

2017 Community Needs Assessment

Community-Based Participatory Research

El Centro de la Raza



El Centro de la Raza
2524 16th Avenue South
Seattle, WA 98144
(206) 957-4634
www.elcentrodelaraza.org

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Pictured above: Graduates of El Centro de la Raza's award-winning José Martí Child Development Center.

Front Cover: Child playing at Santos Rodriguez Memorial Park (top left), Work Readiness Arts Program youth participants (right), and a Senior Wellness and Congregate Meal Program participant and her caretaker (bottom left).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the Community Needs Assessment is to summarize the current needs of Latinos in Seattle and South King County. El Centro de la Raza conducted two research studies as part of our 2017 Community Needs Assessment.

We gathered quantitative and qualitative data on current community needs in the areas of housing, employment, financial security, food security, transportation, healthcare, education, and security and discrimination. The research team collected over 200 surveys at six different social service provider locations and held five focus groups with 37 participants of El Centro de la Raza's programs. We analyzed the survey results using statistical analysis and the focus group results using inductive qualitative content analysis.

Findings indicate that the most pressing needs are good jobs, affordable housing, and safety from interpersonal and institutional discrimination on the basis of race, language, and immigration status. Participants reported that these areas, along with immigration-related concerns, were the most important issues currently faced by Latinos in Seattle and South King County. Financial issues were the most common sources of stress for participants. Many participants identified a lack of English language skills as a barrier to employment, and specifically emphasized the need for ESL instruction. There is also a major need for affordable early childhood education and after school programs, both for children's positive development and as an employment support for parents. In the area of health, most respondents could not afford health insurance and rely on sliding fee scale community clinics for care. Many respondents struggled with financial security, especially households with children. Most respondents used public transportation, but it is not a viable alternative for all families especially those with multiple children and/or job sites. Many respondents struggled to meet their household food needs consistently throughout the year.

We found that the most commonly utilized services were public transportation, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, cultural events, health check-ups, tax prep, emergency food/food bank, legal services, HIV/STI testing, and emergency medical services. Respondents expressed a need for more ESL classes, regular health checkups, legal services, tax preparation assistance, public transportation, cultural events, Know Your Rights training, and financial counseling.

ABOUT EL CENTRO DE LA RAZA

El Centro de la Raza was founded in 1972 after a peaceful and multiracial three-month occupation of the abandoned Beacon Hill School building. Today, we are an indispensable community organization, social service provider, and advocate for low-income communities and communities of color. El Centro de la Raza provides 49 culturally and linguistically competent programs in the areas of children and youth, human and emergency services, education and asset-building, and housing and economic development. Of the 16,452 individuals and 10,128 households served in 2016, 57% of participants were Latino, 90% were people of color, and 91% were low-income.¹ The organization works closely with Latino immigrant families, both newly arrived and those who have lived here for years. With 45 years of experience, El Centro de la Raza is a key resource for many Latino immigrant families, particularly those with limited English skills.

¹ "Low-income" is defined as below 200% of the Federal Poverty Line (\$24,120 for one person and \$40,840 for three in 2017)

ABOUT THE STUDY

Purpose of Community Needs Assessment

El Centro de la Raza conducts a formal Community Needs Assessment every three years to summarize the current needs of the Latino community in our region. This assessment directly informs El Centro de la Raza's organizational strategic planning process to design, improve and sustain effective programs and services that best serve the community's needs. This information is also used to advocate for the community at the local and state level. For this year's Community Needs Assessment, we conducted two studies using a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach. CBPR engages community members as leaders in planning and implementing the study as well as analyzing and creating a plan of action from the results. By using CBPR, research teams ensure that research questions are relevant to communities being studied, that data collection and analysis are culturally competent, and that community members have access to the findings. This approach models accountable practices to communities most impacted by the issues studied.

Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) Process

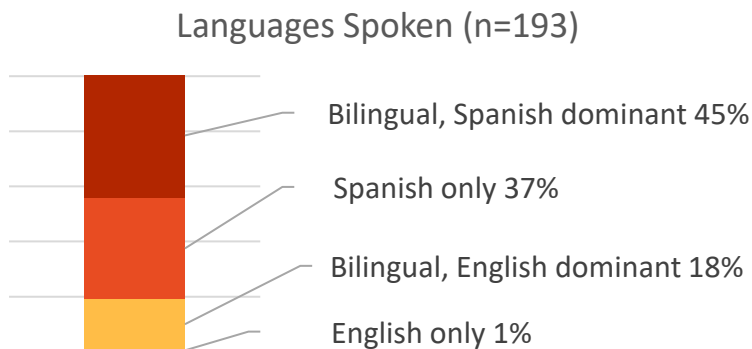
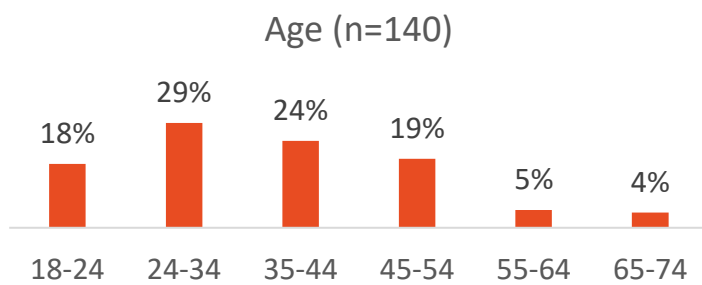
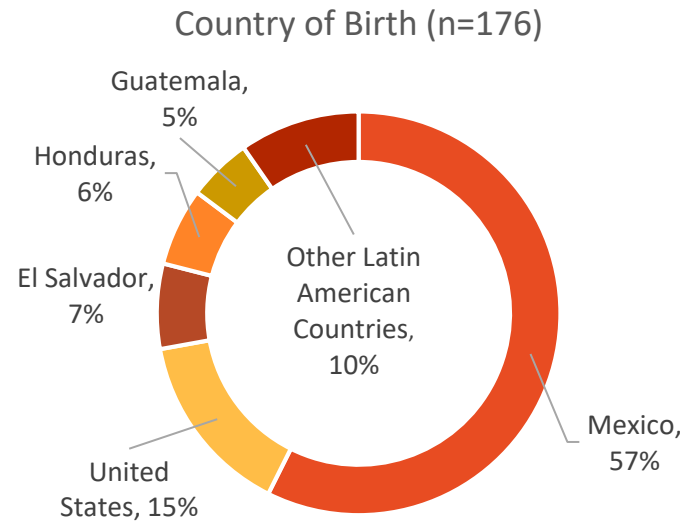
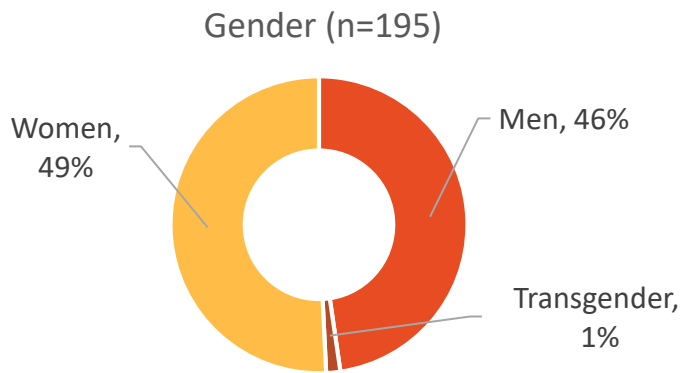
El Centro de la Raza's research team assembled a Steering Committee consisting of representatives from Casa Latina, Entre Hermanos, Movimiento Afrolatino Seattle, Neighborhood House, Para Los Niños, Seattle Office of Civil Rights, United Way of King County, University of Washington Latino Center for Health, and University of Washington West Coast Poverty Center. We partnered with Dr. Linda Ko of the Health Communication Research Center at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center for guidance on CBPR best practices. Over a twelve-month period, the Steering Committee identified the domains to be studied, reviewed current literature on trends in the Latino community locally and nationally, designed the survey and focus group discussion guide, coordinated data collection events, analyzed survey and focus group results, and provided feedback on how best to report this information to the community.

In Phase I of the study, the research team surveyed over 200 Latino adults living in Seattle and South King County on how housing, employment, financial security, food security, transportation, healthcare, education, and security and discrimination affect their daily lives. We also asked about which issues in the Latino community were highest priorities for respondents, and about their service utilization. The research team collected survey responses from legal clinics and tax preparation events at El Centro de la Raza, the day worker center at Casa Latina, classes at Seattle World School, and community events at Movimiento Afrolatino Seattle, Entre Hermanos, and Para Los Niños. Participants received a gift bag with a few small items donated by Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center.

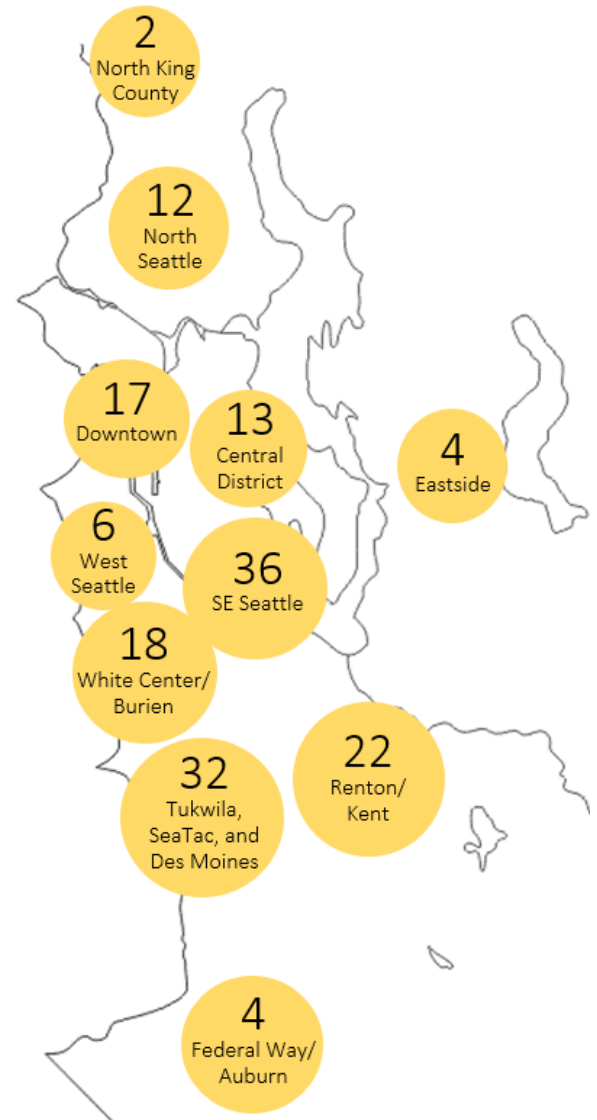
In Phase 2 of the study, the research team led five focus groups with a total of 37 participants to explore the trends identified in the survey more in depth. Focus group participants came from El Centro de la Raza's Comadres women's group, residents of Plaza Roberto Maestas and El Patio Low-Income Apartments, and parents of children enrolled in the José Martí Child Development Center. Participants received a \$25 gift card.

The data collection team consisted of seven El Centro de la Raza staff members, all of whom are bilingual in English and Spanish. All data collectors completed an online Human Subjects Research training and received in-person training on conducting surveys and leading focus groups from Dr. Linda Ko.

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS



Area of Residence (n=166)

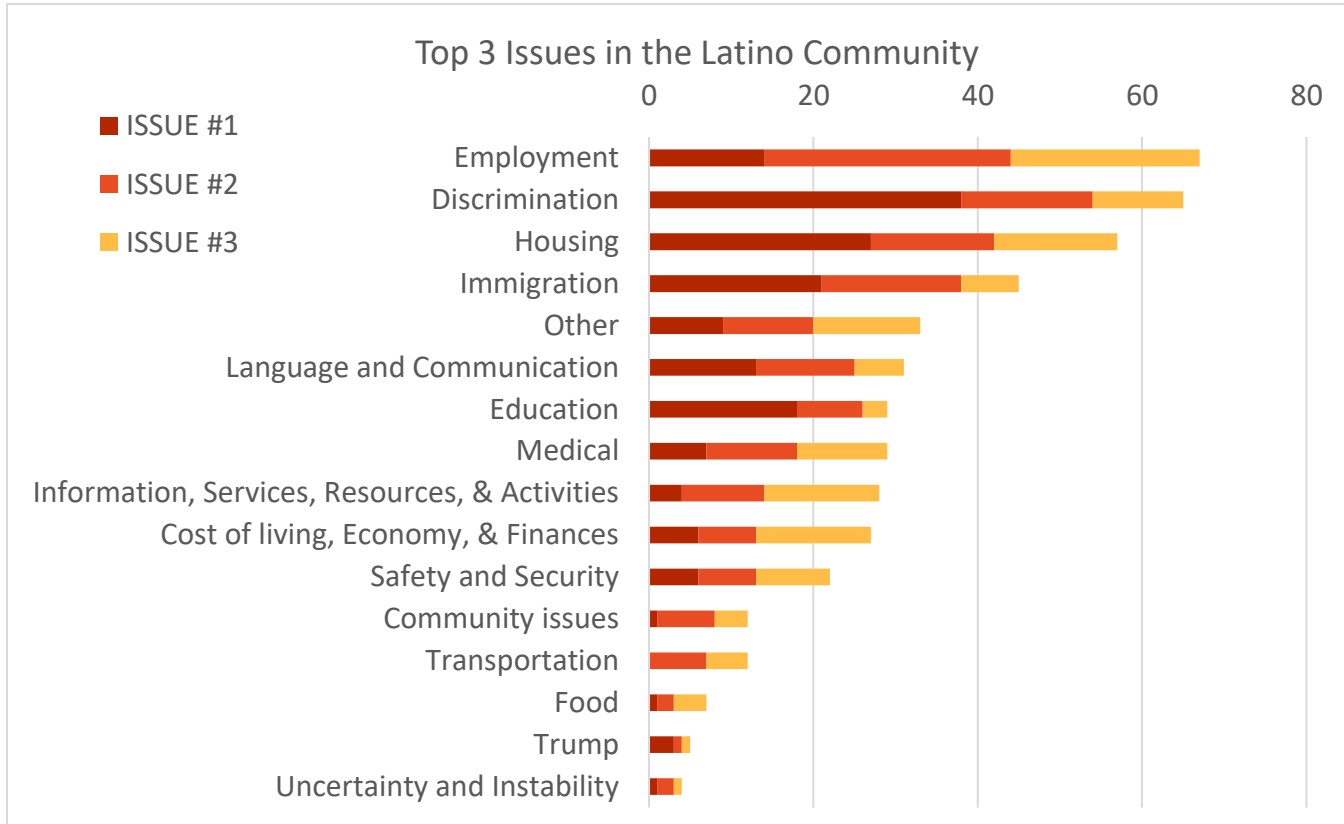


Focus Group Participant Characteristics

We also collected demographic information from the 37 focus group participants. Of these, 78% were women and 22% were men. Participants ranged from 28 to 59 years old, and half were under age 40. Most (94%) were born outside the US, with 1 in 4 foreign-born participants coming from Mexico and the rest from El Salvador, Guatemala, Colombia, Venezuela, and Canada. Nearly half spoke only Spanish, 22% were bilingual Spanish-dominant, 8% were bilingual English-dominant, and 8% spoke only English. Another 14% spoke English and Spanish equally. Most participants lived in the Beacon Hill area, and others came from Bellevue, Tukwila, Federal Way, Tacoma, and Olympia.

TOP COMMUNITY CONCERNS

The Community Needs survey asked respondents to identify the “top 3 issues facing the Latino community” in their own words, in order of importance. We organized these responses into the categories below. This chart shows how many responses fell into each category, and the different colors in each category show whether the respondent listed it as the #1, #2, or #3 most important concern.



Respondents identified **employment, discrimination, housing, and immigration** as the overall most significant issues facing the Latino community in 2017. Analyzing by the order in which issues were listed, **discrimination was the most frequently cited issue in the #1 spot**, followed by housing, immigration, education, employment, and language/communication. These were common themes in the focus groups as well.

Top 5 Causes of Stress

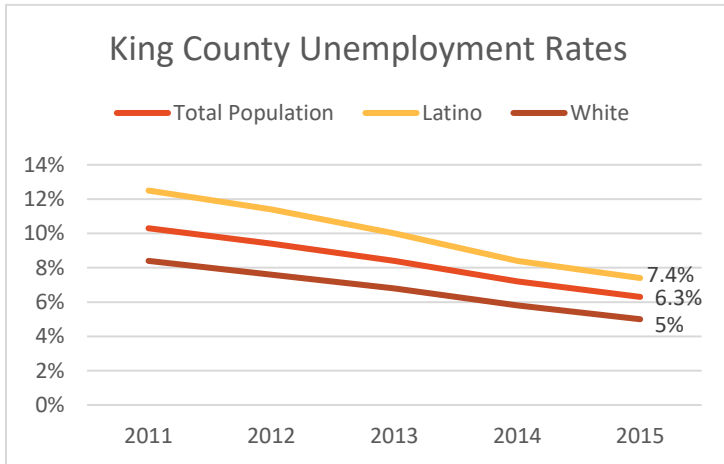
1. Money
2. The economy
3. Housing costs
4. Work
5. Job Stability

We also asked survey respondents about the causes of stress in their lives. Results indicate that the most common sources of stress were primarily related to finances. **Money, the economy, housing costs, work, and job stability were the top five most significant sources of stress**, followed by “family responsibilities”. Almost half of respondents also listed health concerns and personal safety as “very” or “somewhat” significant sources of stress. When asked how they manage stress, focus group participants named a variety of strategies including talking to and spending time with family members, social media, exercise (e.g. running, yoga), going for a walk in the park, sleeping, medication, and listening to music. One participant joined a folkloric dance group to deal with stress. Another shared that she relaxes by playing with her children and reading to them.

In this report, we will present the results of our community survey and focus groups in the order of the categories shown in this chart.

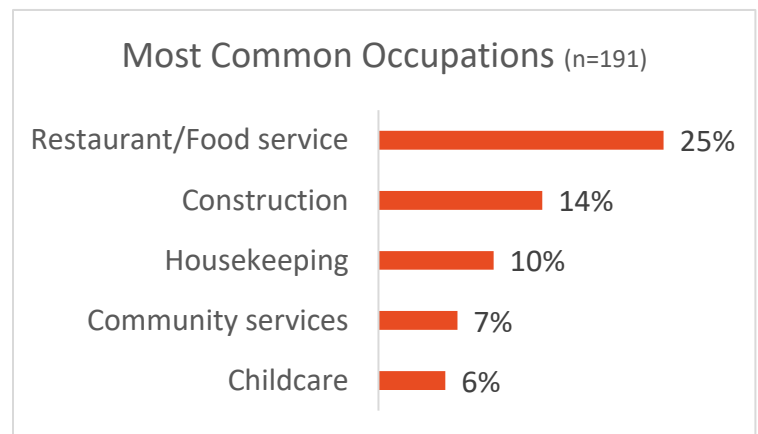
EMPLOYMENT

Employment was a major theme in our survey responses and focus group discussions. Many survey respondents identified employment-related concerns as one of the top three issues affecting the Latino community. These concerns include lack of job opportunities, inability to maintain stable employment, lack of economic opportunity, language ability requirements, low wages, LGBTQ employee rights, job restrictions due to immigration status, and working without social security.



Overall unemployment in King County has declined in recent years, but racial disparities persist. The Latino unemployment rate remains higher than the population average, and the White population rate remains below the population average.¹ The most common occupations among Latinos in King County are food service (14%), cleaning and maintenance (11%), construction (11%, nearly all are men), and office/administrative support (10%, most are women).² Our survey reflected similar results.

The most common occupation among survey respondents was food service, followed by construction, then housekeeping. Foreign-born respondents were more likely to work in these three occupations compared to US-born respondents. Workers in these occupations (particularly food service and construction) often experience higher rates of involuntary part-time work,³ wage theft,⁴ and health hazards.⁵ Around half of our survey respondents were full time workers, and 20% were part-time workers. The rest were homemakers, students, or unemployed. Foreign-born survey respondents were more likely to work part-time than US-born respondents. Those working part time reported higher rates of several hardship factors, including poverty, food insecurity, and lack of health insurance.



Focus group participants reported that it was difficult to find what they considered *good* work. Available jobs are usually part-time, temporary/seasonal, do not pay well, and do not offer benefits. One participant commented, "As an undocumented person, you take whatever job you can get."⁶ Some common barriers to employment included lack of accessible childcare, lack of English language skills, and undocumented status.

"AS AN UNDOCUMENTED PERSON, YOU TAKE WHATEVER JOB YOU CAN GET"

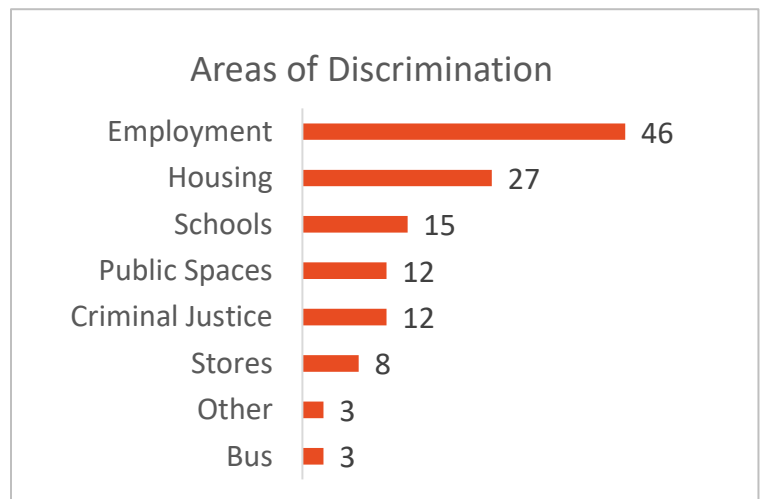
Several women in the focus groups explained that they don't work because they would have to use the money they could make in a shift to pay whoever was watching their kids in that same time. Other barriers included transportation, computer/Internet access, experience and education requirements, unfamiliarity with the Seattle area, and for some, their age. Many participants stressed the importance of being recommended by a family member or friend in order to successfully obtain a job.

DISCRIMINATION AND SAFETY

Discrimination emerged as a common theme in survey responses and in the focus groups. In a 2016 nationwide survey, over half of Latinos said they “have regularly or occasionally experienced discrimination or have been treated unfairly because of their race or ethnicity.” Young and U.S.-born Latinos were more likely to report experiencing discrimination. Among Latinos age 18 to 29, 65% reported experiencing discrimination compared to 35% of Latinos age 50 and over. Among Latinos born in the U.S., 62% reported experiencing discrimination compared to 41% of foreign-born Latinos.⁷

Among our survey respondents, many had experienced discrimination personally and/or described its impact on the larger Latino community. At the personal level, **44% of respondents reported experiencing “discrimination, harassment, or unfair treatment” because they are Latino/a.** Over half of these respondents said they had experienced discrimination in the area of employment, and another 30% said they had experienced it in housing. Other respondents reported they had experienced discrimination in schools, public spaces, and in the criminal justice system.

One respondent stated that a bus driver told her to go back to her country, another said that he had experienced racist and anti-immigrant comments on Facebook, and a third said that store workers ignore her and don’t sell products to her.⁸ Respondents cited racism and stereotypes as well as discrimination based on immigration status, ethnicity, and English fluency as major issues affecting Latinos in the region.



The recent presidential election also had an impact on respondents; a few reported that Donald Trump and his policies were top issues for the Latino community, **and of those who experienced discrimination, 60% said they had experienced more since the 2016 presidential election.** Immediately after the election, the

3 out of 5 respondents who experience discrimination said it has increased since the 2016 presidential election

Southern Poverty Law Center conducted a survey of over 10,000 K-12 educators, and found that the election results had “a profoundly negative impact on schools and students.” 90% of educators reported that school climate had been negatively affected, 80% reported heightened anxiety among marginalized students,

including immigrants, and 40% had heard derogatory language against students of color and immigrants, among others. The increase in targeting and harassment was most frequently reported by educators in schools with majority white students, primarily directed at “immigrants, Muslims, girls, LGBT students, kids with disabilities and anyone who was on the ‘wrong’ side of the election.” Nearly 1,000 teachers observed that children were showing anxiety and fear about deportation and family separation.⁹

Our survey respondents also expressed specific concerns around safety in their communities. Fear of deportation was a common theme, along with family separation, violence, hate crimes, police brutality, fear of the police, intimidation, insecurity in the streets and at night, and violence based on race and immigration status. Some respondents expressed a sense of “instability” and “uncertainty”, perhaps reflecting a growing sentiment of unease related to the current political climate and its impact on Latino communities.

“INSEGURIDAD
EN LAS CALLES,
EN ESPECIAL POR
LAS NOCHES.”

In the focus groups, participants expressed that they had experienced discrimination for speaking Spanish and/or not speaking English, skin color, race, and immigration status. Participants shared examples from their jobs, schools, stores, housing and at doctor’s offices. Most examples involved non-Latino aggressors, but some participants also shared examples of discrimination and mistreatment by other Latinos. A few participants specifically said that they have witnessed Latinos who have legal status threatening to report undocumented Latinos to immigration as a form of coercion or intimidation. Many participants reported that since the presidential election they have noticed an increase in mistreatment and discrimination of Latinos in person, on social media and on television. One participant specifically blamed the president for the rise in discrimination, saying “He gave them the right to.”¹⁰ Several participants referred to El Centro de la Raza as a safe place and a resource for immigrants, particularly in the months following the presidential inauguration.

HOUSING

Housing remains a major concern for Latinos in our region. **In 2014, Latinos had the second highest housing cost burden of any racial or ethnic group in King County**, with 53% of Latino households paying more than 30% of their monthly income to rent. Many of these households are “severely cost-burdened,” meaning that their housing costs equal more than half of their monthly income. In King County, **1 in 4 Latino households pays more than half of their monthly income to rent**, compared to 17% of all households and 15% of White households.¹¹ For reference, median household income among Latinos was \$51,000 in 2014, compared to \$76,000 for the total population and \$82,000 among Whites.¹² There is a persistent need for affordable housing accessible to the Latino community.

In our survey, 73% of respondents were renters and 9% were homeowners. Many respondents were long-time King County residents; almost half said they had lived in here for 10 years or more. Over half of respondents lived in Seattle, and 38% lived in South King County. Foreign-born respondents and monolingual Spanish speakers were more likely to live in South King County than in Seattle. Many respondents noted the lack of affordable housing, high rent, unfair housing application processes, inability to obtain credit to buy a house, and immigration status as a barrier to housing as issues affecting the Latino community. Roughly 1 in 5 respondents said that they or a member of their family had to move in the last two years due to rising housing costs. Some focus group participants reported that they live in housing that is too small for their family in order to keep rent costs down. Others reported they save money on rent by living “in the conditions we live in,”¹³ offering examples of inadequate cleanliness, poorly maintained buildings, and pests.

1 in 5 respondents or a member of their family had to move in the last two years due to housing costs

Three of the five focus groups were held with residents of El Centro de la Raza's low-income housing complexes Plaza Roberto Maestas and El Patio Apartments. These participants found Beacon Hill a favorable place to live due to affordability, access to public transportation, proximity to stores and businesses, and proximity to downtown. They also expressed that having El Centro de la Raza close by was a benefit of living in the area, primarily for the early childhood education services and the sense of community at the organization. All but two households had at least one child and most households (76%) had two or more children.



Pictured: El Centro de la Raza's new mixed-use development Plaza Roberto Maestas, with 112 units of affordable housing

Focus group participants also shared their experiences and thoughts around homeownership. When asked about future goals to become homeowners, many participants laughed. They insisted it was simply a dream, too difficult to achieve. They felt they could not save enough for a down payment and could not afford the mortgage and utility bills. One couple used to own their home, but lost the house after a work injury affected their finances. They felt it would be difficult to regain what they had lost. Another participant shared that their family decided to buy an RV when they had to leave their apartment, but struggled to find affordable parking. A few participants said they had no desire to become homeowners; they felt El Centro de la Raza provided more than sufficient housing for them and their families. One participant stated, "The place that El Centro provides is a good place for our kids."¹⁴

**"THE PLACE THAT EL
CENTRO PROVIDES
IS A GOOD PLACE
FOR OUR KIDS"**

Participants held generally negative views on public housing (although they did not identify El Centro de la Raza's housing as "public housing"). They felt there were too many requirements, an infinite wait to get in, complicated forms, and a very short time frame to submit an application. Several people expressed frustration and hopelessness about the process. One said, "I feel like it is oppressive... it is very difficult at the emotional level."¹⁵ Another participant felt that the public housing system does not help people succeed in the long run. She explained, "As far as state assistance or government help, it's good to have that help when you need it. But in the long term, it keeps you down because if you even make a dollar more than the limit, the help is gone."

EDUCATION

Educational attainment is a strong predictor of economic stability. Among our survey respondents, **those who had completed some post-secondary studies or had a college degree were more likely to make over \$40,000 per year** than those who had a high school degree or less. However, there are significant and persistent academic achievement gaps between Latino students and their White peers. Latino students consistently score lower on standardized fourth-grade and tenth-grade assessments than White students,¹⁶ and these gaps often lead to lower rates of on-time high school graduation. Latino students had the second lowest graduation rate of any ethnic group in King County in 2015, with just 63% of Latino students graduating on time compared to 80% of all students and 86% of White students.¹⁷ The graduation rate was 66% for low-income students, 54% for students who speak limited English, and just 49% for Title I migrant students.¹⁸

For many Latino children, these gaps exist even before kindergarten, and widen as students progress through the education system. In 2015, just 33% of Latino children were considered ready for kindergarten, compared to 58% of their White peers.¹⁹ High quality early childhood education can make the difference for a child to be prepared to enter kindergarten, but it is often inaccessible for low-income families. King County has some of the most expensive childcare in Washington State, totaling about \$33,000 per year for an infant and toddler²⁰—roughly 75% or more of what most of our survey respondent households made last year.

Of the survey respondents who needed pre-K childcare and before/after-school programs, about 1 in 4 said they could not access those services, and another 1 in 4 said that the services were difficult to get. Respondents indicated that **cost was the most significant barrier to childcare access, followed by location**. In South King County, respondents were more likely to list location as the primary barrier. In Seattle, cost was the primary barrier. This suggests that South King County may not have enough childcare programs close to parent or guardian workplaces/homes, while Seattle programs may be available but are prohibitively expensive. Additional barriers to after school programs included lack of information, no spaces available, lack of in-school programs, and lack of transportation or time.

1 in 4 respondents needing
childcare or after school programs
could not access those services

In addition to affordable early childhood education and after school programs, survey respondents identified the following as the greatest educational needs in the Latino community: access to general and technical education, affordable education opportunities for non-citizens and older adults, LGBTQ student rights, and Spanish-speaking mentors for graduating students (likely referring to high school or college). Many respondents felt that a lack of English language skills is a major barrier to pursuing education and employment, and they would like to see more affordable English as a Second Language classes in the community as well.

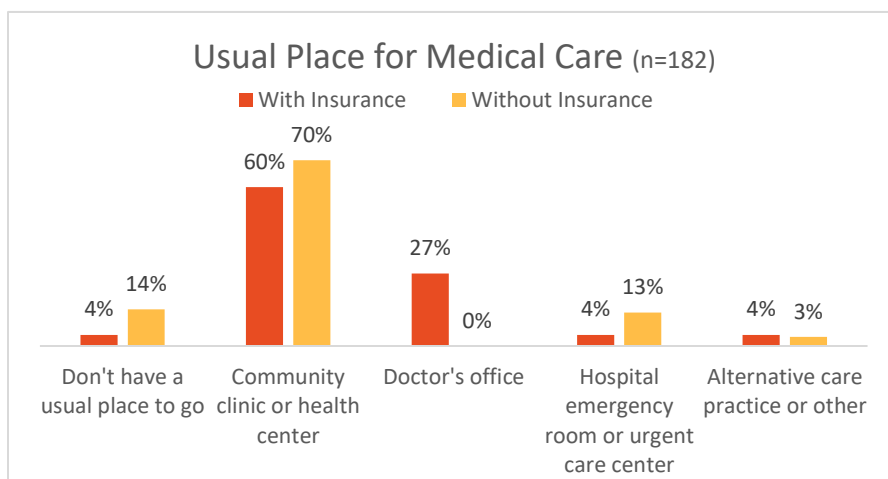
Many focus group participants expressed that early childhood education and after school programs are beneficial for children as well as parents/guardians. Participants valued the bilingual programming provided at El Centro de la Raza, and several said they noticed improvements in their children's learning and behavior after they started attending José Martí Child Development Center. Some parents also expressed that enrolling their children in after-school programs allowed them to work more hours to increase earnings, take courses (such as ESL classes), or have more time to care for younger children.

HEALTHCARE

Before the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, Latinos had the highest uninsured rate of any racial or ethnic group in King County (42% in 2013). As of 2016, **1 in 4 Latinos in King County is still without health insurance**, the second highest uninsured rate after American Indian/Alaska Natives (26%).²¹ Lack of insurance can severely impact both the health and financial solvency of households — “The uninsured often face unaffordable medical bills when they do seek care...which can quickly translate into medical debt since most of the uninsured have low or moderate incomes and have little, if any, savings.” Those without insurance are often charged higher rates for medical care, and end up “using up savings, having difficulty paying for necessities, borrowing money, or having medical bills sent to collection” due to their financial situation.²²

Health insurance and healthcare services are inaccessible for many Latinos in our region primarily due to high cost. Only 55% of our survey respondents had health insurance, half of whom had employer-sponsored coverage (either their own or from a parent, partner, or school), and 29% of whom had Medicare or Medicaid. **Almost half (45%) of survey respondents did not have health insurance.** Of the survey respondents without insurance, 58% said that cost was the primary barrier. Other reasons respondents reported for not having insurance include not knowing how to get coverage (20%), ineligibility due to job loss (15%), and not knowing if they were eligible or doubts about immigration status eligibility (6%). This issue affected foreign-born respondents much more than U.S.-born respondents. Just one of the twenty-three U.S.-born respondents did not have health insurance, while half of foreign-born respondents did not have health insurance. Part-time workers were also more likely than full-time workers to be uninsured.

When asked where they usually receive medical care, the majority of respondents reported that they use community clinics and health care centers. However, **27% of respondents without insurance did not have a usual place to go or would go to a hospital emergency room or urgent care center.** These respondents are likely not receiving preventative care or general wellness checkups. Most respondents

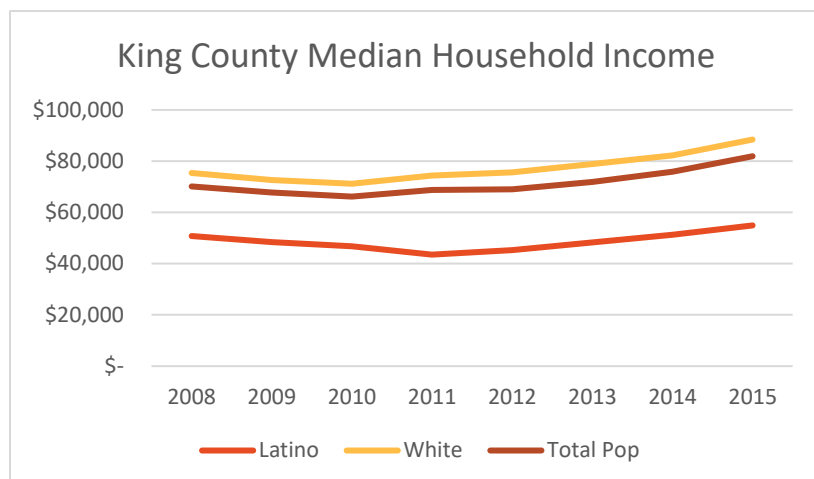


(72%) said they knew where to get an HIV test, but only 1 in 4 had been tested in the past six months.²³ Respondents who felt healthcare was a major concern in the Latino community reported that, in addition to inaccessible health insurance and expensive healthcare, there is a general lack of services, programs, resources, and activities for the Latino community, as well as a lack of information about how to access them.

Focus group participants shared similar challenges. Many participants indicated that health insurance and medical services are not affordable, and they simply choose not to go to the doctor. Those who do seek medical care usually go to the Country Doctor Community Clinic, 45th Street Clinic, or the Seattle-King County Public Health clinics where services are billed on a sliding fee scale based on income. Most were referred to these places by a friend, coworker, family member, or El Centro de la Raza.

FINANCIAL STABILITY

Since 2011, median household income in King County has been increasing, but Latino households continue to bring in less than two-thirds of what White families do. In 2015, median household income among Latinos in King County was \$55,000, compared to \$82,000 for the total population and \$88,000 among Whites.²⁴ This puts Latino families at higher risk of financial instability.



Latinos are more likely to live in poverty than Whites. In King County, 22% of Latinos live below the Federal Poverty Line (FPL) compared to 8% of Whites.²⁵ This disparity is even more striking among young children; 37% of Latino children under 5 live below FPL compared to 12% of White children.²⁶ There are also differences in poverty rates among Latinos based on household composition and gender. Latino families headed by married couples have the lowest poverty rates (7%), compared to 36% of households headed by single Latina women and 16% of households headed by single Latino men.²⁷

In order to gather data on financial stability in the Latino community, El Centro de la Raza's survey included questions about household income and how frequently respondents had money left over after paying bills. Nearly 3 in 4 survey respondents were low-income (below 200% of FPL). Just 1 in 10 respondents "often" had money left over after paying monthly bills, with 33% responding "sometimes" and 35% responding "occasionally." **1 in 5 respondents never had money left over after**

**3 in 4 respondents
were low-income**

paying monthly bills. Analyzing these results by household composition, we found that households with children experienced higher rates of financial hardship. Households headed by single adults with multiple children were the most likely to say that they occasionally or never had money left over after paying monthly bills. When analyzing by country of birth, we found that foreign-born respondents (median household income \$20,000-\$30,000) were more likely than U.S.-born respondents (median household income \$30,000-\$40,000) to report occasionally or never having money left over after paying monthly bills.

**1 in 5 respondents never had
money left over after paying
monthly bills**

In the focus groups, many participants described "financial security" as earning stable income from employment and having savings. Participants emphasized the importance of "the ability to save, not just meet your basic needs."²⁸ However, many reported that saving money is very difficult. When asked what might increase their ability to save, most respondents agreed that the high cost of housing is a major barrier. One participant suggested more housing subsidies or rent control as potential solutions. Other ways participants discussed to increase their savings included working more hours or multiple jobs, but many felt that they would be neglecting their children if they did so. One participant reflected, "I would never sacrifice my children to have more money...my children's future depends on that. What am I going to do with all that money if my children go down the wrong path?"²⁹

TRANSPORTATION

In 2015, the majority of Latinos in King County drove alone to work (66%), followed by lower rates of carpooling (13%) and public transportation (13%). About 10% did not have access to a car.³⁰ Among our survey respondent, most (80%) owned a car, and **75% of respondents reported needing to use public transit in the last year**. Comparing these responses by place of residence, South King County residents were more likely than Seattle residents to own a car, and less likely to say they needed public transit. Of those who needed public transit, 1 in 4 had difficulties accessing transit or could not access it at all, citing location (50%) and cost (38%) as primary barriers to access.



Pictured: The Beacon Hill Link Light Rail Station and Metro bus stop adjacent to El Centro de la Raza

Among focus group participants, transportation was an important factor when deciding where to live. In contrast to survey respondents, only a few focus group participants owned vehicles. Many rely primarily on Metro buses and the Link light rail. Some participants shared that they avoid using cars because of traffic, parking availability and cost, and not wanting to drive in bad weather.

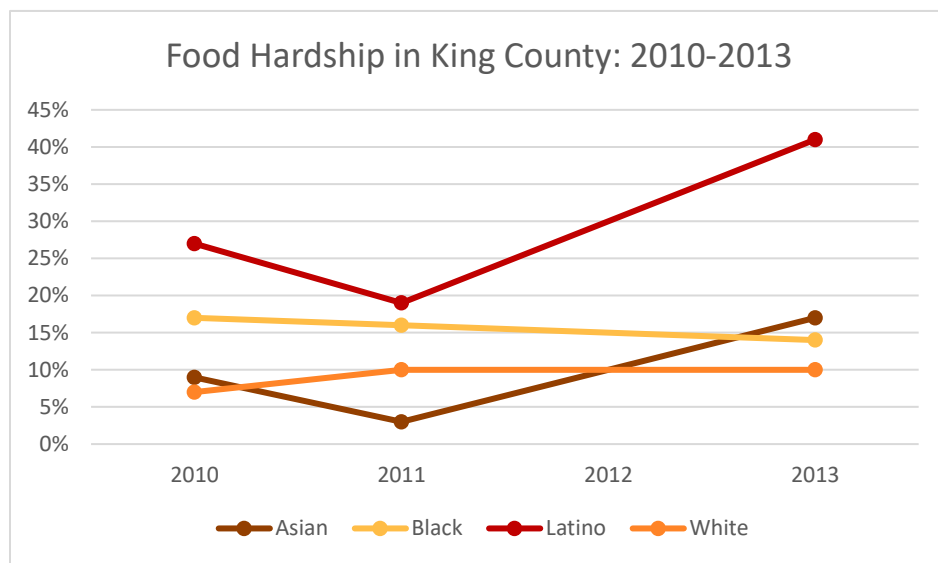
Many participants had positive attitudes toward public transit, indicating that there are convenient stops near work and stores, sufficient frequency of service, and easily transferrable fare. One participant reported that she likes teaching her children how to get around without using a car. However, participants also identified some drawbacks to using public transit. Transfers only last for two hours, which is not always enough time to complete errands. It can also be difficult to run errands with multiple children using the bus, especially when carrying groceries. Some participants have multiple job sites or need to drop off multiple children at different schools, so the bus is not a viable option. Others said they have been harassed on public transit.

All focus group participants knew about the ORCA card, and most knew about the ORCA LIFT program (a reduced fare program for income-eligible adults), although not all were enrolled. We found that **some participants were confused about how the ORCA card worked, indicating that they did not know how to use it, check their balance, or reload funds**. This is something for service providers to be aware of, especially those who offer ORCA LIFT program enrollment. There is a need for more education and training in this area.

NUTRITION/FOOD ACCESS

One of the most basic of needs is having enough food to eat. Households that do not have access to enough food for active healthy lives for all household members at all times during the year are considered food insecure.³¹ Income is a very strong predictor of food insecurity. According to a 2013 King County survey, 38% of adults with household incomes below \$35,000 experienced food hardship compared to just 2% of those with incomes of \$50,000 or higher.³² South King County residents are also at higher risk, with 18% reporting food hardship compared to 12% of Seattle residents.³³

Latinos are at particularly high risk of food insecurity, with 41% of Latino adults experiencing food hardship in King County in 2013, compared to 13% of all adults and 10% of White adults. As shown in the chart to the right, Latinos consistently have the highest rates of food insecurity compared to other racial and ethnic groups. In addition, Latinos have comparatively low rates of enrollment in government nutrition assistance programs. Only half of eligible Latino households are enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).³⁴



Of those who participated in El Centro de la Raza's survey, **38% of respondents reported that they had run out of food and couldn't afford to buy more at some point in the last year.** Of those, 19% reported that this happened almost "every month", and an additional 43% said it happened "some months but not every month." This was most common among very low-income households – 63% of respondents making less than \$10,000 per year experienced food insecurity compared to only 14% of those making \$50,000 or more per year. Part-time workers were also more likely to be in a food insecure household than full time workers.

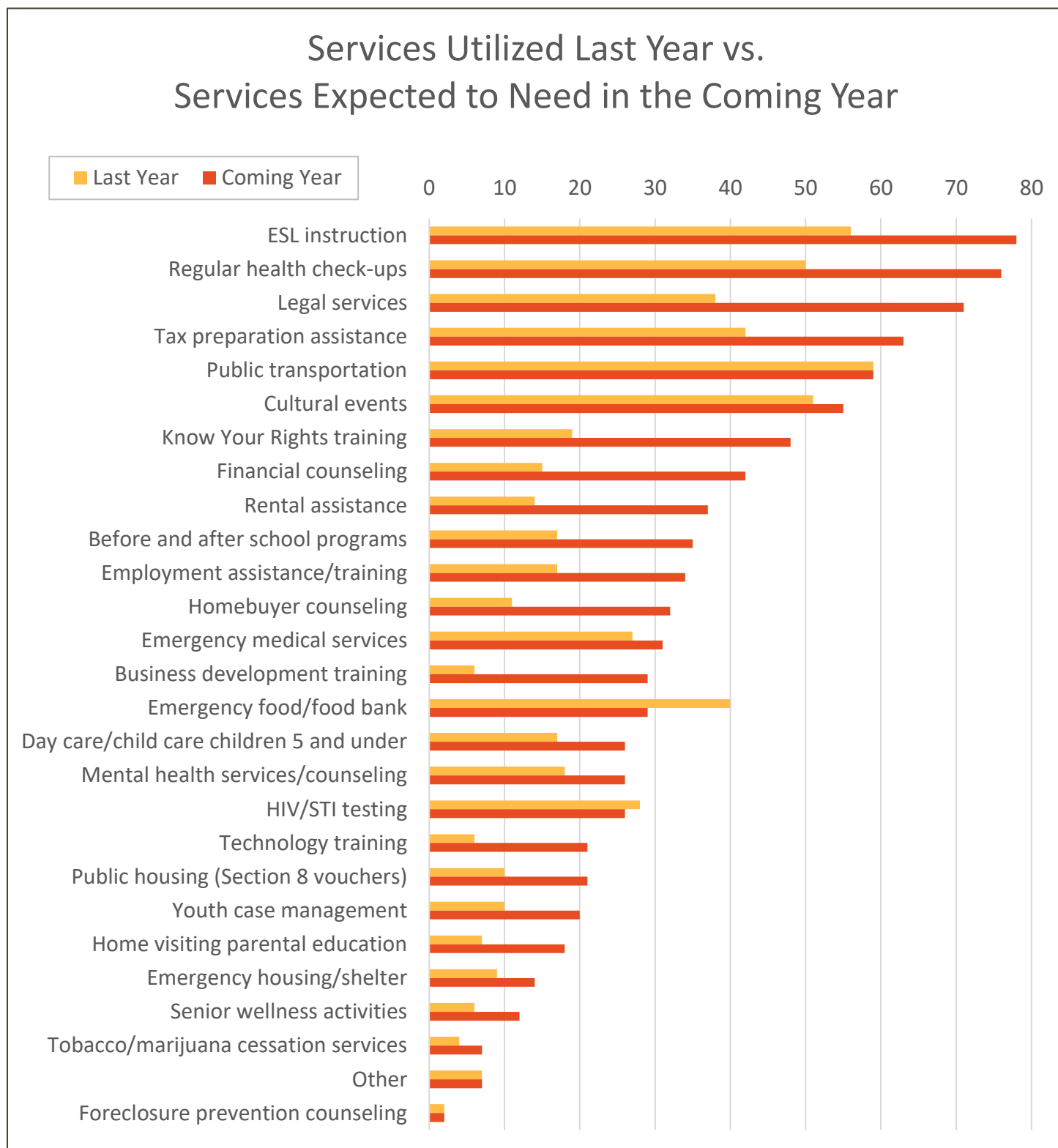
2 in 5 respondents ran out of food and couldn't buy more in the last year

When asked what they would do if they ran out of food, many focus group participants knew about local food banks at El Centro de la Raza and St. Mary's Church and had received food assistance there in the past. Others said they would ask relatives, friends, or neighbors for help. Some participants had borrowed money from friends, and one participant said she took out a payday loan from Money Tree.

Some participants expressed concern about accessing food banks if they already receive public assistance (e.g. WIC), or if they are a green card holder. Several were afraid that food bank staff would use their ID to check their benefits status and turn them away, or that seeking food assistance could jeopardize their residency status. These misconceptions around eligibility may be preventing Latinos from accessing the food resources they need.

SERVICE UTILIZATION

We compiled a list of services offered at El Centro de la Raza and at our Steering Committee partner organizations, and asked survey respondents about their service utilization last year, and anticipated need for services in the coming year. The chart is organized in order of the services respondents expected they would need in the coming year.



The most commonly utilized services in the past year were public transportation, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, cultural events, health check-ups, tax prep, emergency food/food bank, legal services, HIV/STI testing, and emergency medical services.³⁵ This tells us these services were needed and accessible to our survey population.

There were some differences in service usage between groups within the survey population. Seattle residents used public transportation and cultural events at higher rates than South King County residents (37% vs 24%), and South King County residents used ESL instruction and regular health checkups at higher rates than Seattle respondents (ESL: 37% vs 22%, health checkups: 31% vs 21%). Female respondents reported using regular health check-ups and tax prep assistance at higher rates than male respondents in the last year (health checkups: 33% vs 15%, tax prep: 28% vs 14%).

The services that the highest number of people expected they would need next year were ESL classes, health checkups, legal services, tax preparation assistance, public transportation, cultural events, Know Your Rights training, and financial counseling.

It is worth noting that this survey was administered from January 22nd, 2017 through March 8th, 2017, immediately following the presidential inauguration and during a period of the issuance of several Executive Orders that directly threatened the safety of immigrants. This may have had an effect on the number of people who expected they would need legal services and Know Your Rights trainings in the coming year.

We noticed that although the most common stress factors for respondents (discussed on page 3 of this report) were around finances and employment, financial counseling and employment assistance were not among the top 10 most utilized services. There are several possible reasons for this; perhaps these services are not accessible to participants, not seen as useful, or participants are not aware that they are available. This is an area for further study.

Focus group participants reported that they were highly satisfied with services they received at El Centro de la Raza. They also reported that if the service they needed was not available on-site, El Centro de la Raza staff would connect them with outside service providers who could meet their need. However, participants also felt that not having a Social Security number limited their access to services in general. This suggests participants may not be taking advantage of available services due to incorrect assumptions about eligibility. Service providers should be aware of this, and take steps to find out whether public perception of eligibility requirements for their programs is correct.

Outside of these two studies, El Centro de la Raza also collects feedback from participants of all departments on an annual basis on how well they were satisfied with the service they received. The survey asks if participants were helped in a timely manner, treated with respect, received the information or service that they needed, informed about other services the agency offers, felt welcomed in the building, were satisfied with the cleanliness of the building, and if they would recommend the organization to others. In 2017, we collected nearly 500 survey responses, with 96% positive responses and 4% negative responses. In general, participants wanted to know more about other services offered at the organization, more information provided online, better parking (especially among parents of children in the child development center), and expanded services in other areas of the region (South King County was identified as a specific area to expand services).

KEY FINDINGS

The goal of El Centro de la Raza’s Community Needs Assessment 2017 was to summarize the current needs of Latinos in Seattle and South King County. Our research revealed some important trends for service providers, funders, and policymakers to consider in the coming years. We found that the top three most pressing needs among our survey and focus group participants are good jobs, affordable housing, and safety from interpersonal and institutional discrimination on the basis of race, language, and immigration status.

Employment, discrimination, housing, and immigration were the top four community concerns, with discrimination most frequently mentioned as the most pressing issue. The most common sources of stress in peoples’ lives were mostly related to finances: money, the economy, housing costs, work, and job stability.

In the area of employment, there is a need not just for job opportunities, but for *good* jobs with living wages, benefits, adequate hours, and year-round stability. Despite Seattle’s new labor standards, many people are still underpaid, underemployed, and uninsured. English language skills were often cited as a barrier to obtaining good work, and it is worth noting that ESL instruction was the most cited service that survey respondents expected they would need in the coming year. Finding affordable childcare is another common barrier to obtaining employment. Service providers and funders might consider including a strategic focus on these barriers in their employment-related programming.

The rising cost of housing continues to over-burden Latino families. Many have had to move due to rent increases, and live in homes too small for their families with inadequate living conditions. Homeownership is seen as “simply a dream,” unattainable. Service providers and funders can make an impact in this area by investing in creating and maintaining affordable housing, and connecting people to homeownership supports such as financial counseling, homebuyer education, and down payment assistance. Those who live in affordable housing for low-income families emphasize the importance of access to transit, stores and businesses, and childcare. There is a need for policymakers to support affordable housing development in close proximity to these supports.

Many Latinos continue to suffer discrimination on the basis of race, language, and immigration status, and most say it has increased since the 2016 presidential election. People experience discrimination obtaining employment, at their place of work, seeking housing, at school, in public spaces, and in the criminal justice system including with law enforcement. Many feel unsafe and fearful, especially with regard to deportation and violence against immigrants. In the short-term, service providers, funders, and policymakers must protect those whose safety and livelihoods are being threatened and defend the rights of all people including non-citizens. In the long-term, we need to work across sectors to dismantle discriminatory systems, build community power, and increase representation of communities of color, low-income communities, and immigrant communities in the public sphere.

These were the three most pressing issues that emerged from El Centro de la Raza’s Community Needs Assessment 2017: employment, housing, and discrimination. As a voice and a hub of the Latino community in Seattle and King County, El Centro de la Raza is committed to responding to these needs with culturally and linguistically competent programs and services as well as advocacy at the local and state level.

ENDNOTES

¹ American Community Survey 1-year estimates, 2011-2015

² American Community Survey 1-year estimates, 2015

³ Economic Policy Institute: <http://www.epi.org/publication/still-falling-short-on-hours-and-pay-part-time-work-becoming-new-normal/#epi-toc-9>

⁴ University of Washington: https://depts.washington.edu/pcls/documents/research/Sederbaum_Wage.pdf

⁵ Washington State Commission on Hispanic Affairs, Assessment Report 2013-14

⁶ Participant 5, focus group 3

⁷ Pew Research Center: <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/06/29/roughly-half-of-hispanics-have-experienced-discrimination/>

⁸ Original Spanish text of responses: (1) “En los centro[s] comerciales me ignoran y no me venden el product[o]” (2) “En el autobús y en la para[d]a. La conductor me dijo que fuera a mi país” (3) “He experimentado comentarios racistas y anti-inmigrante en Facebook”

⁹ Southern Poverty Law Center: <https://www.splcenter.org/20161128/trump-effect-impact-2016-presidential-election-our-nations-schools>

¹⁰ Participant 7, focus group 1

¹¹ Communities Count housing data: <http://www.communitiescount.org/index.php?page=housing-race-ethnicity>

¹² American Community Survey 1-year estimates, 2014

¹³ Participant 2, focus group 4

¹⁴ Participant 3, focus group 5

¹⁵ Participant 2, focus group 3

¹⁶ Seattle University: <http://digitalcommons.law.seattleu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2190&context=sulr>

¹⁷ Best Starts for Kids Implementation Plan: <http://www.kingcounty.gov/~media/elected/executive/constantine/initiatives/best-starts-for-kids/documents/BSK-Plan-final.ashx?la=en>

¹⁸ Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction: <http://www.k12.wa.us/DataAdmin/Dropout-Grad.aspx>

¹⁹ King County Department of Community and Human Services: <http://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/community-human-services/initiatives/best-starts-for-kids/dashboards/primary-indicators/kindergarten-readiness.aspx>

²⁰ <http://www.childcarenet.org/about-us/data/2017-county-data-reports-1/king>

²¹ King County APDE: <http://www.kingcounty.gov/~media/depts/health/data/documents/aca-increased-coverage.ashx>

²² Kaiser Family Foundation: <http://kff.org/uninsured/fact-sheet/key-facts-about-the-uninsured-population/>

²³ When analyzing these questions based on sexual orientation, we found that all 26 LGBTQ respondents knew where to get an HIV test compared to 66% of straight respondents. However, only 73% of LGBTQ respondents had been tested in the past six months. It is likely that most LGBTQ respondents were Entre Hermanos clients, and staff later informed us that around 40% of Entre Hermanos clients know they are HIV positive and therefore do not require HIV testing.

²⁴ American Community Survey 1-year estimates, 2008-2015

²⁵ American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2015

²⁶ American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2013

²⁷ American Community Survey 1-year estimates, 2016

²⁸ Participant 7, focus group 1

²⁹ Participant 1, focus group 2

³⁰ American Community Survey 1-year estimates, 2015

³¹ USDA Economic Research Service: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/measurement.aspx>

³² A King County telephone survey asked adults how often in the past 12 months (never, sometimes, or often) their food didn't last and they didn't have money to buy more. Answers of “sometimes” or “often” indicate food hardship. Communities Count food insecurity data: <http://www.communitiescount.org/index.php?page=food-hardship-insecurity>

³³ Communities Count: <http://www.communitiescount.org/index.php?page=food-hardship-insecurity>

³⁴ United Way of King County: http://www.uwkc.org/wp-content/uploads/ftp/RacialDisparityDataReport_Nov2015.pdf

³⁵ The prevalence of the most frequently cited services may have been skewed by the nature of the organizations conducting the surveys and the events where the surveys were collected. For example, 41% of surveys were collected at El Centro de la Raza tax preparation sessions and 26% were collected at El Centro Legal Clinics. This likely influenced the high frequency of utilization of those services. Similarly, El Centro offers ESL, cultural events, and a food bank, and Entre Hermanos (where 10% of the surveys were collected) offers HIV/STI testing.

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Research Team

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- Noelia Flores
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Data Collectors

- José Camacho
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