

## Who is ALICE? A brief on the state of ALICE in Queens County New York

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*“There is always more to a student’s work in the classroom than the time that they are on campus with us.”*

### FAST FACTS FOR 2023

- 40% of households in Queens County struggled to cover basic costs; 15% were below the Federal poverty level
- The share of households in the county who could cover basic costs fell by 2.8% from 2021 to 2023
- 69% of LaGuardia students reside in Queens County

The [United Way](#) annually provides an update on ALICE households showing that some of our most vulnerable community members are struggling. ALICE stands for **A**sset **L**imited, **I**ncome **C**onstrained, **E**mployed. These are individuals who are working, but do not make enough to pay for basic expenses. While these individuals have an income above the Federal poverty, they are some of our most vulnerable in the community because they struggle to pay for the combined basic human necessities like housing, child care, food, transportation, etc. These are our community members (students, neighbors, friends) who are just getting by.

The information below summarizes some of the ALICE data related to Queens County. For more information (and more data), access the [State of Alice in New York](#) reflecting data for 2023 or the [national data](#). Much of the report’s data combine information collected by the United Way and data from the Federal American Community Survey. The data in the report reflect 2023 information, and this timeframe will be used for comparisons purposes; however, it should also be acknowledged that this is now retrospective data. Nonetheless, it provides important context for understanding our community and the lived experiences of ALICE and individuals in poverty.

Importantly before continuing, while the Federal government provides thresholds for poverty levels, that threshold represents a nationalized number that is not contextualized or adjusted for cost-of-living. With this in mind, it is easy to see that being in poverty in Queens means something different than any other randomly chosen county across the nation. By only focusing on the federal poverty threshold, a critical population who make just above the poverty threshold, but who struggle to provide for themselves or their families are excluded. Importantly, ALICE individuals are sometimes excluded from some of the social safety net resources because they earn an income above the Federal poverty guidelines.

United for Alice goes into more detail, but the ALICE threshold basically looks at a household’s basic costs ([a survival budget](#)) associated with living and working in a specific community. The result defines the minimum required annualized income in order to *just get by*, which is set as the ALICE threshold.

Table 1 shows the 2023 (national) poverty levels for an individual and for a family of two (Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, 2023) compared to the ALICE thresholds for an annual

survivable budget for Queens County (United for Alice, 2025a). For an individual to earn a survivable wage in Queens County, they would need to earn \$28.22 or more per hour (full-time) to be above the ALICE threshold. Individuals earning below this would struggle to pay for the basics.

**Table 1: Federal Poverty Level Compared to ALICE Threshold (assuming full-time)**

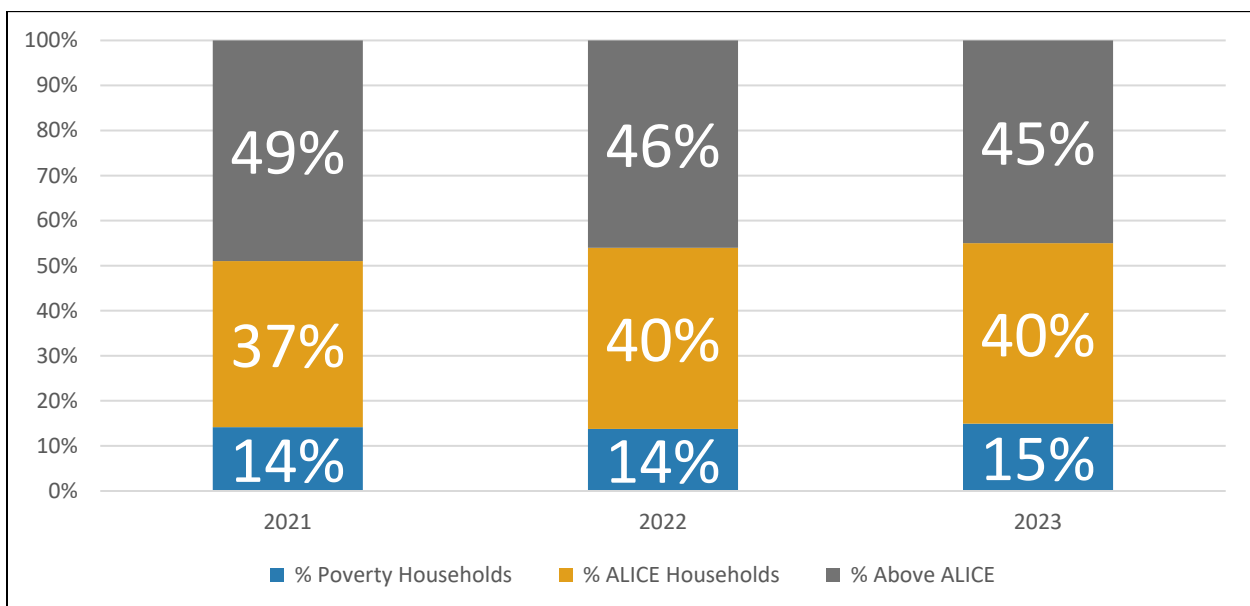
	<b>2023 Poverty Level (annual income)</b>	<b>2023 ALICE Threshold (annual survival budget)</b>
Individual	\$14,580 (or \$7.01/hr)	\$56,436 (or \$28.22/hr)
Family of 2	\$19,720 (or \$9.48/hr)	\$75,624 (or \$37.81/hr)

The gap between the Federal poverty level (\$7.01/hr) and the top end of the ALICE threshold for Queens County is wide. Someone earning at or just above the Federal poverty level in the county has less likelihood of qualifying for some of the social safety-net resources. This creates a wide population for the county who struggle.

For the same period, the minimum wage in Queens County in 2023 was \$15.00, which means that even earning minimum wage in 2023 would not put a household of one above the ALICE threshold. (NOTE: While the minimum wage for New York City, Long Island, and Westchester is at \$16.50 in 2025, this still would not bring one above the ALICE threshold for an individual). This is an important reason why we need to also think about the context when considering outcomes and wages. The minimum wage, even when increased, may still not cover basic expenses for every community.

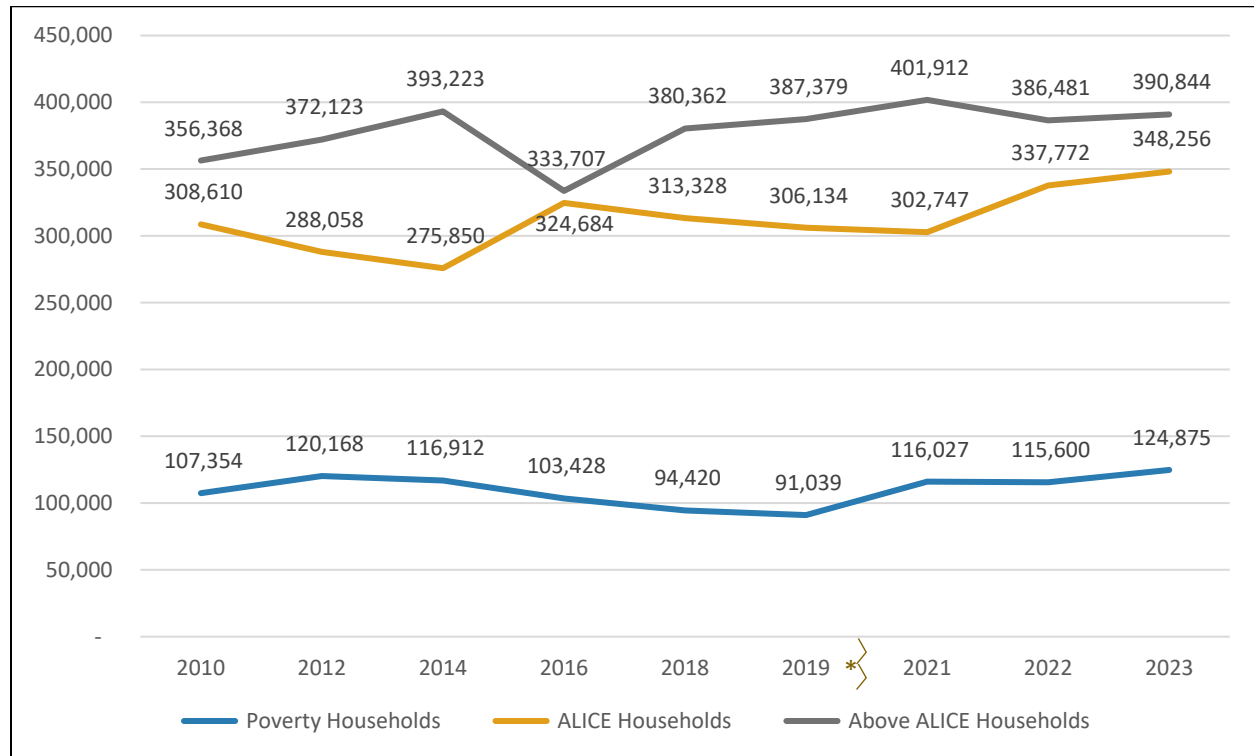
In Queens County in 2023, 40% of households were below the ALICE threshold, but above the poverty level. This means that 40% of individuals are actively contributing to the economy, working to better themselves and/or their families, and are still not getting by.

**Figure 1: Households in Queens County and their ALICE Status (2021 to 2023)**



As a percentage, households above the ALICE threshold have decreased each year from 2021 to 2023. For some context, there were 863,975 households in Queens County according to the American Community Survey compared to 820,686 in 2021 (United for ALICE, 2025b). This represents a 5.3% increase in the total number of households from 2021 to 2023. Over this same period, the percentage of households in poverty increased by 7.6% and ALICE households increased by 15.0%. The number of households above ALICE decreased by -2.8%.

**Figure 2: Long-Term Households and their ALICE Status in Queens County (2010 to 2023)**



\* ALICE data we provided biennially prior to 2021.

### Why is this important?

The ALICE and poverty data provide important context about our community. In 2023 there were 2.25 million people in the county, and this number grew in 2024 to 2.31 million (American Community Survey, 2024 & 2023). An additional 10,000 households were added from 2023 to 2024, tracking with the overall population increases. While the 2024 ALICE data is not available, it is clear that Queens County is growing, but households are increasingly struggling.

We know that 69% of our student population resided in Queens in Fall 2023. If our students are representative of Queens as a whole, then many of them are in ALICE households. We already know that, in Fall 2023, 42% of our students who lived at home had a household income less than \$25,000; the numbers are even higher for students not living at home (54% had a household income less than \$25,000). These levels fall within both the Federal poverty limits and the some of the ALICE threshold. Since the ALICE threshold was just above \$56k in 2023, there are many more students who likely do not make enough to cover basic costs. This points out further area for analysis to better understand the needs of our students with incomes below the ALICE threshold. With this, clearly the wider county

population and some of the LaGuardia student population as a whole likely fit within the ALICE income range.

Knowing that some of our students fall with the ALICE range (and below the poverty level) has particular importance for us as a college because we know that when basic human physiological needs are not met (consider the work of Abraham Maslow), then getting to higher order thinking skills is not easy. There is always more to a student's work in the classroom than just the time that they are on campus with us. This points to a need for understanding what resources might be available at the college, including [wellness](#) resources, [health](#) resources, [student-parents/caregivers](#), [LaGuardia CARES](#), [LGBTQ+](#), and many more.

While this brief about ALICE was just an introduction to the topic, it did not directly comment on demographics of students such as age, gender identity, ethnicity, caregiver status, etc. That is a limitation of this brief because we know that some populations are disproportionately impacted by systemic practices and/or institutional barriers. Although not specifically addressed here, it is important that we focus on these issues in future discussions. The ALICE data provide crucial information on their website about [demographics](#) in some depth.

Additionally, it is important to note that much has changed since 2023, and there are additional pressures on the community that may not have been as pronounced before now. Tariffs and a weakening economy add additional economic and psychological stressors today. We need to continue to consider these aspects when thinking about student supports, access issues, and retention, among others.

## Learn More

- [2025 ALICE Report/New York](#)
- [Data from The State of Alice in New York](#) (filterable by county and zip codes)

## References

American Community Survey (2023 & 2024). Demographics and housing Estimates. Retrieved from: <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP1Y2024.DP05?q=queens+county+new+york>

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