

EXCLUDED IN THE EPICENTER

MAY
2020

IMPACTS OF THE COVID CRISIS ON WORKING-CLASS IMMIGRANT, BLACK, AND BROWN NEW YORKERS



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Immigrant, Black and Brown communities are reeling from COVID-19 and the crisis it has unleashed. We mourn the far too many Make the Road New York (MRNY) members and their loved ones who have contracted the virus and died. We hear daily from workers who have lost their jobs, are excluded from accessing Unemployment Insurance and all other income supports, and do not know how they will be able to buy groceries or pay the rent. We hear, too, from front-line workers who face the risk of contracting the virus at their work sites, where they labor without adequate protections.

This report is based on a survey of primarily working-class Latinx immigrants across New York City, Long Island, and Westchester, one third of whom are undocumented. As residents in the epicenter of the pandemic grapple with the grave risk of infection, the dramatic loss of income, and deep concern of displacement, they need urgent action from federal, state, and local governments.



HESTER ST

THE CONTEXT

DISPARATE IMPACT

COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted New York's low-income communities of color. As of the end of April, Black and Latinx New Yorkers have died of COVID-19 related illness at rates 45% to 57% higher than their white and Asian neighbors.

IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES ARE THE EPICENTER OF THE CRISIS

Immigrants make up a majority of New York City's essential workforce and one-third of the essential workers statewide. The places where they live – Elmhurst, the Bronx, Hempstead, White Plains – are now home to extreme concentrations of COVID cases.

ECONOMIC EMERGENCY

In addition to being more likely to perform essential work, immigrants and Black and Brown New Yorkers are more likely to have lost work from this crisis.

NO GOVERNMENT RELIEF

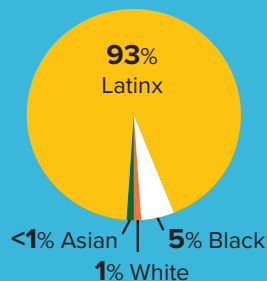
Meanwhile, government relief has been scant and excluded many. The federal CARES Act included a one-time tax rebate to tax filers with social security numbers, as well as expanded unemployment insurance. But neither of these measures included the eleven million undocumented people living in the country, and the tax rebate excluded mixed immigration status families where the tax filer does not possess a social security number. In New York, nearly one million undocumented people were excluded from federal relief.

COVID Poured Gasoline on the Fire of Inequity

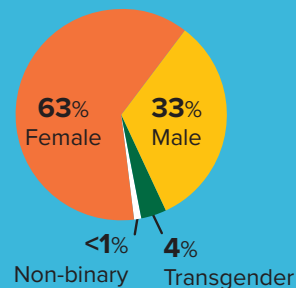
Immigrant, Black and Brown neighborhoods were marked by inequity well before this pandemic, with limited access to health insurance, healthcare and healthy food, low incomes, high unemployment rates, outsized rent burden, less healthy and more overcrowded living conditions, and, as a result, more chronic health problems.

SURVEY RESPONDENT PROFILE

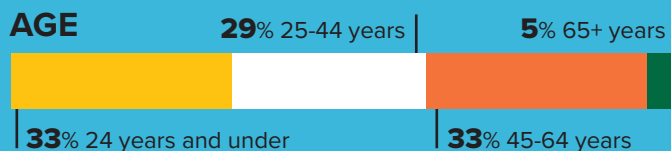
RACE/ETHNICITY



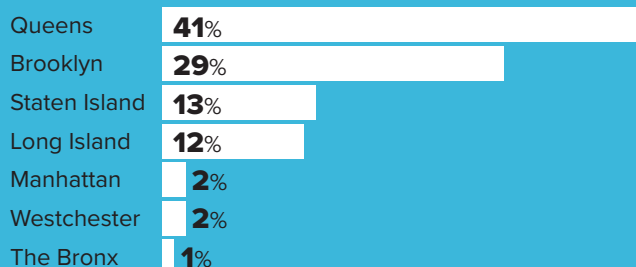
GENDER IDENTITY



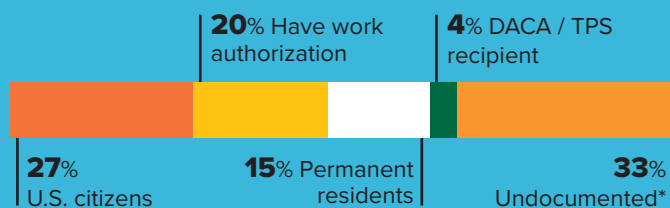
AGE



WHERE SURVEY RESPONDENTS LIVE



IMMIGRATION STATUS



79%

are immigrants to the United States

69%

live in mixed-status households

*The estimated undocumented data highlighted throughout this report refers to survey respondents who indicated they were immigrants to the United States but not US citizens, lawful permanent residents, DACA or TPS recipients, or individuals with any other work authorization or asylum status.

FINDINGS

HEALTH SYSTEM FAILURE

While **3 out of 5** of respondents report someone in their family member has been sick since March 1, and

60% of those have either confirmed or believe that it was COVID-19,

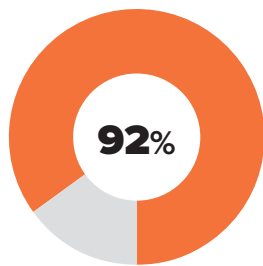
less than half received the medical treatment they needed



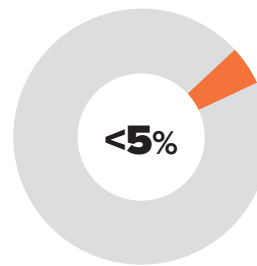
A full **16%** of respondents—one out of six—has lost a family member to COVID-19.

Almost **two-thirds** of respondents (61%) have experienced anxiety or depression over the past 8 weeks, and **close to half** (46%) did not know where to go for help.

OVERWHELMING JOB LOSS & NO SAFETY NET



92% of respondents reported that either they or another earner in their household has lost their job or income as a result of the crisis.



Less than **5%** of respondents received unemployment benefits in the last month.*

84% of respondents were out of work at the time of the survey.

88% report losing their job due to the pandemic.

About **90%** of household cleaners were no longer working at the time of a complementary MRNY Domestic Workers Project survey. Those that were working had fewer clients and therefore less income than usual.

"Estoy muy preocupado porque voy a tener una hija y no tengo trabajo—ni dinero para pagar los gastos en este país ni mandar a mi familia en México."

"I am very concerned that I am going to have a daughter and I have no job — no money to pay for expenses in this country or to send my family to Mexico."

*Federal law excludes workers without work authorization from receiving unemployment insurance (UI) or pandemic unemployment assistance (PUA), regardless of how much they may have paid into the insurance system.

NOWHERE TO TURN

More than half (53%) of respondents could not pay their April rent and **almost all** (89%) were worried about being able to pay the May rent.

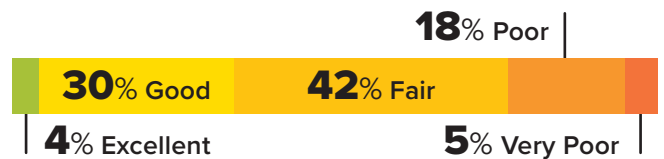
The majority of respondents are sheltering in place with what they identify as overcrowded (63%) and unsafe conditions (58%) in their homes.

"Para este mes me falta \$700. Para el proximo mes pago \$1700 de renta, no tengo trabajo tampoco dinero ni ayuda."

For this month I was short \$700.00. For the next month I have to pay \$ 1700 in rent, I don't have work, money or help."

EDUCATION EMERGENCY

Almost two-thirds of respondents (65%) rate their remote education experience as fair, poor, or very poor, with **close to a quarter** (23%) rating their experience as poor or very poor.



Respondents face barriers to remote learning due to:



No Device



Internet Access



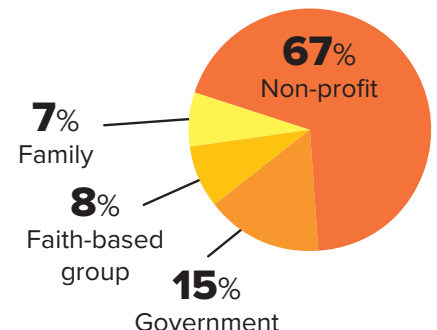
Language/
Translation

We don't have enough supplies. We have three children and we only have one computer that does not work well. One of my children wears glasses, but the glasses store is closed, so she can't see and do her work.

POWERFUL COMMUNITY RESPONSE

65% of respondents name community-based organizations as one of their main sources of information.

67% of respondents had received income replacement or cash assistance from community-based organizations. Only **15%** have received such assistance from the government.



SPOTLIGHT: YOUTH

The COVID-19 crisis is having a profound effect on the wellbeing of New York's youth. The socio-economic impacts and the mitigation measures – closing schools – will impact young people now and long into the future. The harmful effects of this pandemic will not be distributed equally, and immigrant youth and young people of color who are already vulnerable due to economic and/or immigration status will be among the hardest hit.

With the coronavirus, my little siblings have been struggling with remote learning. And because my parents and I work, it's hard to take care of them.

SPOTLIGHT: SUBURBS

Nassau and Suffolk counties on Long Island are second and third after New York City with the highest infection rates. Westchester county is fourth in the number of cases per 100,000 people, and third in the state in the number of deaths. Latinx communities in all 3 counties have the highest and fastest rising rates of infection, and the largest total number of cases in the region. As in NYC, many Latinx and immigrant community members are essential workers and cannot afford the luxury of working from home.

88% of suburban repondents report that they or someone in their household has lost their job or income

CONCLUSION

This report shows the overwhelming damage that the COVID-19 pandemic has wrought on immigrant, Black, and Brown communities. Survey data and the lived experience of community members reveal extraordinarily high rates of illness, death, and economic devastation. Community members—healthcare workers, food delivery workers, janitorial and maintenance staff, warehouse workers, cab drivers, construction workers, and more—are not only worried about protecting themselves and their loved ones from the virus, but are also worried about being able to pay for food, rent, and other essential utilities. Meanwhile, most of these New Yorkers have been largely excluded from the government's recovery funding.

Community members are hungry because they have no money to buy food. They are worried about being displaced because they cannot pay their rent. 92,000 New Yorkers today are homeless – living shoulder to shoulder in shelters or sleeping on our streets. Meanwhile, thousands sit in jails, prisons, and immigrant detention centers.

**SOLUTION
1**

**PROVIDE IMMEDIATE
RELIEF TO IMMIGRANT
WORKERS EXCLUDED
FROM THE CARES ACT**

Federal:

- Amend UI and PUA in the CARES Act to include all workers.
- Renew cash assistance at \$2,000 per month and remove the exclusion of ITIN-filers and some mixed status families.
- Enact the Paycheck Guarantee Act.

State:

- \$3.5 billion Excluded Workers emergency fund.

Federal and State:

- Tax billionaires and mega-corporations like Amazon that are profiting extensively at this moment.

City / local:

- Create Excluded Workers emergency fund.

Federal, State, and City/local:

- Adopt an Essential Worker Bill of Rights.

**SOLUTION
3**

**DEPOPULATE JAILS
AND PRISONS**

Federal:

- Reduce the number of detained people in federal jails and prisons, and immigration detention facilities.
- Provide adequate funding for people released from incarceration to support their transportation, housing, healthcare, and food needs.

State:

- Immediately release all aging and vulnerable people in jails, prisons, and detention centers.
- Prohibit the use of electronic monitoring or home confinement.
- Rescind all civil and criminal fines related to social distancing.

City:

- Immediate moratorium on all police enforcement of low-level and “quality of life” offenses.
- Remove police from homeless outreach and social distancing enforcement.

**SOLUTION
2**

**CANCEL RENT AND
SUSPEND MORTGAGE
PAYMENTS**

Federal:

- Rent and mortgage payment moratorium.

State:

- Extend eviction moratorium for the duration of the emergency plus two extra months after the emergency.
- Cancel rent for all those impacted by COVID.
- Disallow all forms of rent hikes during this crisis and provide all tenants the right to renew their leases.

City/local:

- The NYC Rent Guidelines Board should adopt a rent freeze.
- Offer every homeless person a single hotel room with a private bathroom.

**SOLUTION
4**

HEALTH CARE

Federal:

- Pass the Health Care Emergency Guarantee Act.

State:

- Create a state-funded Essential Plan for all New Yorkers with income up to 200% of the federal poverty level, regardless of immigration status.