

Nevada's Excluded Communities:

Key Findings from a COVID-19
Community Impact Survey



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The survey data featured in this report was coordinated and collected by Make the Road Nevada staff: Robert Cabrera, Blanca Macias, Lalo Montoya, Leo Murrieta, Luis Ortiz, and Jen Fleischmann-Willoughby. Maggie Corser (Center for Popular Democracy) analyzed the survey data and wrote the report. The report was edited by Leo Murrieta (MRNV), Emily Gordon (CPD), and Natalia Renta (CPD).



Make The Road Nevada is a non-profit organization based in Las Vegas, Nevada. Our vision for Nevada begins with building a strong grassroots foundation in Las Vegas and it ends with elevating the power of working class immigrant communities in every community around the state. We do this by Informing, Empowering, and Mobilizing our community to take action on important issues that directly affect their families and loved ones.

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Executive Summary

Nevada's communities of color and immigrant communities are being hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. Against the backdrop of Nevada's rising COVID-19 cases, Make the Road Nevada launched an impact survey to more fully understand the public health and economic crises facing people of color and immigrants across the state. The survey highlights key issues facing these communities and underscores the need for policy solutions that are both responsive to this urgent moment and center those most impacted. Make the Road Nevada conducted in-depth surveys with nearly 150 Nevadans in July 2020. The survey findings reveal widespread financial instability and hardship among Nevada's most vulnerable residents:

- A staggering 70% of all survey respondents—and 86% of estimated undocumented individuals—reported that they or someone in their household lost a job or income since the coronavirus crisis began.
- Widespread financial hardship is severely impacting community members' ability to secure basic necessities like food, medicine, and utilities. Half of those surveyed—and 82% of undocumented respondents—are worried they will be unable to pay for utilities and other bills. More than one-third are concerned about having enough food.
- The pandemic has been disproportionately impacting Nevada's communities of color who were more likely to report contracting and losing loved ones to COVID-19 and less likely to have health insurance and access to care.
- Government support is not reaching those who need it most. Only 24% of survey respondents have received unemployment insurance from the government in the past month and only 62% qualified for the government cash assistance. Latinx and Black respondents were significantly less likely to have received any government support and undocumented respondents are completely excluded from relief.
- The survey found that one in three renters were unable to pay rent this month and a startling 60% are worried about being able to pay rent next month. As Nevada begins easing the eviction moratorium, these already precarious renters are likely to face high rates of eviction in the coming weeks and months.

Policy Recommendations

In light of the trends surfaced in the community impact survey, policymakers must take immediate steps to:



Provide economic relief and protections for workers

Federal:

- Include immigrant families in all COVID-19 relief measures, including in both cash payments that currently exclude many mixed-status families and those who file their taxes with an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN), and expanded unemployment insurance.
- Extend the availability of Pandemic Unemployment Insurance (PUA) and the additional \$600 in weekly unemployment benefits for the duration of the crisis. Invest in states' infrastructure to ensure their ability to process and disburse unemployment benefits quickly and efficiently.
- Automatically extend work authorizations, including for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients and Temporary Protective Status (TPS) holders.
- Leverage the Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC) to secure paychecks and benefits of workers and provide small businesses with the financial assistance they need to keep their businesses from shuttering.
- Do not provide corporations with immunity from liability, which would serve as a disincentive for employers to provide necessary protections to their workers.

State:

- Create a state fund to provide economic support to those excluded from federal economic relief programs.
- Increase the number of sick days to 10 days and make the provision applicable to businesses with 25 or more employees (instead of the current 50 or more employees).



Keep community members in their homes

Federal:

- Institute a nationwide eviction and foreclosure moratorium.
- Provide at least \$100 billion in emergency rental assistance to help keep the lowest-income renters in their homes.

State:

- Extend the eviction moratorium until 90 days after the state of emergency ends.
- Increase rental assistance, tenant counseling, and legal services for low-income renters.
- Ban late fees and rent increases.
- Permanently eliminate evictions without just cause.
- Protect transgender people from housing discrimination and ensure shelter placements are made consistent with an individual's stated gender identity.





Ensure access to healthcare regardless of legal status

Federal:

- Cover COVID-19 testing and treatment for everyone, regardless of immigration status, through Emergency Medicaid.
- Ensure everyone can access healthcare by passing the Health Care Emergency Guarantee Act.
- Suspend the public charge immigration rule, a regulation that has deterred immigrant communities from seeking healthcare, nutrition assistance, and other essential services.

State:

- Allow undocumented people to access the Silver State Health Exchange.
- Cover COVID-19 testing and treatment for everyone, regardless of immigration status, through Emergency Medicaid.

“I was pregnant, had a miscarriage recently so I am not able to go back to work in anyway right now. I applied for [Pandemic Unemployment Assistance] PUA unemployment May 16 and I am in desperate need of unemployment. I have not received a dime yet. I have no money and bill’s are waayyy behind. The unemployment issue for self employed individuals NEEDS to be addressed. You cannot get a hold of anyone at DETR [Nevada’s Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation]. Everyday is a struggle and thank God for SNAP or else I would not have food in my fridge.”

—Survey respondent



Depopulate jails and prisons

Federal:

- Suspend Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) enforcement activities and release detained individuals.
- Reduce funding for ICE and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and institute restrictions on the transfer of funds to those agencies.
- Provide for the decarceration of federal prisons and incentives to states and localities to reduce jail and prison populations and admissions.
- Ensure that the \$300 million in additional funding for the COPS program included in the HEROES Act does not become law.
- End all federal funding for police in schools.
- End the Department of Defense’s 1033 Program and associated transfers of all military equipment and vehicles to local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies.

State:

- Divest from policing and incarceration and invest in housing, healthcare, and education.
- Eliminate the Clark County School District Police Department and invest the money previously spent on policing and surveillance towards restorative practices, mental health support counselors, and culturally relevant curriculum.
- Fully implement AB490, which requires public schools to collect and report data on the discipline of all students in Nevada, to be analyzed by the State Board of Education.
- Publicly fund legal representation for community members in immigration detention.

Introduction

As of early August, Nevada has over 53,500 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 900 deaths.¹ While Nevada has not yet seen a surge at the same scale of neighboring Arizona or California, the state is poised to see a significant increase in COVID-19 cases. In fact, according to a document prepared for the White House Coronavirus Task Force in mid-July, Nevada is now in the "red zone" with more than 100 new cases per 100,000 residents. According to the report "Las Vegas continues to have a concerning rise in cases" and immediate steps must be taken to mitigate the risk.²

Nevada's communities of color have been hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Due to systemic and historical racism in our economy, healthcare system, and society generally, Latinx and Black communities are bearing the brunt of this crisis, contracting and dying from COVID-19 at alarming numbers.³ Nationally, the COVID-19 mortality rate for Black communities is 3.8 times higher than white mortality rates, and 2.5 times as high for Latinx communities.⁴ Nevada trends are echoing this national data. Nevada residents who have died of COVID-19 are largely concentrated in the Las Vegas area which has a higher number of Latinx and Black residents than the state overall.⁵ According to Nevada health officials, 42% of Nevada residents testing positive for COVID-19 are Latinx.⁶

Communities of color have less access to health insurance and have long experienced racism when accessing healthcare.⁷ These factors contribute to higher rates of chronic illness and make communities of color especially vulnerable to COVID-19.⁸ Latinx and Black people also fill a high number of essential jobs on the frontlines and are more likely to be employed in industries that lack adequate paid sick days. Undocumented communities have an added layer of discrimination and vulnerability during the pandemic, facing enormous economic and public health crises while being excluded from necessary government social and economic supports.

Nevada's immigrant communities and communities of color are experiencing enormous economic suffering as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the survey highlights, these communities have seen widespread job loss and reduction in income, a lack of insurance and access to care, financial precarity for renters and homeowners who are unable or poised to fall short on rent and mortgage payments, and a limited ability to secure vital government support, like unemployment insurance or the stimulus payments.

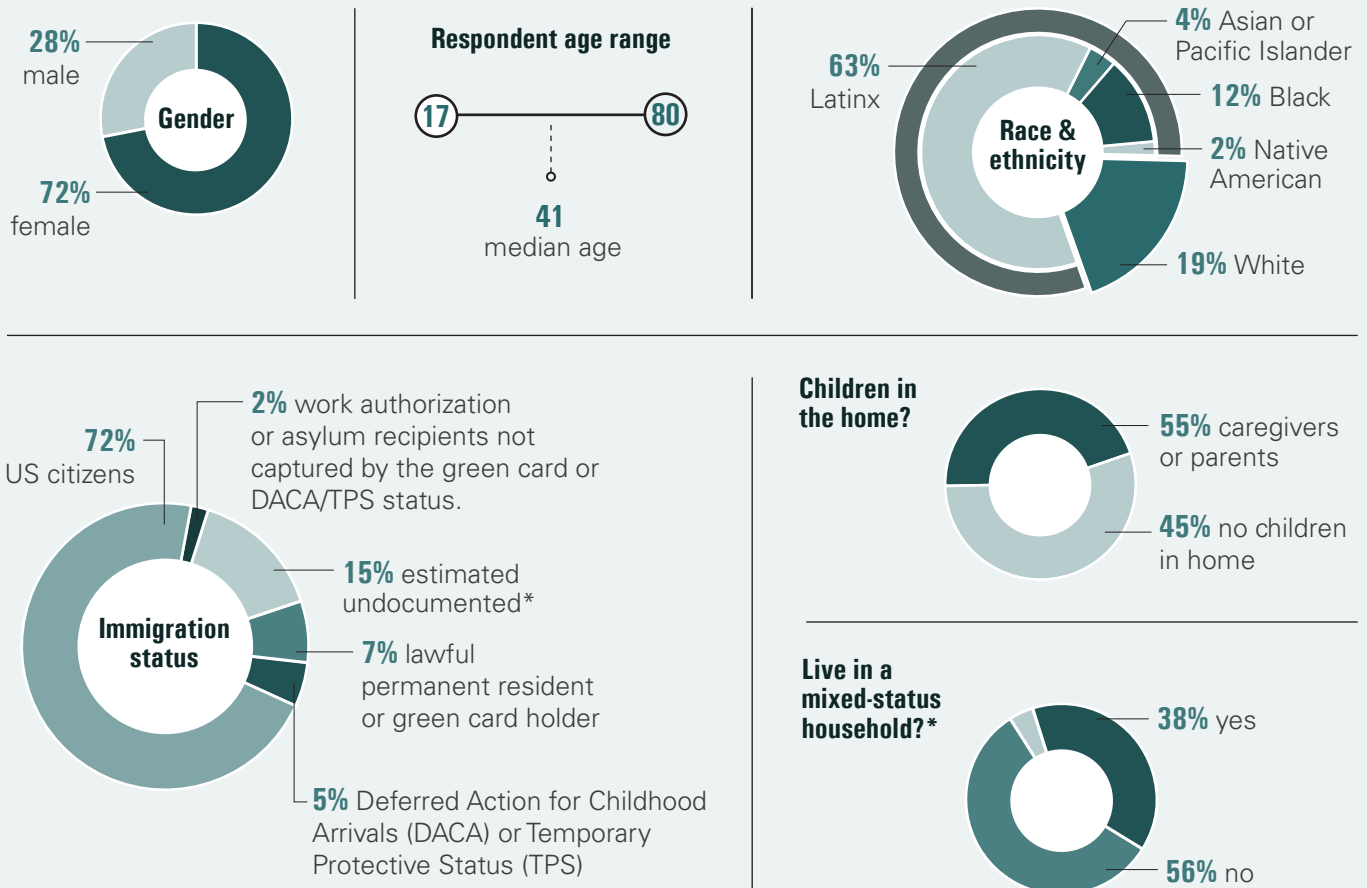
The survey findings underscore the urgency of this situation. State and local policymakers must immediately adopt policy solutions to address these pressing needs by creating a state fund to provide economic support to those excluded from federal economic relief programs, increasing access to paid sick leave, extending Nevada's eviction moratorium until 90 days after the state of emergency ends, and allowing undocumented people to access the Silver State Health exchange. These policy solutions will provide Nevadans the vital economic support, stable housing, and health coverage they urgently need to get through this pandemic.

Survey Findings

Make the Road Nevada fielded in-depth community impact surveys with nearly 150 Nevada community members in July 2020. The survey was designed to surface key issues facing the community related to employment, housing, health, and economic security. These findings reveal enormous precarity and suffering in our local communities, with undocumented, Latinx, and Black community members facing significant economic and health disparities.

Survey Sample at a Glance

148 Survey Respondents residing in Nevada



*See methodology appendix for more details.

* With at least one member with a different citizenship or immigration status

In the words of some survey respondents:

"I'm not getting [Pandemic Unemployment Assistance] PUA yet. The system has stalled and I don't have any additional income."

"Stimulus checks really helped during pandemic but should be offered more the longer [the] pandemic is active."

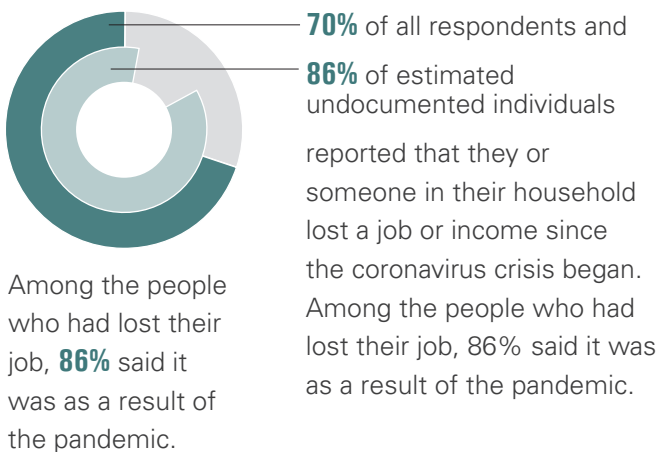
"I still have not received any unemployment money & the money I have saved is running out."

"Still waiting for unemployment money. It's been 3.5 months."

"I am in pretty good shape now. I consider myself one of the lucky ones. But in a matter of weeks the unemployment will run out and I have no idea what happens then."

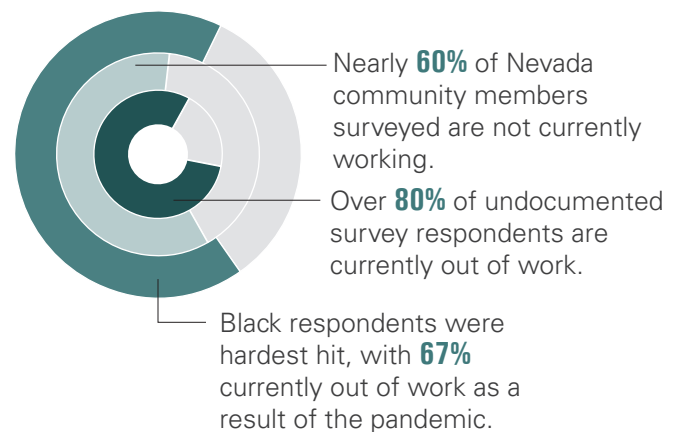
Nevada's communities are facing widespread job loss and reduction of income.

Nevada's workers have been hard hit by the pandemic. During some months of the pandemic Nevada saw the highest unemployment rate in the nation with 30% of people out of work—a historic high for the state.⁹ While the unemployment rate improved in June 2020, the survey shows the lasting impact felt by most families:



These Nevada job losses spanned many sectors including restaurant, warehouse/factory, retail, and construction. Notably, a high number of job losses were concentrated in the hospitality and leisure sectors. These industries represent a large percentage of Nevada's overall economy and were heavily hit by the pandemic.¹⁰

Among the undocumented respondents currently out of work, many previously worked in domestic work, construction, warehouse/factory, and restaurant roles.



Unemployment insurance and stimulus checks have not provided the relief Nevada's families need: Only **24%** of survey respondents have received unemployment insurance from the government in the past month and only **62%** qualified for the government cash assistance. Latinx and Black respondents were significantly less likely to have received unemployment insurance or federal stimulus when compared to white respondents.

Some survey respondents (15%) have relied on family members to get by and several reported they were still waiting to receive benefits filed in March 2020, at the outset of the pandemic.

Undocumented families in desperate need for federal and state aid are excluded from receiving any support.

Undocumented survey respondents have been left out of state and federal cash aid. Among undocumented respondents who lost their jobs, none qualify for state unemployment or the federal stimulus payment.

64% of undocumented respondents live in mixed-status households, with at least one member with a different citizenship or immigration status than them. Despite living with family members who are not undocumented, **more than 90%** of undocumented respondents still report they will not qualify to receive any federal stimulus.

Zero undocumented survey respondents have received unemployment insurance.

“I don't agree with the help the government is giving (why only to people with ss [Social Security numbers]. What this means [they're] not humans too and that they're not hurting too”

—Survey respondent

Another survey respondent echoed these sentiments:

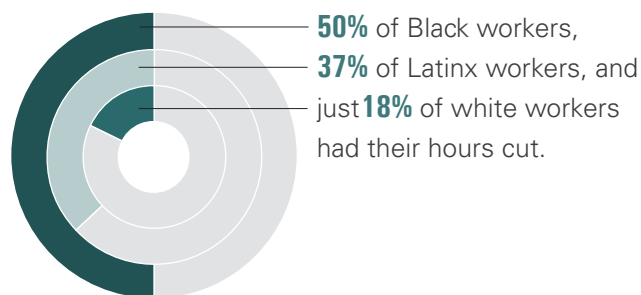
“I think everybody that works and paid taxes with or without social [security numbers] should be able to get the stimulus check”



Among the people currently working, many have seen their hours or pay cut and many report a lack of paid sick days. This not only leaves working people financially precarious but means they are unable to take time off if they are sick.

One in three survey respondents currently working have seen a reduction in hours during the pandemic.

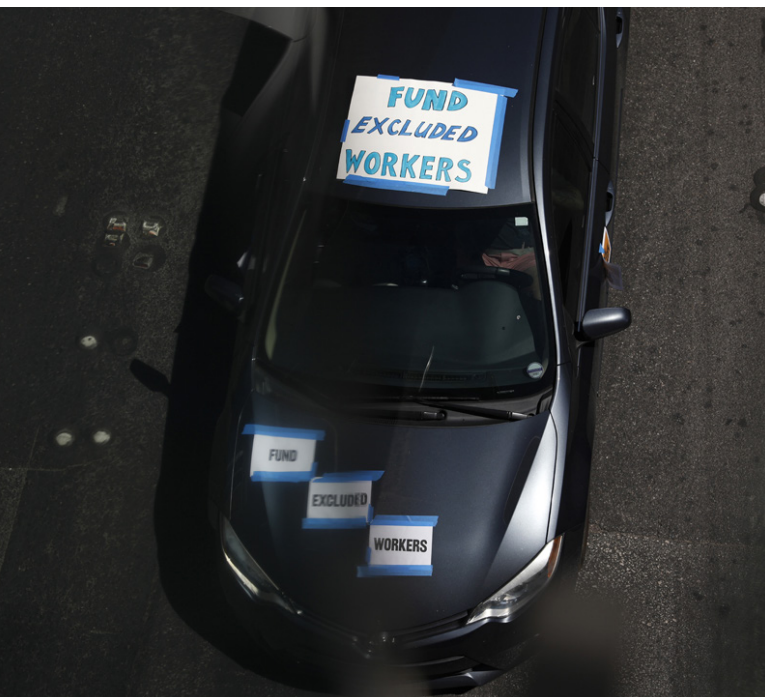
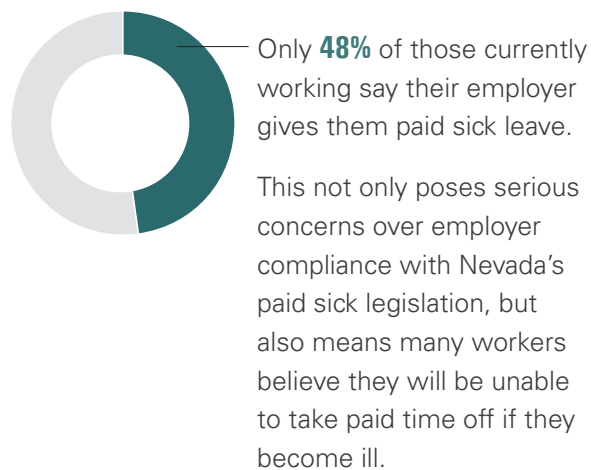
Black workers were almost three times as likely, and Latinx workers were twice as likely to have their hours cut.



14% of people currently working said their employers have reduced their pay. While 19% of Latinx workers had seen a pay cut, no white workers reported a pay cut.

Nationally, Latinx and Black workers are much more likely to work essential front-line roles. Less than one in five black workers and approximately one in six Hispanic workers are able to work from home, according to the Economic Policy Institute.¹¹ This is reflected in the Nevada survey findings: respondents who are currently working are concentrated in industries, like restaurant, retail, construction, and domestic work, where remote work is generally not possible and where the risk of COVID-19 exposure is significant.

- While some workers reported their employer seemed to be doing what they could to protect workers—including tele-work, mandatory mask and glove usage, and social distancing—others reported there was not enough personal protective equipment like masks or employers were not adequately following safety guidelines.
- Despite the state of Nevada’s newly adopted paid sick leave legislation,¹² many workers report they do not have paid sick leave.



A lack of health insurance during the COVID-19 pandemic has been disproportionately impacting Nevada’s Latinx, Black, and undocumented communities.

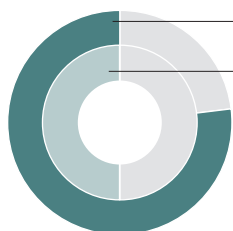


Over **40%** those surveyed have no health insurance. Nevada has long had high rates of uninsured residents—in 2018 it had the 7th highest rate of uninsured people nationally.¹³ The survey underscores how the pandemic has only exacerbated those issues.

The lack of workplace safety leaves communities of color and other vulnerable groups at risk. In the words of one survey respondent:

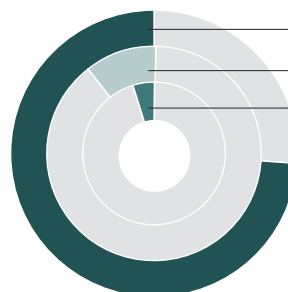
“I’m a senior [who has] lived in Las Vegas for four years. I need to work part time to supplement my income. I am also at high risk of the virus.”

The survey revealed racial disparities in health insurance coverage and access to care.



77% of white respondents, and only **55%** of Latinx respondents have health insurance.

One out of three survey respondents reported sickness during the pandemic, with 40% of sick patients being tested and told by a doctor that it was COVID-19. Latinx and Black survey respondents were most likely to report they or a loved one having contracted COVID-19. In fact, the overwhelming majority of the survey sample who had contracted COVID-19 were people of color:



74% were Latinx
11% were Black
only **5%** were white

Overall, only 44% of survey respondents said they received the care they needed (notably, only 29% of Black respondents received necessary care while sick).

Survey respondents cited a lack of insurance (21%) and overcrowding in hospitals and clinics (19%) as the top two barriers to care. A lack of insurance and language access were the top barriers among undocumented respondents who had experienced an illness since March 1st.

Nearly one out of ten survey respondents had lost a family member or loved one from a COVID-related illness (both in the US and in home countries).

Among undocumented immigrants, who are largely excluded from any health insurance coverage, the chilling effects of immigration enforcement is clear.

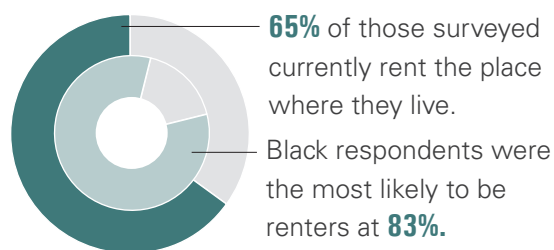


50% report not having gone to a doctor or using local services in the past as a result of fear of immigration enforcement or the impact on their status.

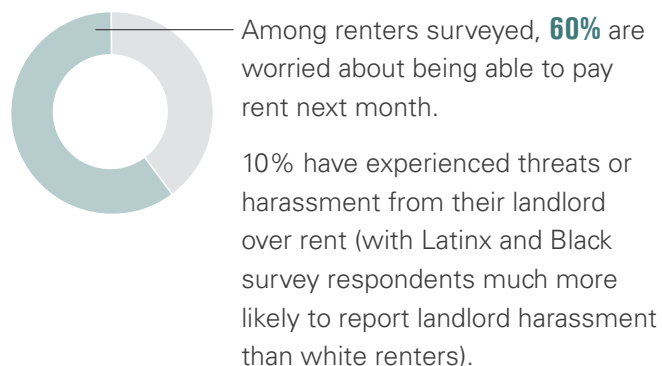
In the midst of widespread financial hardship and uncertainty, many survey respondents reported mental health challenges. Since the start of the pandemic, 42% report they or a family member had suffered from anxiety and depression, with an additional 23% declining to answer the question.

“At first, I was told to leave and was being harassed but when the governor issued the eviction moratorium, my landlord has only reached out to me once since then. But as soon as the eviction moratorium is up, I will be evicted.” —Survey respondent

Nevada’s renters are already struggling to make rent. Many will face even greater housing precarity in the coming months.



One in three renters were unable to pay rent in the month of July.



In late June, Governor Sisolak announced he would be gradually lifting the moratorium on evictions and easing some restrictions on eviction prior to September 1, 2020.¹⁴

The bulk of the survey respondents are concentrated in Las Vegas and North Las Vegas. Prior to the pandemic, both Las Vegas and North Las Vegas were in the top 100 evicting large cities in the US.¹⁵ Based on the survey findings, it is clear that lifting the protections for renters would be disastrous for many Nevadans.

Survey respondents listed many reasons for why they are worried about being able to pay rent:

- *“Needed to find another job to pay my rent this month”*
- *“I may be laid off or hours cut and I’m only one working”*
- *“The CARES Act will end at the end of July and that was crucial for me to pay my rent. Unemployment alone will not cover all my bills.”*
- *“No source of stable income”*
- *“I’m not getting income.”*
- *“Because I’m quarantined, and I don’t have any income.”*
- *“No work, no money”*
- *“I have no job or my daughter and we have not paid this month’s rent and I don’t think I can pay the next one and I’m afraid I’ll be taken out of my apartment”*

A smaller but still significant number of homeowners surveyed are also facing threats of foreclosure and uncertainty about the future.

Among homeowners, 14% were unable to pay their mortgages in the month of July. Nearly 40% are concerned about paying their mortgages next month. When asked about these concerns, homeowner respondents shared details on why they are worried about next month's mortgage:

- *"If I lose my job due to budget cuts"*
- *"I see a great depression coming"*
- *"No money for pay"*
- *"No tengo dinero ni trabajo/I have no money or work"*
- *"Still not working and I'm not sure how long the pandemic supplement will last"*
- *"I'm running low on savings. Trying to cut costs to make it one more month. Asking family for help."*
- *"Who knows if more household members start to lose their jobs"*
- *"No funds coming in. Except my SS [Social Security]"*
- *"Fearing not being able to work with the company that I work in the near future"*

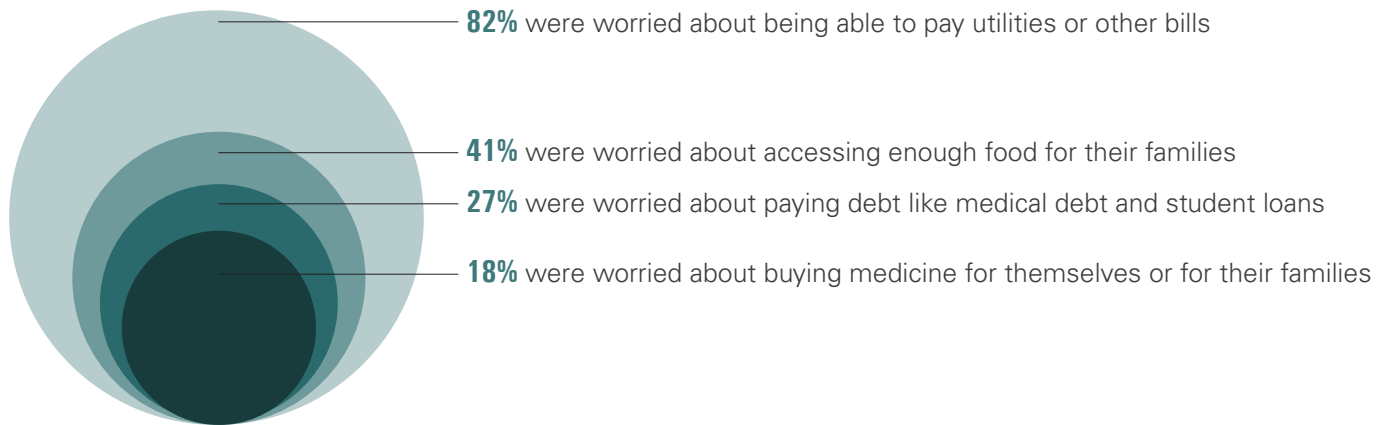


“Everything is very confusing with incorrect information being distributed out to the general population and resources are not accessible.” —Survey respondent

Financial hardship is severely impacting Nevada families’ ability to secure basic necessities like food, medicine, and utilities.

Half those surveyed are worried they will be unable to pay for utilities and other bills in the coming month. Over one-third are concerned about accessing enough food for their family and being able to pay debts like medical and student loan debt. One in four survey respondents are concerned about having enough money to buy medicine for their families.

Undocumented respondents had especially high levels of worry about basic necessities:



A small number of survey respondents currently have family members or loved ones in immigration detention or criminal custody.

All of these survey respondents were worried for the health and safety of their loved ones. 80% reported challenges contacting their family members on the inside. As of July, dozens of people detained in rural Nevada detention facilities have tested positive for COVID-19 and the facilities are facing growing public scrutiny for the lack of safety precautions to protect the people being held at these facilities.¹⁶

Caregivers report challenges with remote learning related to the digital divide.

Among those surveyed, 55% have children in their home. Over half of these caregivers rate their experience with remote learning as fair, poor, or very poor. Top challenges include no or limited internet access in the home (21%), no or limited computer devices in the home (23%), and adults in the home are working and unable to support children in remote learning (22%). Language access for non-English speakers and communication challenges with schools were also cited as challenges.

Conclusion

Make the Road Nevada's community impact survey highlights the enormous toll the pandemic is having on the state's communities of color and immigrant communities. The experiences and voices featured in this report have painted a picture of widespread precarity and suffering across the state of Nevada. To chart a path forward, Nevada's policymakers must immediately adopt a set of policy recommendations that are responsive to and center those most impacted by this unfolding crisis. This must include creating a state fund to provide economic support to those excluded from federal economic relief programs, increasing access to paid sick leave, extending Nevada's eviction moratorium until 90 days after the state of emergency ends, and allowing undocumented people to access the Silver State Health exchange, along with other vital reforms outlined in this report. By taking swift action, Nevada can ensure all communities around the state have the support they so urgently need.

Methodology and Survey Sample

The survey findings featured in this document were the result of a 50 question survey conducted digitally and over the phone by Make the Road Nevada staff in July 2020. The survey sample included 148 respondents residing in Nevada. Survey respondents spanned cities across the state and while the bulk of respondents lived in Las Vegas and North Las Vegas, some also lived in Henderson, and Reno.

The survey respondents were 72% female and 28% male and ranged in ages from 17 to 80 (the median age was 41). Respondent race and ethnicity totals were: 63% Latinx, 12% Black, 19% White, 4% Asian or Pacific Islander, and 2% Native American (Note: respondents were able to "check all that apply" so race and ethnicity figures do not total 100%).

Reported immigration status among survey respondents were 72% US citizens; 15% estimated undocumented;* 7% lawful permanent resident or green card holder; 5% Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) or Temporary Protective Status (TPS); 2% work authorization or asylum recipients not captured by the green card or DACA/TPS status.

*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. Survey respondents who declined to answer any of the survey questions on immigration status were not counted in the estimated undocumented total (n= 22), but are instead reflected in the overall survey response total (n = 148).

Endnotes

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