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Needs Assessment Related to COVID-19 with Special Populations: Brief Report

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Key Findings

A total of 754 adult respondents from the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) participated in a needs assessment survey conducted between May 25, 2020 and June 30, 2020. The survey aimed to reach out to specific populations: immigrants and refugees (N=246), non-immigrant racial/ethnic minority groups (N=163), and people with disabilities (N=93) each had a large enough sample size to include in this report. The survey also aimed to reach out to LGBTQ+ populations, however, we did not collect enough surveys from people who identified as LGBTQ+ to have reliable information.

Key findings from the survey included:

Understand Information from MOA

- **Most** (94%) reported being **knowledgeable/somewhat knowledgeable** about the Municipality's emergency orders and changes related to COVID-19
- **Most** (93%) reported that the Municipality's policies related to COVID-19 are **clear/very clear**.

Less Risk Behaviors

- **Immigrants and refugees**, and **people with disabilities**, were significantly **more likely** to engage in **COVID-19 related protective behaviors** (wearing mask, physical distancing, etc.) compared with other survey respondents.

More Worried

- In terms of mental health, **racial/ethnic minorities** and **immigrants and refugees** reported significantly **higher levels of worry** in terms of **household finances, losing employment, having self or members of their household being infected by coronavirus, and having enough to eat** compared with other survey respondents.

Information Preferences

- All three examined groups preferred receiving information about COVID-19 through **Internet, television, texting, and email**.
- A majority of respondents for each examined demographic group reported that their **primary source of information about COVID-19** were **general media sources** (i.e., KTUU, KTVA, ADN) and **official sources of information in Alaska** (health departments, Dr. Zink, governor, mayor). A majority of immigrants and refugees in the sample (81%) also got their information from **social sources** (family, friends, social media).

KEY MESSAGES

Underrepresented communities have unique needs and concerns during the pandemic. While many in these communities are already doing their part in protecting themselves from the spread of COVID-19, it is important not to lose sight of the mental health and financial toll of the pandemic to them and their families. MOA already has several resources in place to alleviate some of these concerns, and innovative ways to communicate these resources to underrepresented communities such as television, text messages, Internet, and

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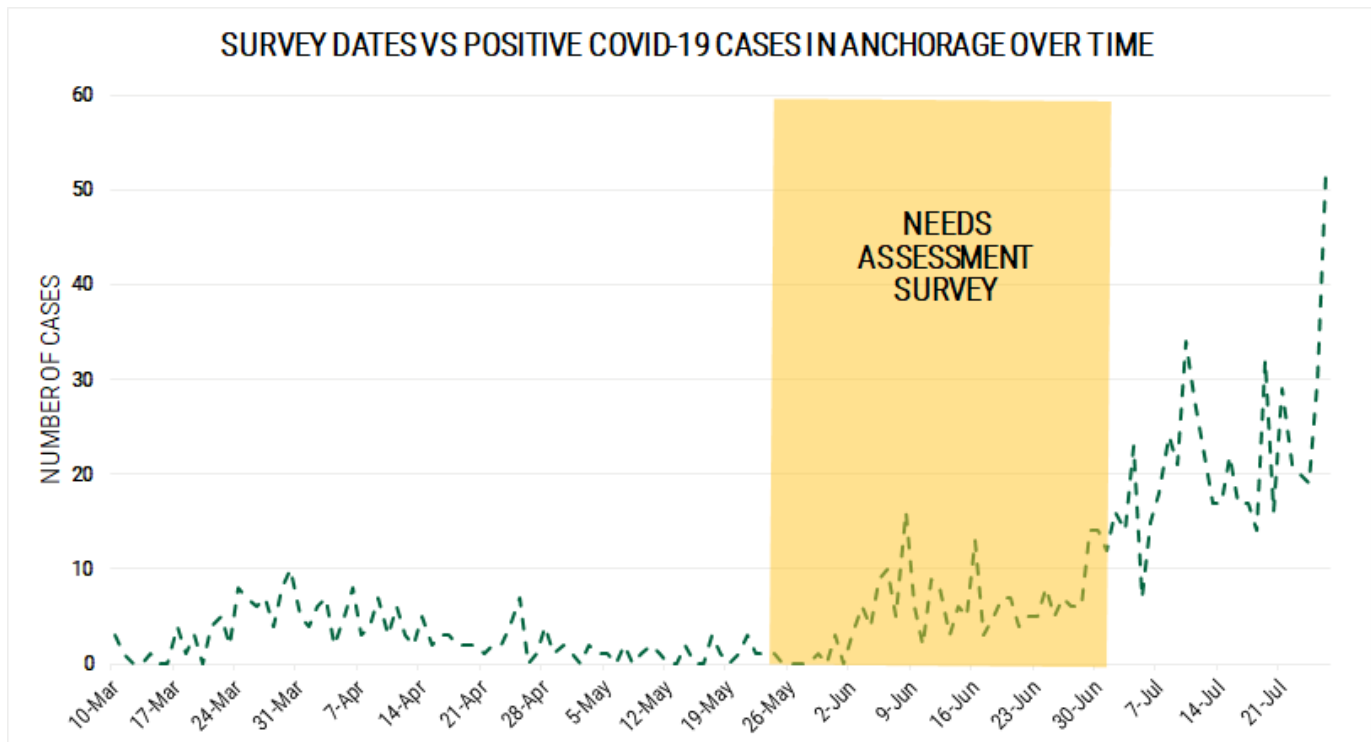
social sources could be further explored. Key messages should incorporate personal, familial and community responsibility to reduce risk, behavior scripts to mitigate household transmission and reminders of available MOA COVID assistance.

Background and Context

From May 29, 2020 to June 30, 2020, the UAA project team conducted a needs assessment survey among Anchorage residents, aged 18 years and older. Groups, including racial/ethnic minorities, immigrants and refugees, people with disabilities, and LGBTQ+, were specifically recruited to participate in the survey. The survey questionnaire was online in English only. Community liaisons from the aforementioned groups were hired to help recruit participants in their communities and conduct the survey by phone if the respondents do not speak English, have vision limitations, and/or Internet limitations. If respondents did not speak and/or understand English, community liaisons did real-time oral sight translation with survey participants.

A total of 754 adults participated in the needs assessment survey. Of those surveyed, most (73%) were women, most (63%) had at least a college degree, half were from racial/ethnic minority groups (mostly Asians and Latino/as), about one third were immigrants and refugees, and 12% had a disability. However, the survey did not include a question about respondents' sexual orientation, and a relatively small number of respondents (N = 26) identified as gender non-binary, trans, or another self-reported category, and we have consequently not included findings from this group due to the small number of respondents identifiable as part of the LGBTQ+ population.

The **purpose** of the needs assessment survey was to inform public health education and communication recommendations and strategies for racial and ethnic minorities, immigrants and refugees, and people with disabilities in the prevention and mitigation of COVID-19. The findings included in this summary present key findings for each specific demographic group in terms of their strengths/assets, needs/concerns, and communication/information preferences. In addition, the needs assessment results are currently being shared with the demographic communities who participated to hear their recommendations for next steps from their own perspectives.



Limitations

Survey respondents were recruited specifically for their affiliation with one of the four recruited demographics, and are consequently not representative of Anchorage as a whole, and **may not** necessarily represent the opinions and behaviors of these specifically recruited populations. This survey relied on convenience sampling, and the results may consequently not be generalizable to the specific groups. However, the results could be used as a guide to better understand the specific needs and concerns for each identified demographic group.

Results

IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

Strengths and Assets

- While **most (95%)** reported **going outside their home** some or all of the time in the past 7 days, **most (96%)** reported **wearing a mask** some or all of the time whenever they left home.
- While **most (83%)** reported **coming within 6 feet** of someone from outside of their household some or all of the time in the past 7 days, **most (92%)** reported wearing a mask some or all of the time they were within 6 feet of someone from outside their household.
- **Most (88%)** reported **washing hands** a little or a lot **more** now compared to before the pandemic.
- **Most (73%)** reported **knowing where to get tested for COVID-19** in Anchorage.
- **Most (91%)** were knowledgeable/somewhat **knowledgeable about the Municipality's emergency orders** related to COVID-19
- **Most (91%)** felt that the **MOA's policies regarding COVID-19 were clear/very clear.**
- **Most reported having access to health care:**
 - 85% said they had health insurance
 - 74% said they had a regular health care provider
 - 70% said they have been able to access health care services during the pandemic.

Needs/Concerns

- Compared to non-immigrants/refugees in the sample, they were significantly **more likely** to report being **worried** or very worried about:
 - Household finances (71% vs. 54%)
 - Losing employment (57% vs. 42%)
 - Self or other members of their family being infected by coronavirus (84% vs. 75%)
 - Spreading coronavirus (84% vs. 76%)
 - Accessing transportation (40% vs. 24%)
 - Having enough to eat (37% vs. 16%).
- Among those who were unemployed, compared to non-immigrants/refugees in the sample, they were **more likely to have lost their employment due to the COVID-19** outbreak (71% vs. 46%).
- Compared to non-immigrants/refugees in the sample, they were **more likely to be required by their jobs to work outside their homes** during the "hunker down" order (52% vs. 36%).
- Most (62%) working parents **relied on their family and friends for child care**, and one in five had **no source of child care.**



Communication/Information Preferences

- The top three ways immigrants and refugees in the sample said they preferred to receive information on COVID-19 were:
 - Internet (38%)
 - Text messages (19%)
 - Television (18%)
- The top three trusted sources of information on COVID-19 among immigrants/refugees in the sample were:
 - General media - television, i.e., KTUU, KTVA (85%)
 - Social sources - social media, family, friends, co-workers (81%)
 - Official sources of information from the State (67%)

NON-IMMIGRANT RACIAL AND ETHNIC MINORITIES

Strengths and Assets

- While **most (95%)** reported **going outside their home** some or all of the time in the past 7 days, **most (92%)** reported **wearing a mask** some or all of the time whenever they left home.
- While **most (82%)** reported **coming within 6 feet** of someone from outside of their household some or all of the time in the past 7 days, **most (88%)** reported wearing a mask some or all of the time they were within 6 feet of someone from outside their household.
- **Most (85%)** reported **washing hands** a little or a lot **more** now compared to before the pandemic.
- **Most (80%)** reported **knowing where to get tested for COVID-19** in Anchorage.
- **Most (95%)** were knowledgeable/somewhat **knowledgeable about the Municipality's emergency orders** related to COVID-19
- **Most (93%)** felt that the **MOA's policies regarding COVID-19 were clear/very clear.**
- **Most reported having access to health care:**
 - 83% said they had health insurance
 - 79% said they had a regular health care provider
 - 58% said they have been able to access health care services during the pandemic.

Needs/Concerns

- Compared to white people in the sample, they were significantly **more likely** to report being **worried** or very worried about:
 - Household finances (62% vs. 49%)
 - Losing employment (50% vs. 36%)
 - Having enough to eat (24% vs. 11%).
- **Most (51%)** reported experiencing **new challenges** in getting **health care services** and/or prescriptions during the pandemic.
- Compared with white people in the sample, they were **more likely to be required by their jobs to work outside their homes** during the "hunker down" order (56% vs. 28%).
- Almost half (48%) of working parents **relied on their family and friends for child care**, and one in three had **no source of child care.**

Communication/Information Preferences

- The top three ways non-immigrants racial and ethnic minorities in the sample said they preferred to receive information on COVID-19 were:
 - Internet (41%)
 - Text messages (19%)
 - Television (19%)
- The top three trusted sources of information on COVID-19 among non-immigrants racial and ethnic minorities in the sample were:
 - Official sources of information from the State (90%)
 - General media - television, i.e., KTUU, KTVA (85%)
 - Official national/international sources of information, i.e., CDC, WHO (61%)



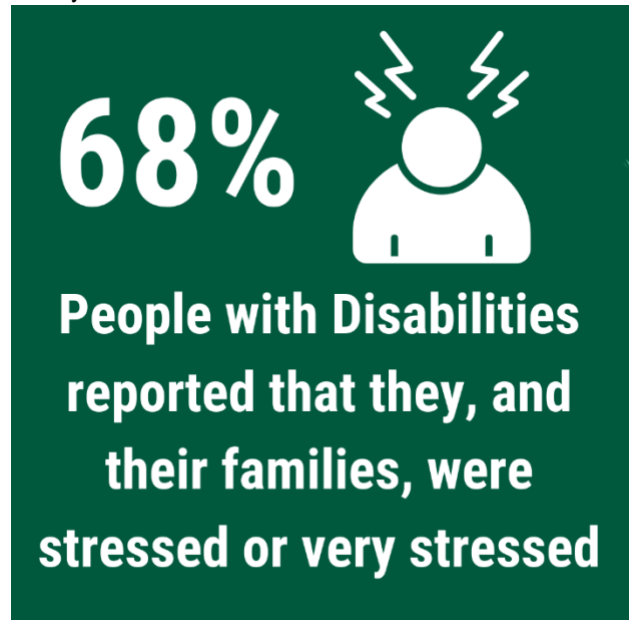
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Strengths and Assets

- While **most (88%)** reported **going outside their home** some or all of the time in the past 7 days, **most (91%)** reported **wearing a mask** some or all of the time whenever they left home.
- While **most (67%)** reported **coming within 6 feet** of someone from outside of their household some or all of the time in the past 7 days, **most (82%)** reported wearing a mask some or all of the time they were within 6 feet of someone from outside their household.
- **Most (88%)** reported **washing hands** a little or a lot **more** now compared to before the pandemic.
- **Most (83%)** reported **knowing where to get tested for COVID-19** in Anchorage.
- **Most (93%)** were knowledgeable/somewhat **knowledgeable about the Municipality's emergency orders** related to COVID-19
- **Most (91%)** felt that the **MOA's policies regarding COVID-19 were clear/very clear.**
- **Most reported having access to health care:**
 - 90% said they had health insurance
 - 91% said they had a regular health care provider
 - 61% said they have been able to access health care services during the pandemic.

Needs/Concerns

- Most were **worried** or very worried about:
 - Household finances (60%)
 - Losing employment (51%)
 - Self or other members of their family being infected by coronavirus (73%)
 - Friends or family being infected by coronavirus (68%)
 - Spreading coronavirus (64%)
- **Most (64%)** reported that they, and their families, were **stressed** or very stressed (68%)
- **Almost half (47%)** reported experiencing **new challenges** in getting **health care services** and/or prescriptions during the pandemic.



Communication/Information Preferences

- The top three ways people with disabilities in the sample said they preferred to receive information on COVID-19 were:
 - Internet (39%)
 - Television (28%)
 - Email (13%)
- The top three trusted sources of information on COVID-19 among people with disabilities in the sample were:
 - Official sources of information from the State (80%)
 - General media - television, i.e., KTUU, KTVA (76%)
 - Official national/international sources of information, i.e., CDC, WHO (46%)

Recommendations

Population-based data may not always capture the complexity and diversity of those residing within the Municipality of Anchorage, while this needs assessment specifically examines the perspectives of several underrepresented population groups. Given the findings, information and communication strategies could consider the following:

- Remind communities MOA COVID resources are available. Local television news is an important source for these communities. The Friday community briefing/press conference is a key opportunity for earned media coverage. Prior to closing remarks, the MOA could include a brief reminder of where to access information for these communities. This reminder could include Alaska 2-1-1, the MOA www.muni.org/covid-19/languages site, etc.
- Utilize different segments of local television coverage to highlight important needs in these communities. Health and end-of-newscast segments are two opportune areas for earned media placement, along with morning new shows. Earned coverage can include information on health disparities, child care, mitigating household transmission, jobs and a range of other topics.
- Promote MOA COVID resources available on multiple platforms (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and modes (email, text, etc.) through community partners, signage, etc.
- Utilize partnership with the Anchorage School District to promote MOA COVID resources and health education.
- Examine and explore further use of text messaging to provide timely COVID information by the MOA or community partners.
- Strengthen communication to places of employment along with other group settings, such as places offering services to those experiencing disabilities, regarding the use of PPE and social distancing.
- Assess whether the 2-1-1 hotline properly relays questions or concerns regarding resources and compliance to the correct agencies/areas.
- Encourage the use of AK CARES funding to support paid furloughs and/or partial furloughs. This could reduce pressures associated with child care and help local businesses.
- Address the higher levels of worry and mental health needs reported by connecting communities to mental health providers.
- For concerns regarding food security and transportation, review recommendations made in the whitepapers previously submitted to the MOA.