

## **Top-priority issues**

Sections four and five reported the top-priority issues for household and key informant survey respondents, while sections six through eight identified the following three sections will identify the top-priority issues for focus group participants (low-income parents, youth, and senior citizens). Table 60 displays the top-ranked concerns for survey respondents, and is followed by lists summarizing general categories of concern for survey and focus group participants. These results point to broad consensus about the importance of several issues, particularly the prevalence of concern about health insurance, economic issues, mental health/substance abuse, and activities.

**Table 60: Top Five ranked issues from *Household and Key Informant Surveys* (based on average rating for each item)**

Household Survey: Experienced within your own household (n=428)		Household Survey: Perceived within our town or area of the county (n=327)		Key Informant Survey: Perceived within Knox County (n=124)	
Rank	Issue	Rank	Issue	Rank	Issue
1	Having a lot of anxiety, stress, or depression	1	Lack of jobs that provide decent wages	1	Lack of affordable medical care
2	Not having enough money to pay the doctor, buy prescription medications, or get medical insurance	1	Lack of jobs that provide a benefits package	1	Alcohol and/or drug abuse
3	Having a job that doesn't provide benefits	2	Lack of affordable medical care	1	Unemployment or underemployment
3	Not having enough money to buy needed clothing and shoes	3	Obesity	1	Lack of jobs
3	Not being able to afford entertainment activities (music, movies, etc.)	3	Teen pregnancy	2	Mental illness, emotional issues, or suicide
3	Finding it difficult to budget	4	Unemployment	3	Family violence, abuse of children or adults
3	Observing unsafe driving habits	4	Alcohol and/or drug abuse	3	Obesity
4	Not being able to afford recreational activities	5	Shortage of affordable housing	3	Poverty
4	Not having enough money for food	5	Unsafe driving habits	4	Shortage of affordable housing
4	Being overweight or obese			4	Lack of affordable care for children
5	Not being able to find work			4	Teen pregnancy
5	Not being able to afford legal help			5	Substandard housing
5	Lack of activities for school-aged children and teens			5	Lack of cultural activities (concerts, museums, etc.)
5	Lack of recreational activities that are accessible				

Source: *COMPASS Household and Key Informant Surveys, 2004-2005.*

General high-priority categories from household and key informant surveys:

- Health care affordability and insurance
- Jobs and economic issues (wages, benefits, unemployment, poverty, and lack of money for basic needs)
- Stress, emotional issues, mental health, and substance abuse
- Obesity
- Affordable recreation, entertainment, and activities for children and youth
- Teen pregnancy
- Unsafe driving habits
- Housing
- Family violence and abuse of children or adults

High-priority issues and needs identified in low-income parent focus groups:

- Health care quality and access, including mental and dental health services
- Child care affordability, quality, and safety for young children
- Before and after-school care for school-aged children
- Affordable recreational activities and facilities for children, families, and teens
- Support for self-sufficiency, including access to affordable health insurance, affordable housing, and jobs that provide higher wages and benefits
- More comprehensive safety net with more flexible eligibility criteria

High-priority issues and needs identified in youth focus groups:

- Affordable activities, recreation, and entertainment
- Jobs and economic issues (wages, training, and part-time employment)
- School policies and education
- Access to transportation

High-priority issues and needs identified in senior focus groups:

- Better transportation services, including expansions of the MOTA and FISH programs
- More activities, recreation, and entertainment for youth
- Better access to and information about health care, including local health fairs, a traveling clinic, and help understanding medical instructions
- Residents of outlying communities feeling “left out” of Mount Vernon and Knox County
- Need for greater public awareness of volunteer needs and opportunities