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## Child Poverty, Physical & Mental Health in Maine

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# CHILD POVERTY, PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH IN MAINE

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Mentor, Brenda Joly, Ph.D



## Overview

Children (0-18) who live below the national poverty line account for nearly one fifth of Maine's overall population. Living in poverty during years essential to development can lead to negative health outcomes that affect educational achievement, as well as physical and mental health.

## Objective

- To identify Maine counties with childhood poverty rates above the national average.
- To compare the rates of poverty with leading health indicators.

## Methods

- Data were collected from County Health Rankings and Roadmaps to identify child poverty rates in all sixteen counties.
- Data from the quality of life measure were compared with the top five counties with the highest rates of child poverty.
- Physical & mental distress indicators were analyzed based on adults who reported poor physical/mental health within the last 30 days.

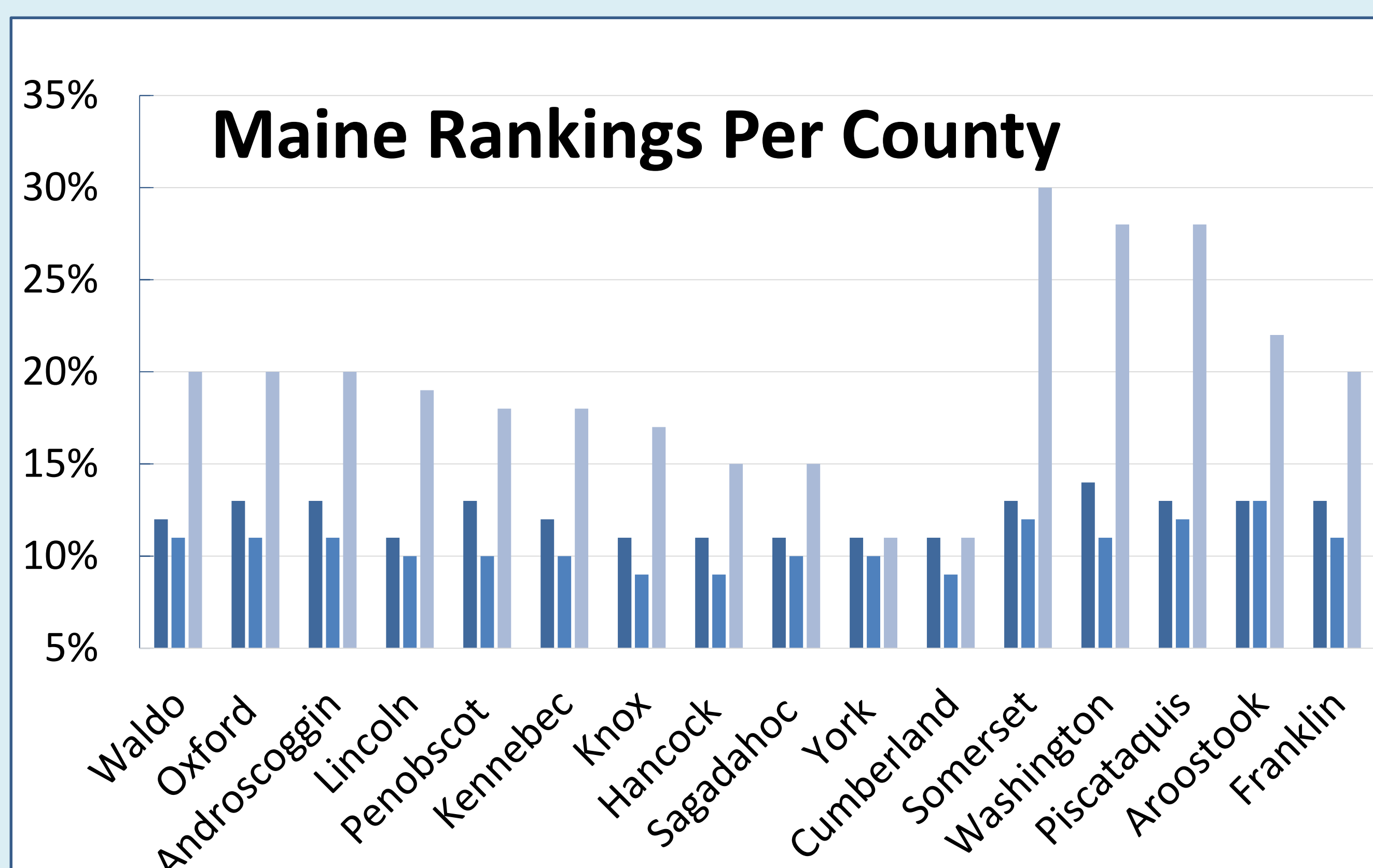


Figure 1. Percentage child poverty, physical, and mental distress in all Maine counties (n=15)

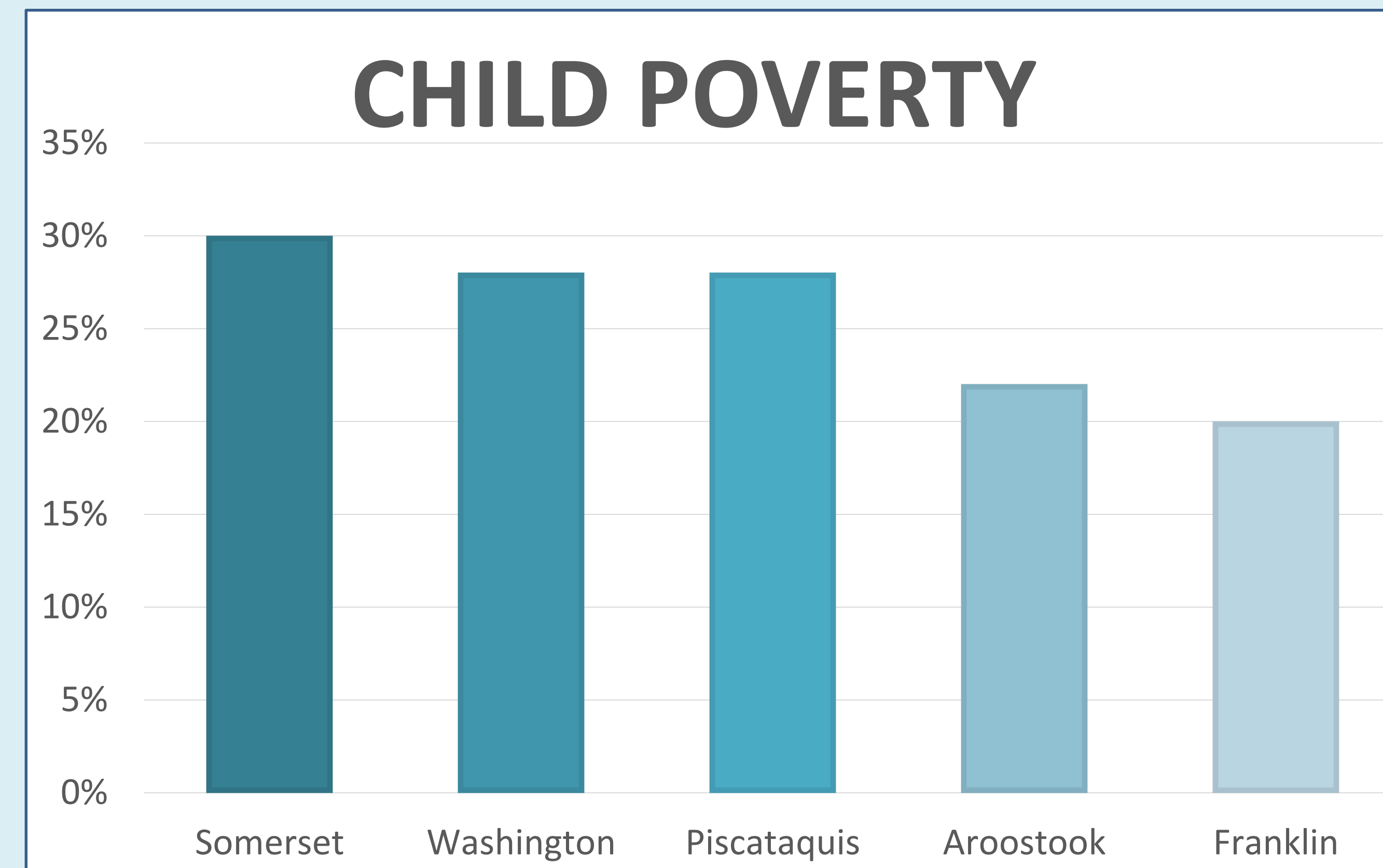


Figure 2. Percent of children living in poverty among top five counties with highest rates

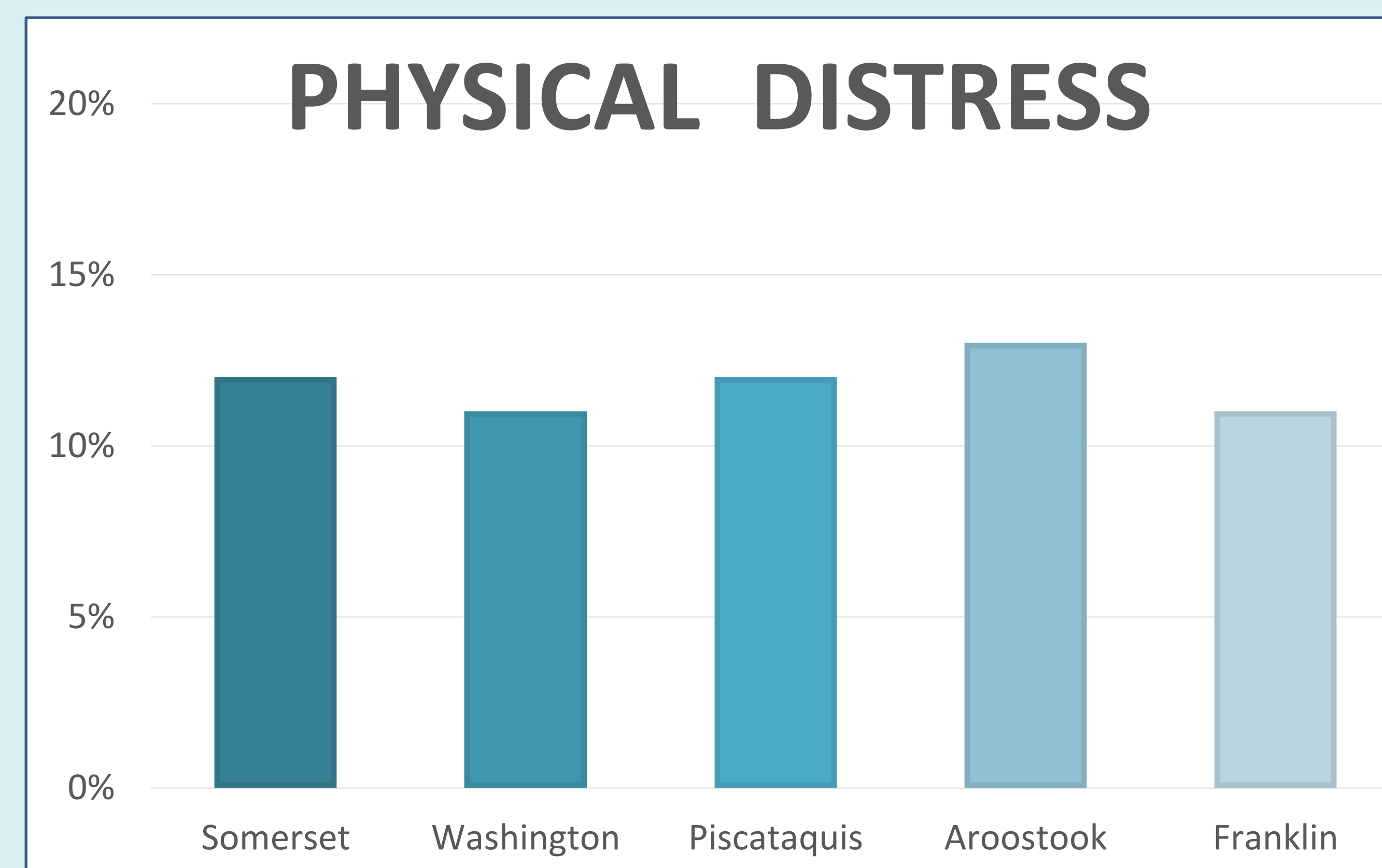


Figure 3. Percent of population that reported physical distress in the identified five counties

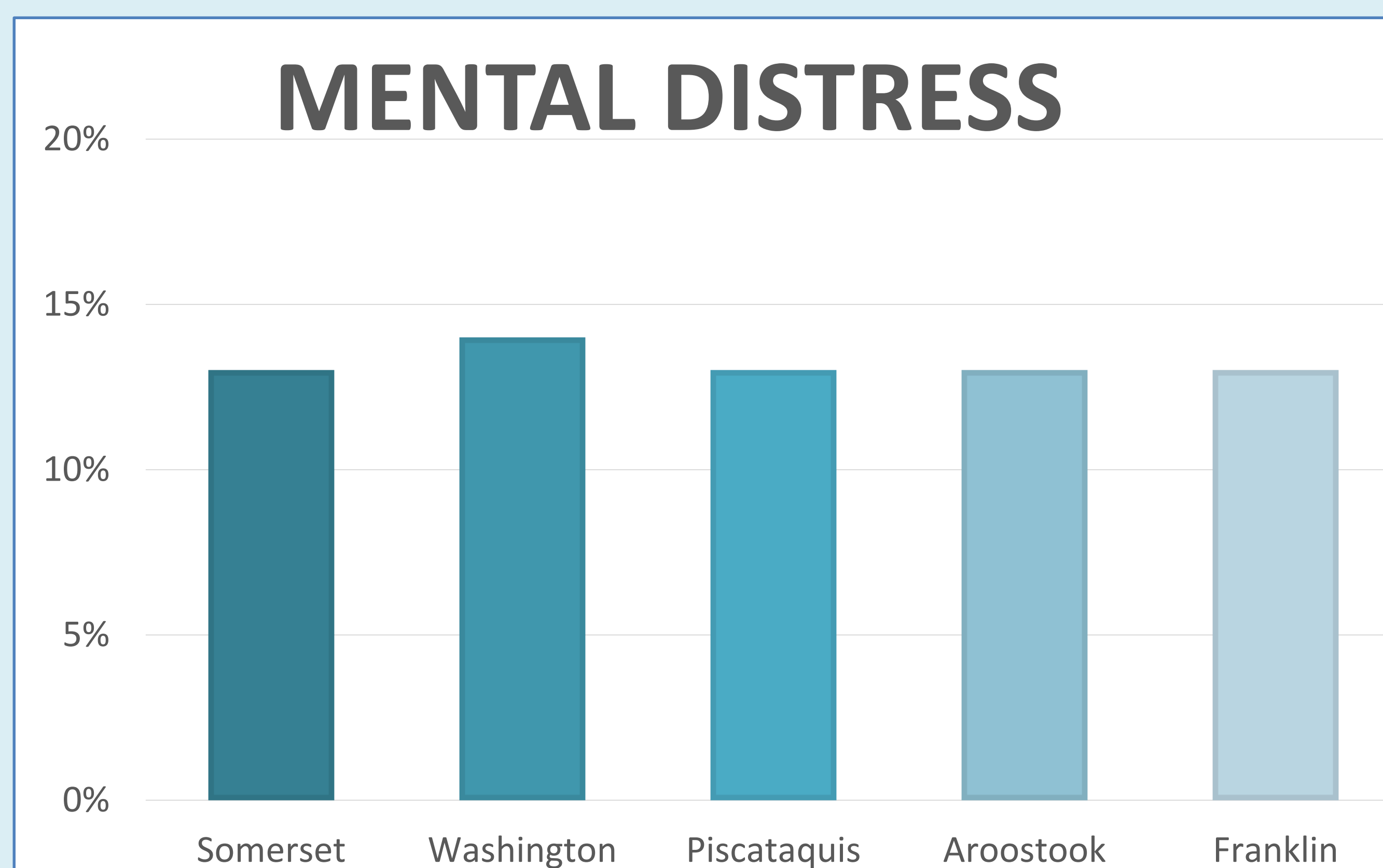


Figure 4. Percent of population that reported mental distress in the identified five counties

## Results

**State Ranges:**  
 Child Poverty: 11% - 30%  
 Mental Distress: 11% - 14%  
 Physical Distress: 9% - 13%

- *Figure 1* indicates that the rates of child poverty and both physical, and mental distress in the 11 remaining counties are notably lower compared to the counties identified in *Figure 2*.
- The average of child poverty rate for the 11 counties is 16.72% compared to 25.6%
- The highest rates of child poverty in Maine coincide with the highest rates of physical and mental distress.

## Conclusion

- The mean of the 11 counties versus the five identified counties represents a higher level of child poverty by 8.8%, making these counties exceptionally vulnerable to child poverty.
- The results from this study confirm a relationship between children in Maine living in poverty and frequent physical/mental distress.
- The results bring further evidence of leading health indicators that may impact the level of child poverty in Maine, and present new avenues of research for further interventions.

## Acknowledgements

Thank you Professor Brenda Joly Ph.D, and the Muskie School of Public Service.

## References

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