



Community Health Assessment, 2025-2030

TOMPKINS COUNTY, NEW YORK

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PRODUCED BY

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- Tompkins County Office For the Aging
- Tompkins County Youth Services
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Photo 1 View north from downtown Ithaca with Cayuga Lake at the top

Table of Contents

GLOSSARY	5
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	8
DESCRIPTION OF THE COMMUNITY	9
Population	9
Profile	10
Households.....	12
HEALTH STATUS OF THE POPULATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF HEALTH ISSUES.....	18
Community Health Survey	21
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	25
Key Collaborators and Structures	25
Community Engagement and Visioning.....	25
RELEVANT HEALTH INDICATORS.....	28
Social Drivers of Health and Health Equity	28
Prevention Agenda Domain: Economic Stability.....	30
Prevention Agenda Domain: Social and Community Context	43
Prevention Agenda Domain: Neighborhood and Built Environment	57
Prevention Agenda Domain: Health Care Access and Quality	62
Prevention Agenda Domain: Education Access and Quality	76
HEALTH CHALLENGES AND ASSOCIATED RISK FACTORS.....	80
Contributing Causes of Health Challenges.....	80
Health Disparities	82
COMMUNITY ASSETS AND RESOURCES.....	84
Tompkins County Whole Health (TCWH).....	86
Public Health Services.....	86
Mental Health Services.....	89
Community Based Organizations.....	91
REFERENCES	100



Photo 2 Tompkins County's rural landscape

DESCRIPTION OF THE COMMUNITY

TOMPKINS COUNTY, New York covers 476 square miles at the southern end of Cayuga Lake, the longest of New York's Finger Lakes. Tompkins County is on Cayuga Tribal land, Gayoghó:nq', part of the Iroquois Confederation.

Positioned in the center of the County at the lake's southern tip is Ithaca, the County seat and only city. Ithaca is 60 miles southwest of Syracuse and 25 miles west of Cortland. It forms a hub for five state highways, though the closest Interstate connection is forty minutes away in Cortland. (Figure 1)



Figure 1 Map of Tompkins County

Population

While the U.S. Census Bureau's 2024 estimated population for Tompkins County is 105,602, all data in the following demographic profile is based on the Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) 2019-2023 5-year estimates, which marks the County population at 102,879.

The City of Ithaca and the surrounding Town of Ithaca account for nearly half (50.6%) of the County population. The Towns of Dryden and Lansing combined are another quarter (24.7%) of the population total, with the six remaining towns, all with a population under 5,637, making up the final 24.7%. (Table 1)

Population Totals and Percent XMunicipality and XRace							
Tompkins County. Source: US Census ACS 5-year estimate B02001, 2023. *AIAN: American Indian and Alaska Native. *NHOPI: Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.							
Muni	Total Population	Percent Total Population	White Alone	Black or African American Alone	Asian Alone	AIAN*	NHOPI*
Tompkins County	102,879	100.0%	76.8%	4.0%	9.5%	0.2%	0.0%
Caroline	3,285	3.2%	84.3%	0.5%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Danby	3,360	3.3%	91.7%	1.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Dryden	13,689	13.0%	89.2%	1.1%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Enfield	3,323	3.2%	91.5%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Groton	5,636	5.5%	91.2%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Ithaca City	31,792	30.9%	65.1%	6.6%	4.7%	0.1%	0.0%
Ithaca Town	20,254	19.7%	68.5%	5.8%	3.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Lansing	11,717	11.4%	76.5%	4.4%	1.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Newfield	5,018	4.9%	94.1%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Ulysses	4,805	4.7%	93.7%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Table 1 Percent of population X race

Profile

Tompkins County is home to three institutions of higher education, Cornell University, Ithaca College, and Tompkins Cortland Community College. Cornell's main campus is on East Hill in the City of Ithaca, and many of its facilities are in the Towns of Ithaca and Dryden. Ithaca College is on South Hill, within the Town of Ithaca. TC3 is in the Town of Dryden. Together, these schools enroll a total of 36,213 undergraduate, graduate, and professional students, 35.2% of the County population.

Much of the County's demographic profile reflects the college sector. The median age of Tompkins County residents is 32.8 years—the lowest in the state—with 25.9% of residents age 18–24 years. About 1-in-6 Tompkins County residents are age 65 or older (17.3%). While the overall population has remained stable over the past decade, its age structure has shifted considerably. Between 2013 and 2023, the number of residents aged 0-19 declined by 12.3%. In contrast, the population aged 65 and older grew by 43.1%, now representing a significantly larger share of the community (US Census, 2013-2023). (Figure 2)

Tompkins County population has a number of residents with higher education: 95.7% residents aged 25-plus are high school graduates, 57.5% have a Bachelor's degree or higher, and 32.9% have a graduate or professional degree. The high school drop-out rate is low at 5.9%. Of the civilian population 16 years and over, 48% work in educational services, and health care and social assistance, 11.5% in professional, scientific, management, and administrative and waste management services, and 8.7% in arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services. (Figure 3 & Figure 4)

Transience is another characteristic of Tompkins County's higher education student population. This lack of population consistency challenges efforts to establish a broad awareness of public services for health, housing, and transportation. About 1-in-5 (15.3%) County residents lived outside the County

the previous year. In the City and Town of Ithaca, 17.7% and 12.4% of the respective populations moved in from out of state within the past year.

About thirteen percent of County residents are foreign born; about 1-in-20 of those are now naturalized citizens. Among the foreign-born population aged 5 and up, 70.3% speak a language other than English, and about 1-in-4 of that group are identified as speaking English “less than very well.” That represents about 6,324 residents, not all of whom are post-secondary students. For example, the Ithaca Housing Authority provides its leasing materials in a dozen languages. All public health and public health preparedness service providers must be ready to accommodate these individuals.

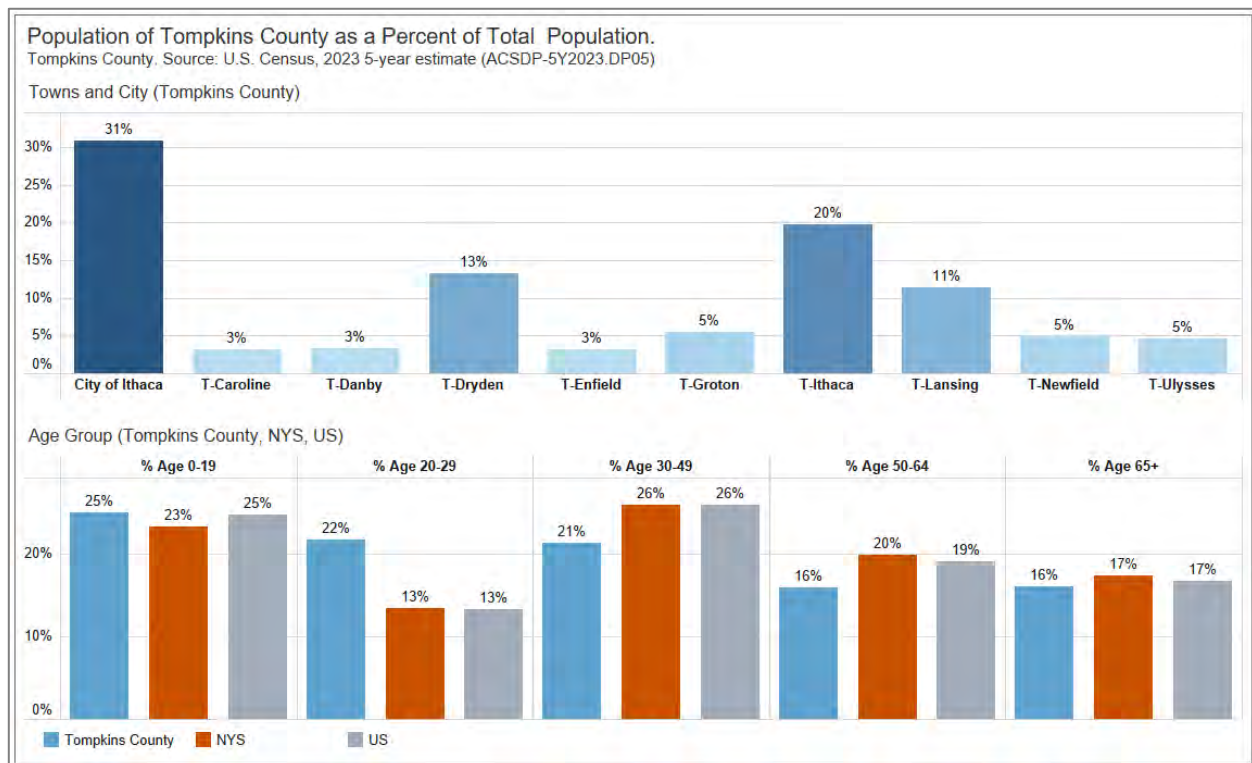


Figure 2 Percent of population X municipality and X age

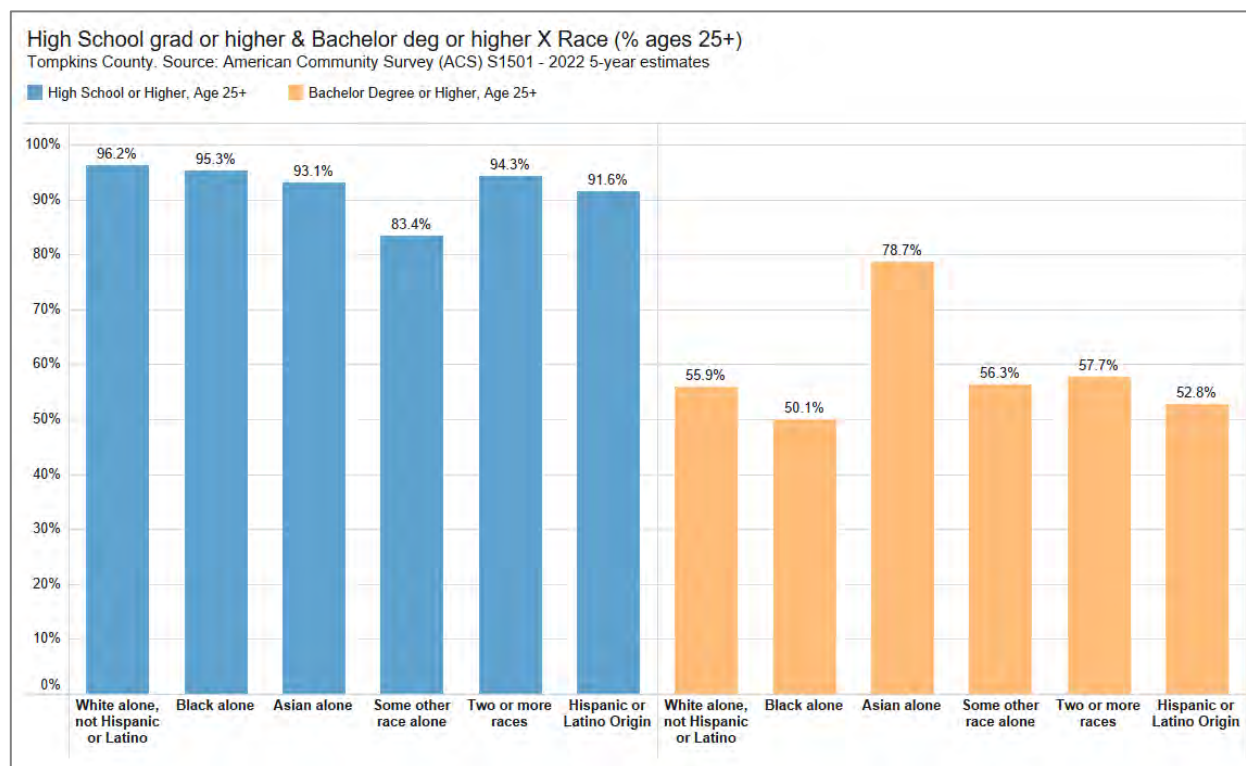


Figure 3 Education attainment X race

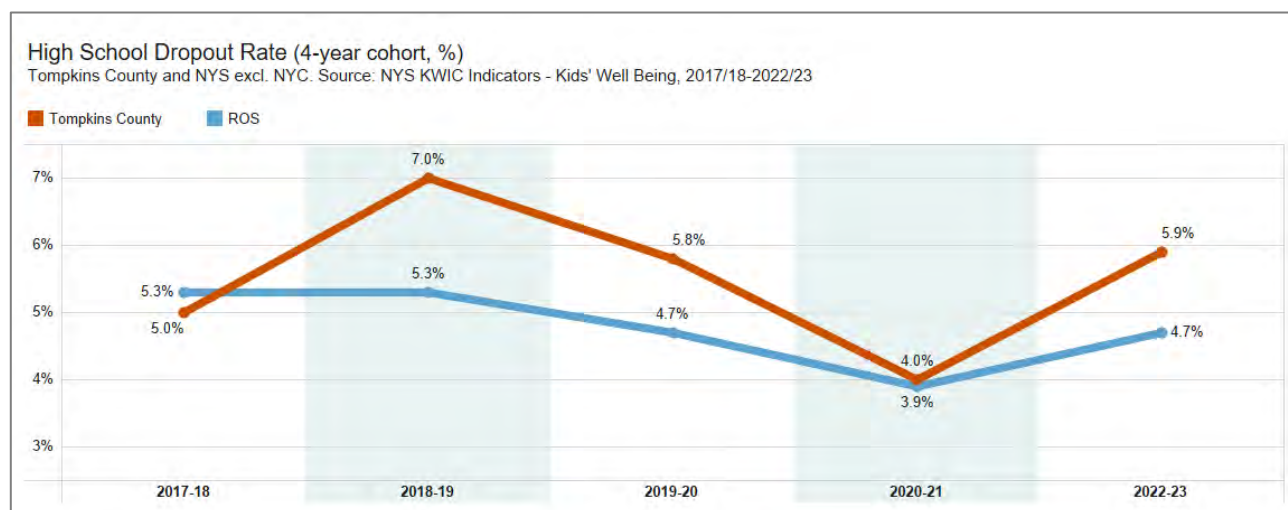


Figure 4 High school dropout rate

Households

Close to half (51.5%) of Tompkins County households are non-family households (consists of a householder living alone or where the householder shares the home exclusively with people to whom they are not related). In the City of Ithaca nearly three-quarters (72%) of households are non-family. Consistent with rates of non-family households and transience, the number of renter-occupied housing approaches half (45.8%) of all units. In the City of Ithaca, nearly three out of four (74.9%) occupied units are rentals. (Figure 5)



Photo 3 Ithaca's Fall Creek neighborhood

Among all households, owner-, renter-, and family-occupied, a clear majority of the housing stock is old; County-wide, 36% (or 16,498) homes were built before 1960 and over 27% (or 12,491) homes were built before 1940. Within the City of Ithaca, that number rises to nearly two out of three (62.8%) occupied structures built before 1980, when lead paint was still in use. Across the County, 8% of occupied units are a mobile home or other type of housing (Tompkins County Planning and Development, 2022). However, in the towns of Newfield and Enfield on the western side of the County, mobile homes or other housing account for nearly one third of residents' housing (24% and 38.7%, respectively).

Median household income is student influenced. In Ithaca city for example, the median for all households is \$48,617, while for family households it is \$122,065; family households are just 29.1% of all households in Ithaca city. In Tompkins County as a whole, nearly half (48.5%) of all households are families, and the median family income is \$111,825. The County median across all households, family and non-family, is \$73,012. (Figure 6)

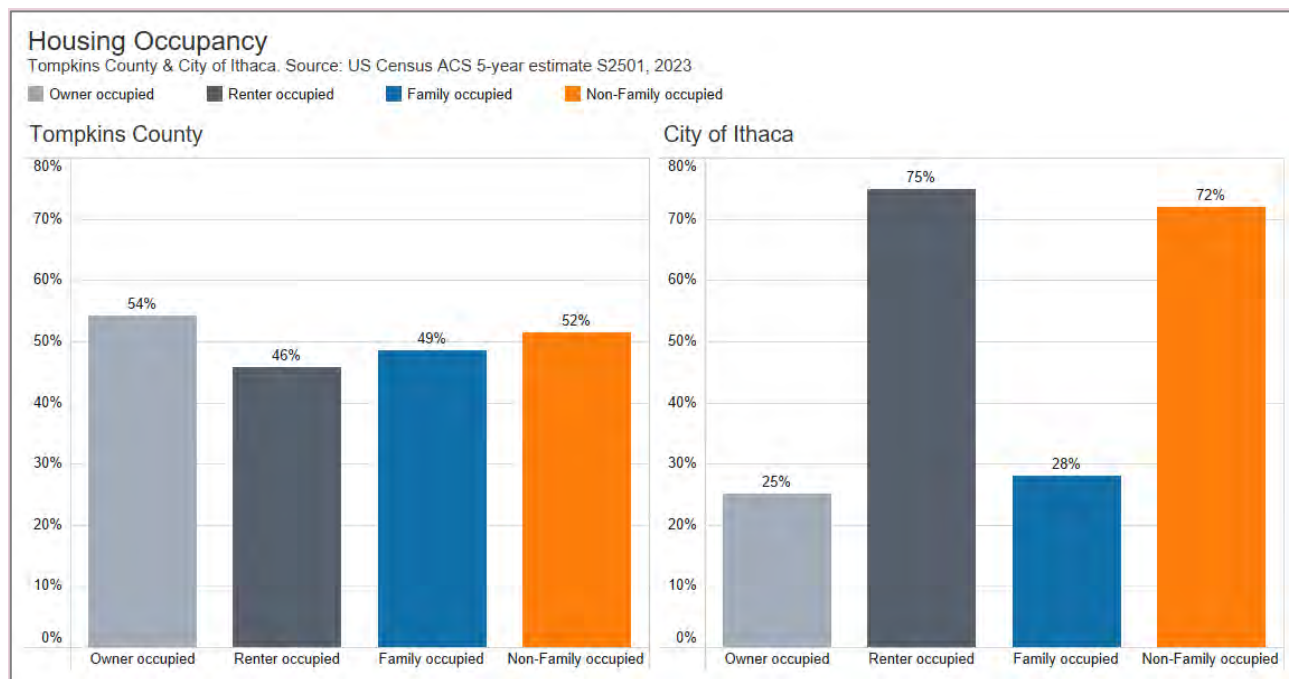


Figure 5 Housing occupancy



Figure 6 Median household income

General Health Status

Self-rated health data indicate an average physical health score of 3.35 and an average mental health score of 3.26 on a five-point scale, where 0 represents poor health and 5 represents excellent health. Physical health ratings were relatively consistent across age groups, while mental health

tended to improve with age. Both measures increased with higher income levels, suggesting the close relationship between financial stability and perceived well-being. Individuals experiencing difficulty meeting basic needs reported notably lower physical and mental health, underscoring the influence of economic strain on overall health status (Community Health Survey, 2025). (Figure 7)

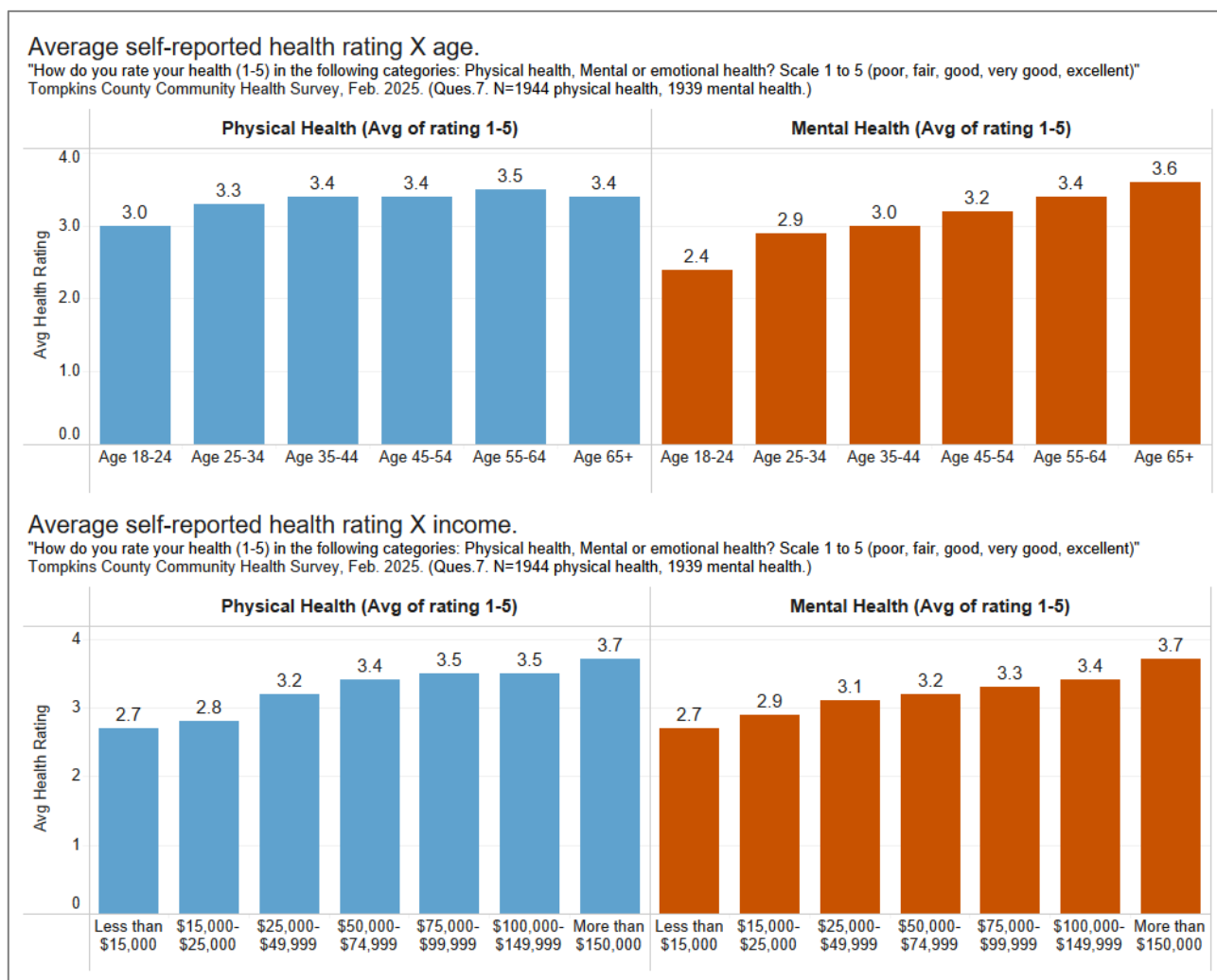


Figure 7 Self-reported health ratings

Overall life expectancy in Tompkins County is 80.9 years. Premature mortality indicators show that the percentage of deaths occurring before age 65 has ranged from 25% to 23% over the past decade (Vital Records, 2025). Adults report an average of 3.9 poor physical health days and 5.2 poor mental health days in the past 30 days (County Health Rankings, 2022). Health insurance coverage is high, with 94.7% of adults insured. The County's uninsured rate has remained consistently below state and national levels for more than a decade. (Figure 8)

Approximately 12% of residents report having a disability. Disability prevalence varies across racial groups, with rates ranging from 7.5% to 14.4%, and higher reported rates among Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and American Indian/Alaska Native residents. (Figure 9)

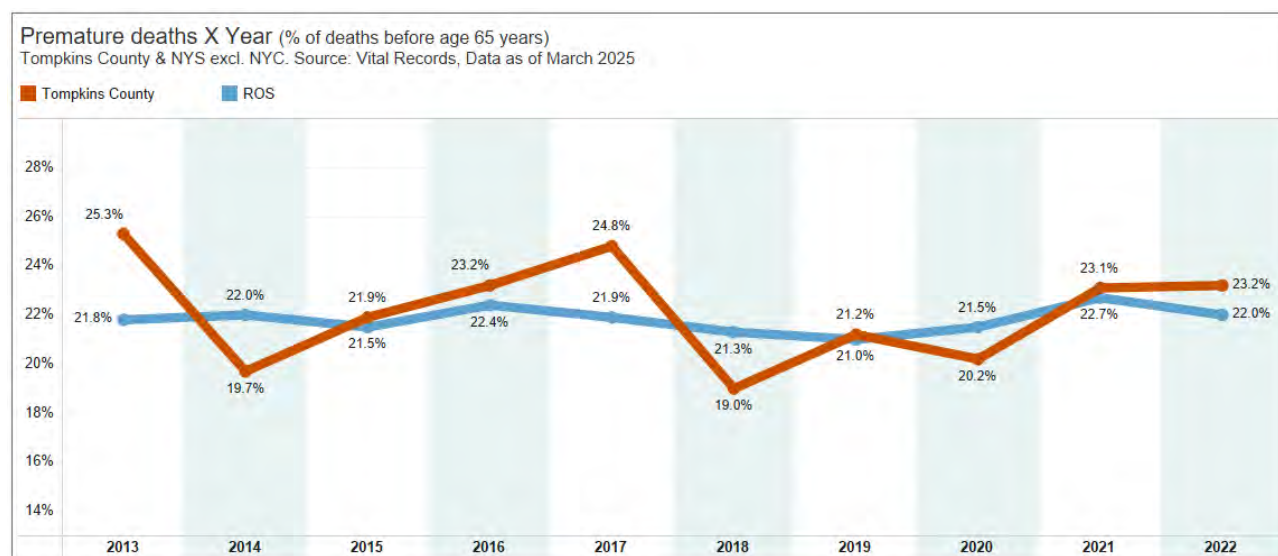


Figure 8 Premature deaths X year

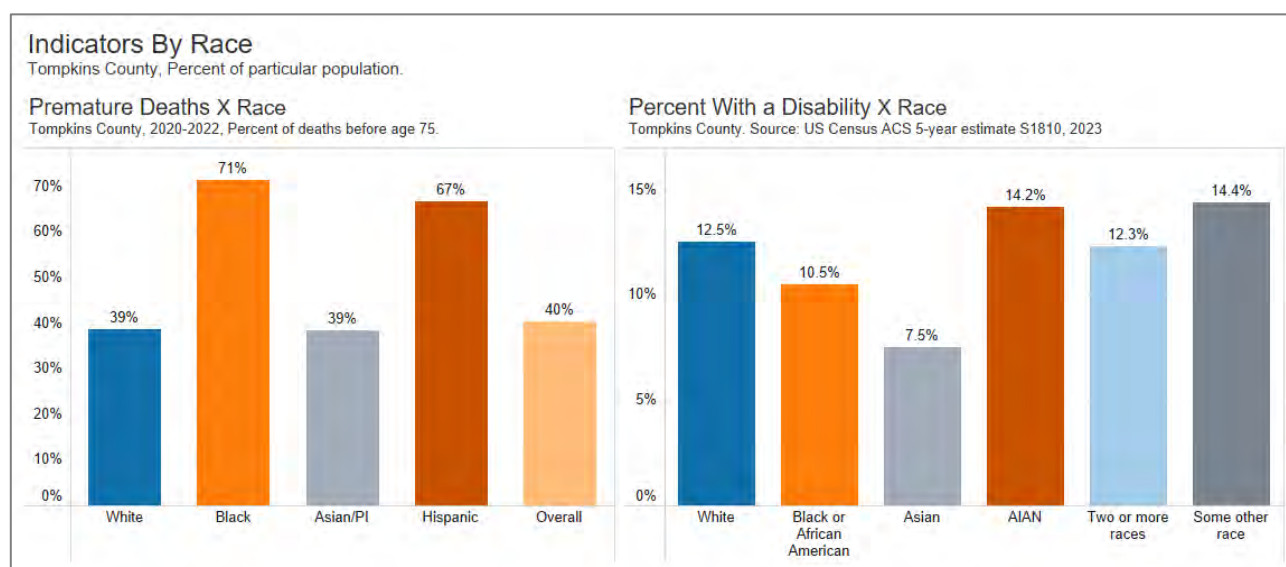


Figure 9 Indicators by race

Unemployment data show that Tompkins County's overall unemployment rate is 5.3%, compared with 6.2% statewide and 5.2% nationally. Rates vary across racial groups, ranging from 4.7% among White residents to 15.3% among Black residents, with intermediate levels among other groups (Table: Unemployment by Race). Unemployment rates also differ across municipalities, from less than 1% in Enfield and under 2% in Caroline and Danby, to more than 7% in the City of Ithaca and Ulysses. (Figure 10)

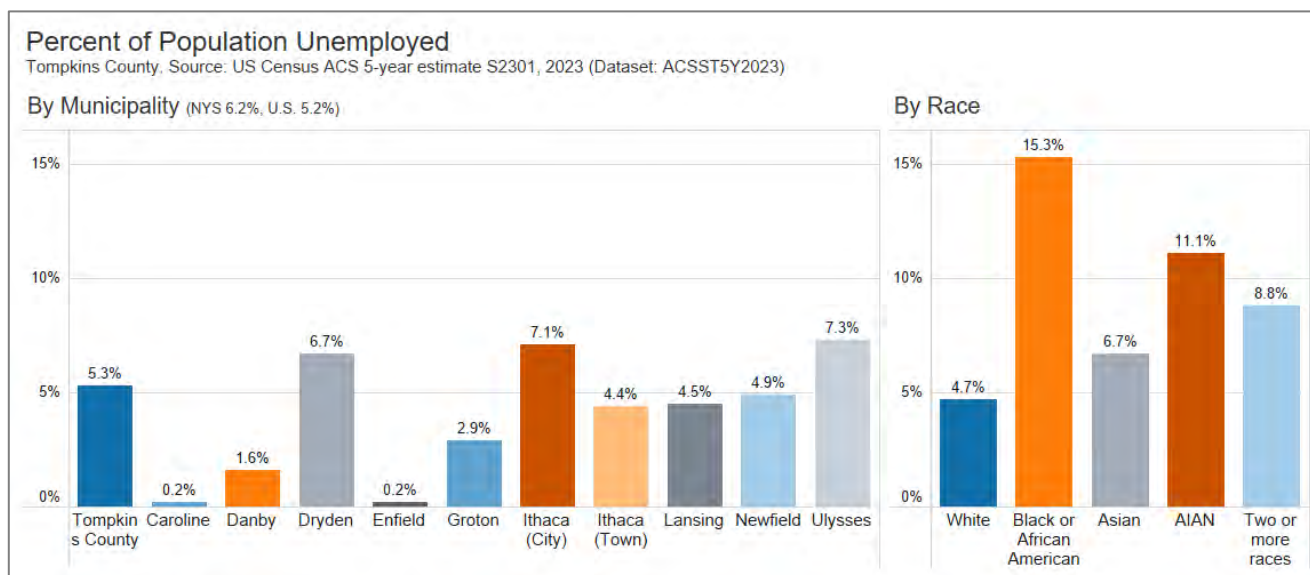


Figure 10 Percent of population unemployed