

Impact of COVID-19 on Immigrant & Latino Community in Lane County

A Service Provider Survey

Report from

Centro Latino Americano

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April 2020

Introduction

The urgency to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic requires information, good information that can help us understand what is happening, what is needed, and what can be done to make sure all Lane County residents stay healthy and safe. This current situation impacts everyone at varying levels. Without understanding the various ways different populations are facing this crisis, we will fall short in our effort to make sure this pandemic ends sooner rather than later. This report strives to illuminate the experience of residents from the immigrant or Latino communities, specifically those from low-income households. It does so through the words of employees from nonprofit organizations, schools and government agencies. Many have long-standing relationships with these communities or come from the community; therefore, they possess a unique perspective and understanding about COVID-19's impact on immigrants and Latinos in Lane County. In an attempt to gather information about the needs and issues, local service providers who specifically work with these communities were surveyed from March 30 to April 6, 2020.

The Survey

A total of 43 individuals responded to the survey. Respondents worked for nonprofits (24), higher education (8), school districts (7), and local government (4). A request from staff at the City of Eugene Emergency Response Center led to the use of four questions. One of the questions asked whether or not the community served is aware of City of Eugene resources available to support all community members during this pandemic. Of those surveyed, 44% responded yes, saying they believed the immigrant and Latino communities were aware of these resources. This indicates a gap in awareness for more than half of the communities served by these respondents.

The following three questions made up the remainder of this survey:

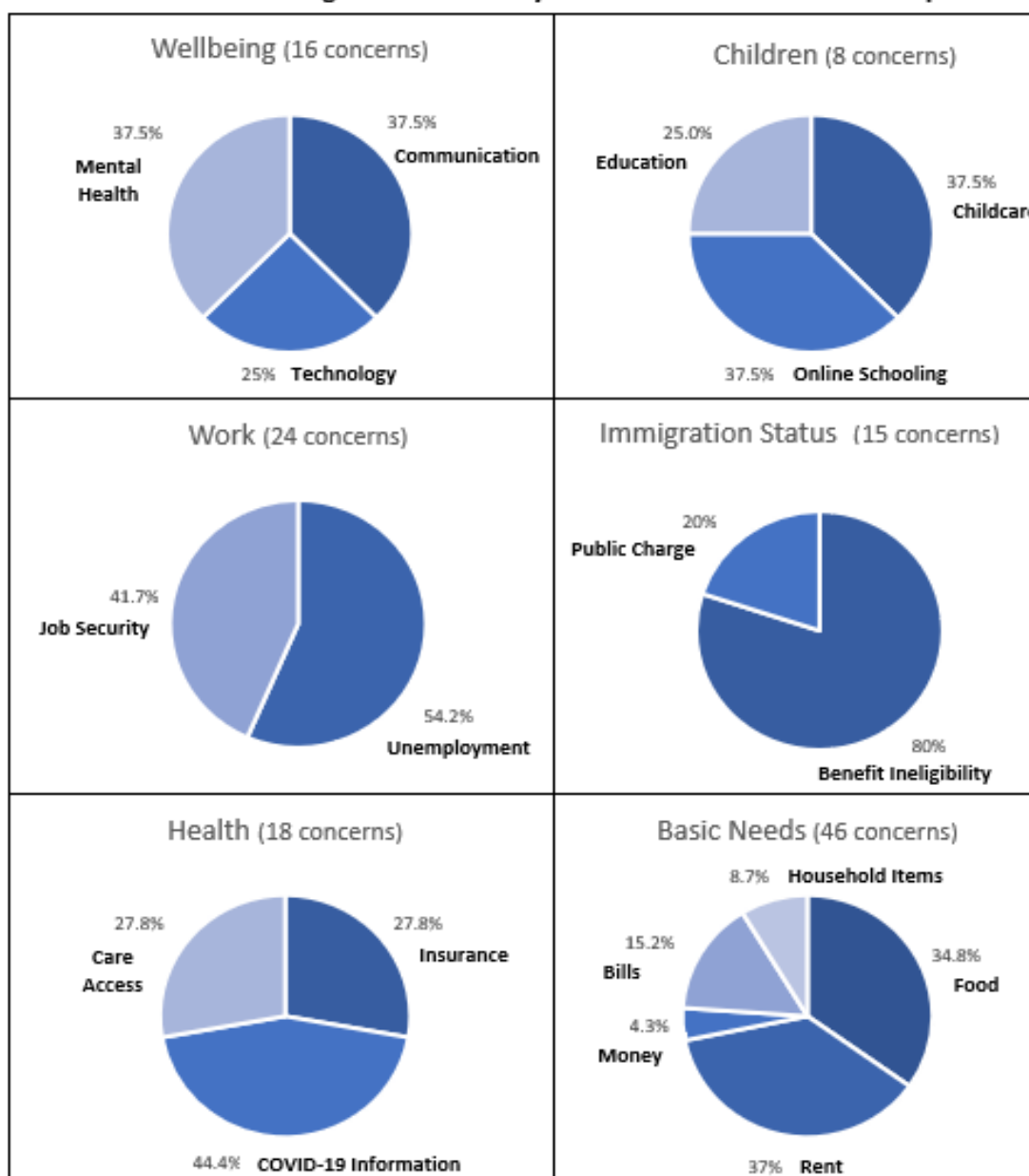
1. What questions/concerns are you hearing from your staff, clients and other Latino and immigrant community members about COVID-19 and its impacts?
2. Are there unique needs that are newly emerging in the Latino and immigrant community in Eugene/Springfield in relation to COVID-19?
3. In what ways can the City of Eugene and individual community members best support Latino and immigrant community members in relation to COVID-19?

The following charts summarize the responses to these questions.

Concerns

The first graph provides an overview of the kinds of concerns respondents heard from community members. There was a total of 127 concerns identified, each of which were categorized into six areas: Wellbeing, Children, Work, Immigration Status, Health, and Basic Needs. Survey responders were asked to freely type in their answers to each question, and these answers were systematically grouped, based on word-choice similarity, into different categories. The frequency of responses within each category is represented using a percent of the total for each area of concern.

127 Latino and Immigrant Community Concerns about COVID-19 Impacts



This is a brief description of each area of concern identified above.

Wellbeing: Respondents described community members expressing feelings of fear, anxiety, depression, grief, worry, and concerns about abandonment. There was a sense of a lack of information about the pandemic and its development as well as of resources and supports that would be available. Finally, there was concerns about being able to access technology for telehealth and online schooling.

Children: Respondents heard about concerns related to how children were continuing with school and, in particular, uncertainty about online schooling. There was also concern about access to childcare for community members who still have to go to work.

Work: Respondents are hearing concerns about lost jobs and the inability to access unemployment benefits as a result of immigration status.

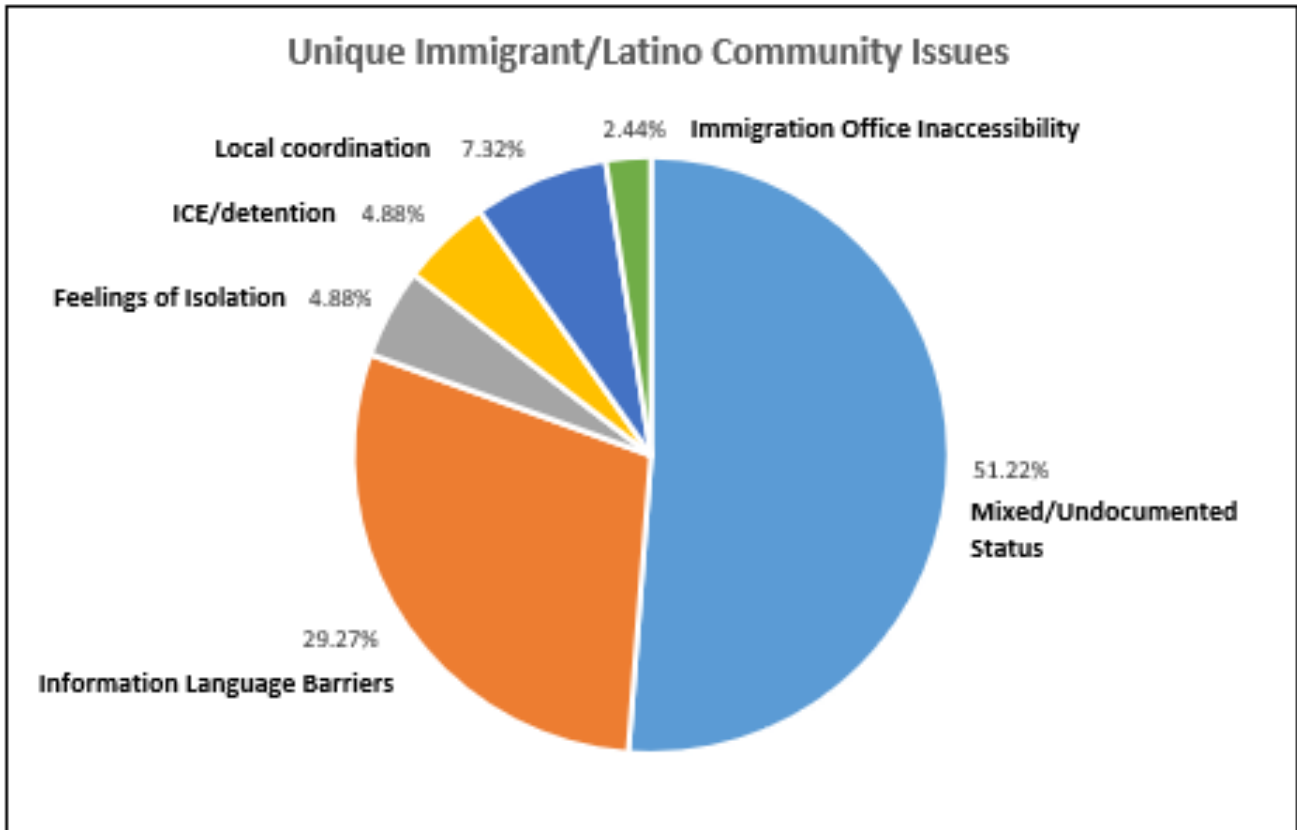
Immigration Status: Respondents reported that community members with immigration issues are most concerned about the impact of using benefits on their immigration cases as it pertains to the Public Charge rule. They are also concerned about being ineligible for public benefits and relief as a result of their status.

Health: Respondents identified concerns about access to health care and insurance and reliable information about the COVID-19 situation in Spanish and indigenous languages.

Basic Needs: Respondents identified the concern for meeting basic needs as the most significant with 46 references to concerns about paying for rent, food, bills, household items, and access to money for financial relief.

Unique Issues

After having respondents identify these concerns, our goal was to have them provide a deeper look at the unique concerns to this population. Again, respondents were given space to write their answers. Anything not considered unique to this population was left out. What follows is a graphic view of the unique concerns identified. Although immigration status and language barriers represent a significant percentage of the unique concerns, they were not the only ones.



This is a brief description of each area identified above.

Mixed or undocumented status: Respondents said individuals are uncertain about their eligibility for public benefits because of their immigration status or the mixed status of their household. Some self-employed individuals have lost wages because they are not being hired (e.g., house cleaners) and are ineligible for benefits because of their status. There are also fears about whether accepting public benefits would represent a Public Charge and adversely impact their immigration cases.

Information language barriers: Respondents identified the lack of Spanish-language information about COVID-19, community resources, and information from schools. There was also concern about having health care in Spanish.

Feelings of isolation: Respondents reported clients feeling “out of the loop” because information is not always provided in Spanish, thereby increasing a sense of isolation.

ICE or detention issues: Respondents indicated that clients are worried about reports of ICE activity and how this fear impacts their willingness to access care and services. Community members are worried that the pandemic does not impact their ability to follow through on required check-ins with ICE. Mention was made of the health risks posed by detention since social distancing is less possible.

Local donations and volunteer coordination: Respondents expressed there are concerns about the community’s ability to secure donations and volunteer support for immigrant

and Latino families. Social distancing guidelines has made volunteering challenging, particularly for retired volunteers who may put themselves at risk.

Immigration office inaccessibility: Respondents mentioned client concerns about accessing immigration services and the impact of the delay on their cases.

Suggested Ideas

Those surveyed also offered 71 ways in which the City of Eugene could support the immigrant and Latino community. Ideas were categorized based on word-choice similarity and divided into three broad clusters: collaboration, resource communication, and direct support. The table below summarizes service provider recommendations.

71 Suggested Ideas for Support in Response to COVID-19

Collaboration	Resource Communication	Direct Support
Partnering with trusted agencies and groups (Latino/immigrant groups, faith community)	Ensure access to bilingual translation and interpretation of information and services	Provide financial assistance for a variety of basic needs for those ineligible for public benefits
Support existing programs	Raise awareness by using clear information that's repeated and widely disseminated through local channels (including published and social media)	Attend to food scarcity concerns
Address barriers to accessing basic needs and medical services	Collaborate with trusted navigators	Build community support through positive, inclusive messaging
	Create a hot or warm line to provide information about resources and services	

Next Steps

The ideas offered above represents a call for action on the part of Lane County leaders. These are three significant steps the broader community can support to meet the needs described in the survey results.

1. Create a financial assistance fund to support residents and their families who are ineligible for federal aid to meet their basic needs.
2. Eliminate any barriers to food access.
3. Launch a coordinated and intentional communication strategy for Spanish-speaking residents so they can receive reliable information about COVID-19, resources, and supports.
4. Implement a community awareness campaign about the impact COVID-19 is having on immigrant and Latino residents and stressing why a unique response is required during this crisis.

At Centro

Centro Latino Americano continues to support community members during this time. Staff are working remotely from their homes using phone calls, texts, videoconferencing, emails, and social media to provide information, connections to direct support, and behavioral health services. We are collaborating with local schools to coordinate the distribution of household items and raising funds to help clients needing assistance to pay rent.

Thanks

Centro Latino Americano would like to thank all 43 individuals who participated in this survey. We appreciate their willingness to take the time to offer their thoughts and observations during this difficult time. We hope that their contribution leads to county-wide actions that support their work and the community they serve.