fill out this paperwork and still I can't get help because, oh, well, you have a 401 k. Why is that a punishment for me?"
~ARISE Participant*



*"It's really hard to qualify for anything in Alexandria unless you're already in a bad situation or at poverty level. So if you're just surviving or need a little bit of assistance, you're very unlikely to get it."
~ ARISE Participant*



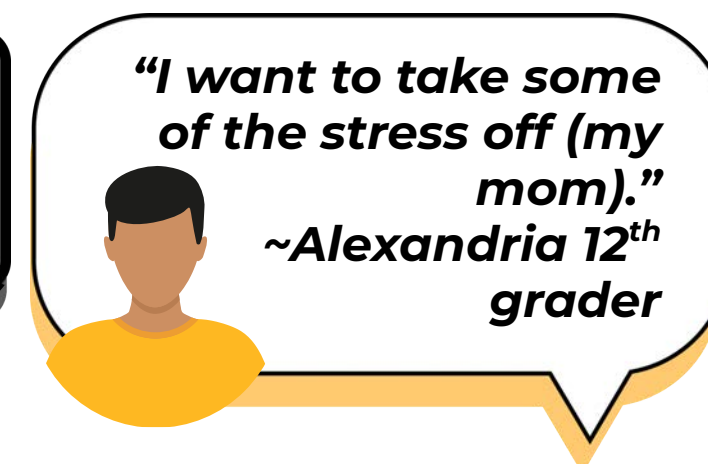
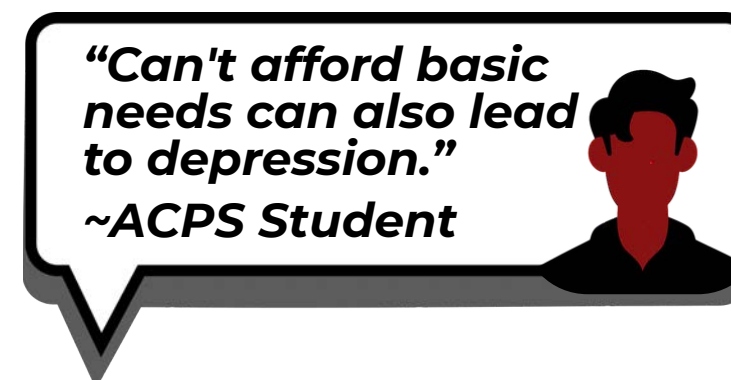
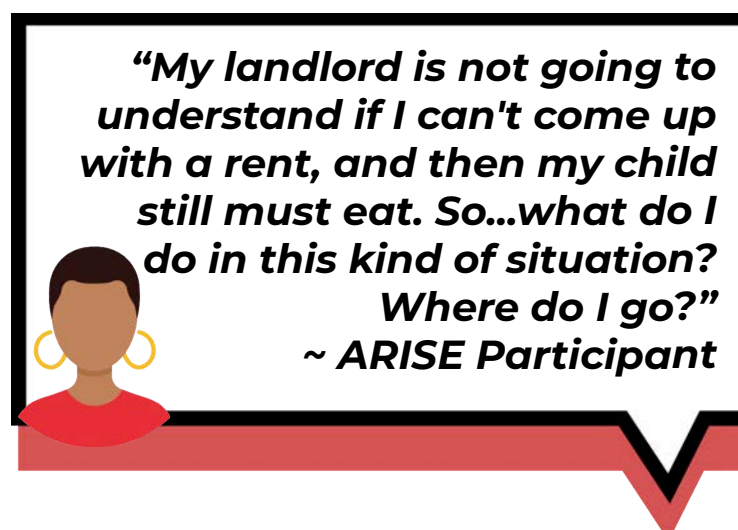


How Economic Instability Creates Conditions That Make It Harder for Youth to Thrive



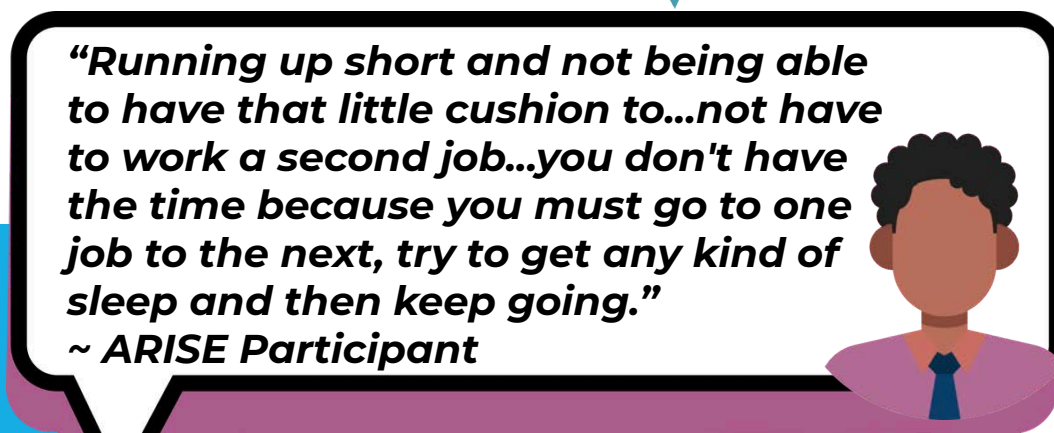
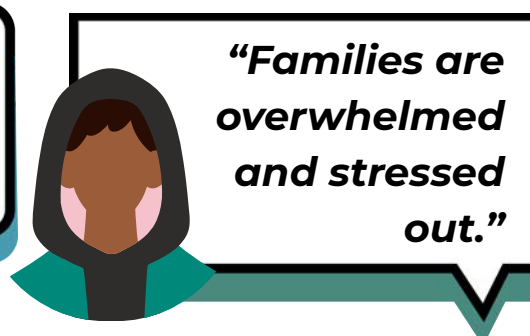
Economic hardship & limited supports create stress & instability even in the strongest of families

Caregivers and youth experience worry, disrupted routines, housing instability, food insecurity, and fewer choices.



Stress and instability reduce protective factors

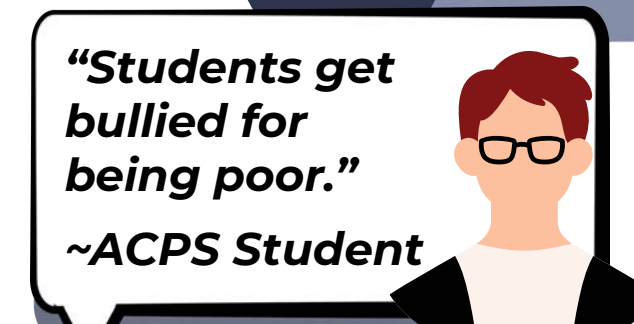
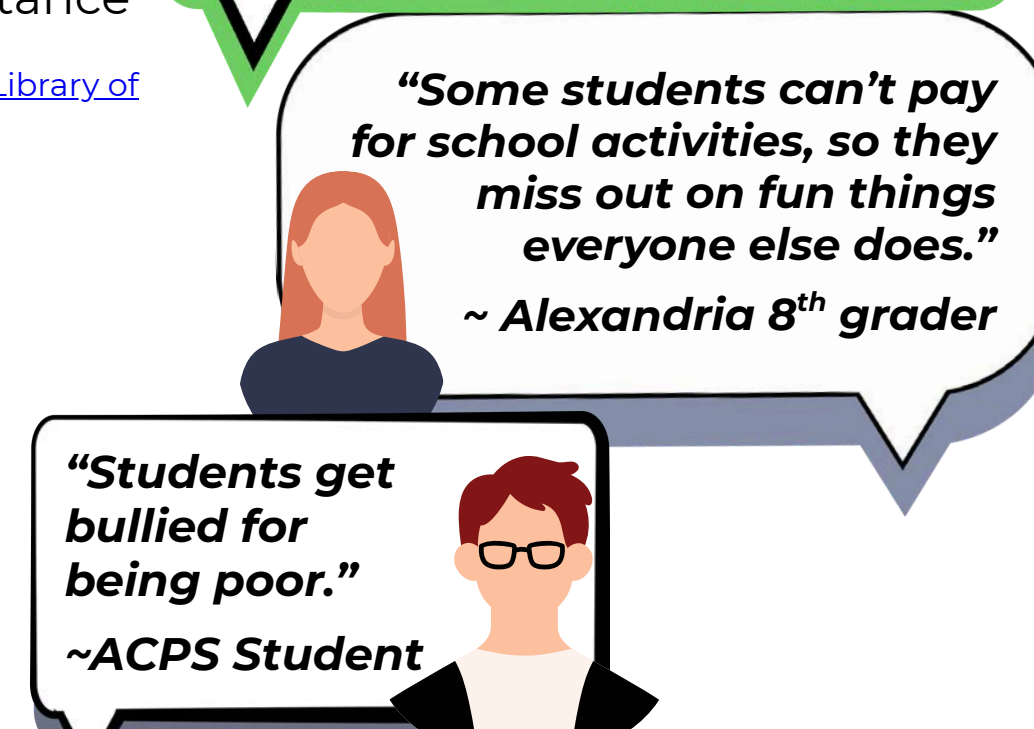
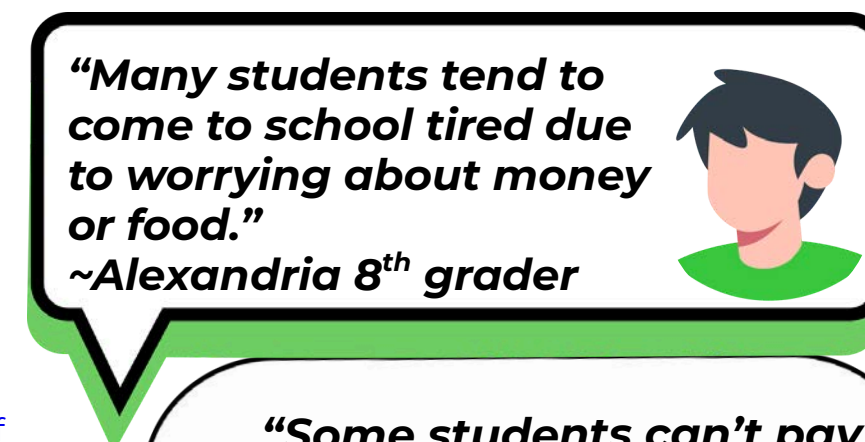
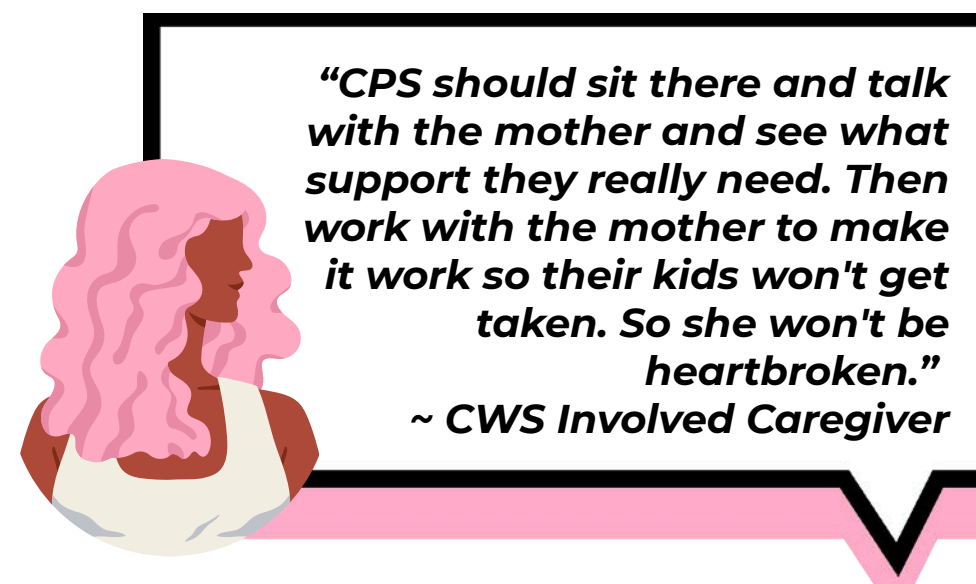
Families may have less time, money, and emotional bandwidth for supervision, connection, enrichment, school engagement, rest, and planning ([CDC, 2021](#))



Reduced protective factors increase youth risk

Youth may experience more mental health stress, academic disengagement, missed opportunities, exposure to violence, risk-taking behavior, substance use, or system involvement

([American Public Health Association, 2018](#), [National Library of Medicine, 2017](#), [Conrad-Hieber, A. & Byram, E., 2018](#))





Discussion

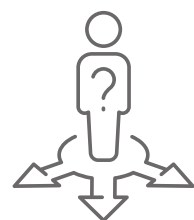




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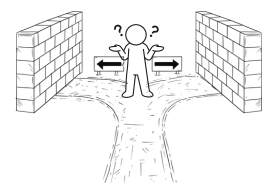
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Income & Employment Shocks, & Lack of an Emergency Buffer

Discussion

- **What feels most relevant?** Which root causes or system barriers feel most significant in Alexandria?
- **What's missing?** Based on what you've noticed/experienced, are there any root causes that should be added to the list?

Additional ideas from last meeting:

- Trust, accessibility, & usability
- Court involvement, incarceration, and family instability
- Chronic unemployment and disconnection from the labor force



Next Steps





Next Steps



- **Next meeting:** September 3, 3:30-5PM
- Begin mapping existing efforts, partners, and gaps.
- Move from understanding the story behind the curve into identifying where coordinated action can help.
- Check out latest recommendations from youth ([Report Cards Made by Youth](#))!