Latino Parent Voices: What Our Families Need Now

The nation’s most comprehensive study of COVID-19 impacts on Latino communities and how policy makers should respond.
INTRODUCTION

In a matter of months, Latino American lives have drastically changed. Here are the real stories and real solutions.

The coronavirus pandemic has caused catastrophic outcomes worldwide, and continues to worsen across the United States. Latinos are some of the hardest hit by COVID-19—four times more likely to be hospitalized than whites, according to the CDC. However, it’s not just the infection rate that has made this health crisis so lethal. The pandemic has revealed deep inequities in the United States’ healthcare, social safety net, and education systems. With one of the highest unemployment rates since the Great Depression in the 1930s, Latino families are struggling to pay bills, homeschool their children, and find the healthcare they need.

Additionally, the country is reeling from escalating racist violence, causing historic social uprisings in the name of Black Lives Matter. Thus far in 2020, the American economic and cultural landscape has changed drastically, bringing equity and racial justice to the forefront of the national conversation.

Latino families contribute more than $700 billion to the economy annually, according to the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and own over four million U.S. businesses. They are the second largest racial group behind white non-Hispanics, according to the Pew Research Center, and make up 28% of public school students. Studies show working Latino families—entrepreneurs, small business owners, day laborers, skilled workers, childcare providers, and parents—are the linchpin of the United States’ economic vitality. The future of our country is inextricably linked to the wellbeing of Latino families.

Survey conducted by Latino Decisions in partnership with Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors.
Latino families are seeing their children fall behind in school using distance learning. However, because Latino communities have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19, parents feel increased anxiety about the health risks of sending their children back to school.

The problems

Latino families do not have adequate internet access or computers, and their children are falling behind in school. Parents struggle to troubleshoot new technologies and support the teaching of new subject matter.

Key Concerns

- **COVID AND HEALTH**: 53% of parents considered not sending their children to school or childcare due to fear of COVID-19.
- **FALLING BEHIND**: 83% of families are worried their children are falling behind in school.
- **TECHNOLOGY**: 53% of parents report they do not have enough computers, tablets, or laptops to support distance learning.
- **UNFAMILIAR MATERIAL**: 65% of parents report difficulty helping their children because they are too unfamiliar with class material.
- **INTERNET**: 33% of families do not have regular access to the internet; 37% of whom only have access from their cellphones.
Most important issues government should address

### Top challenges for distance learning

**Communication with Teachers**
- 65% of parents feel learning is more difficult now because it is harder to communicate with teachers

**Classwork Difficulty**
- 65% of parents feel it is difficult to help kids with online schooling because they are not as familiar with the class subjects and assignments

**Technical Issues**
- 58% of parents feel online school work has been difficult because of technical problems, such as websites or programs not working

**High Internet Cost**
- 51% of parents find their internet and/or cell phone bill is much higher now because increased usage is needed for online school

**Lack of Hardware**
- 50% of parents do not have enough computers, laptops, or tablets for everyone in the household

### Subjects parents are concerned their children are falling behind in

- **Math**: 59% Overall, 68% in rural areas
- **Writing**: 49% Overall, 53% in rural areas
- **Science**: 47% Overall, 53% in rural areas
- **History**: 46% Overall, 55% in rural areas
- **Reading**: 44% Overall, 47% in rural areas
- **Foreign Language**: 40% Overall, 41% in rural areas
- **Physical Education**: 40% Overall, 37% in rural areas
- **Arts and Culture**: 36% Overall, 40% in rural areas
- **Special Education**: 31% Overall, 25% in rural areas
The solutions

Latino parents are asking for more direct communication with teachers, better ways to monitor their students’ progress, and more tech help for online learning tools.

**Biggest Needs**

- **76%** of parents requested more technical support with learning websites, programs, apps.
- **74%** of parents requested more one-on-one tutoring options for their children.
- **76%** of parents requested more in-person or virtual time with teachers.
- **74%** of parents requested more direction on creating at-home learning schedules.
- **60%** of families requested better or more reliable internet.

Solutions parents support to feel safer returning to school during COVID-19

- **87%** support classrooms extensively cleaned and requiring mask.
- **82%** support staggering school days to reduce class size.
- **83%** support a mix of in-person and distance learning.

“As parents we have not studied at the same level as teachers and we cannot offer the same level of education at home to our children.”

—Maria Ventura, Brooklyn, NY
How schools and teachers can best help kids catch up

How to help parents with remote learning

SOFTWARE
Parents who need updated software to be compatible with their school's technology

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL SUPPORT
Parents who need additional emotional support counseling for their children

INSTRUCTION
Parents who request more virtual instruction directly from children's teachers

DIRECTIONS
Parents who request more direction on creating at-home learning schedules or lesson plans

HANDS-ON LEARNING
Parents who request more direction on creating at-home learning schedules or lesson plans

TECH SUPPORT
Parents needing more orientation to understand how to use video conferencing (Zoom, Google Hangout etc)

TUTORING
Parents who ask for more tutoring or extra help for their child

OFFLINE WORK
Parents who ask for more printed materials/assignments that do not require the computer or internet

PRINTERS
Parents who need better printers and/or cartridges

COMPUTERS
Parents who need a computer provided by the school/do not have one at home
In the second month of the pandemic, our internet got cut off. My older children did school through their phones, but the mobile hotspot was not big enough to do a Zoom meeting. Having no wifi made online learning so difficult.

—Joana Perez, Los Angeles, CA
Economic Security

The job loss in the wake of COVID-19 closures has been catastrophic for Latino communities. Immigrant parents, whose jobs are often essential but unstable, have been the hardest hit. Immigrant and mixed-status families were disqualified from federal stimulus aid, further exacerbating their precarious financial security.

The problems

Many families are struggling to pay rent and find healthcare—and they are draining their emergency savings to stay afloat.

Key Concerns

- **LOST HEALTH INSURANCE**: 63% of families lost employer-provided health insurance; 54% lost coverage for their children as well.
- **EMPTIED SAVINGS**: 45% of families report having less than $1,000 in savings; 20% have less than $100.
- **CAN’T PAY RENT**: 71% of families are concerned they can’t keep up with rent/mortgage, utilities, and/or food.
- **LOST SMALL BUSINESS**: 33% of families have either seen their business shut down and/or significant drops in revenue.
“The fact that 1 in 3 Latino families have seen their businesses negatively impacted by COVID-19 is an inauspicious sign for the economic health of the small-business sector.”

—The Brookings Institute

Click to read the Institute’s story

### How COVID-19 affected jobs

- **52%**
  - Had work hours cut, or pay cut, but kept their job

- **51%**
  - Continue to go to work outside of the house

- **41%**
  - Had trouble making rent or mortgage payment

- **39%**
  - Have lost a significant amount of retirement savings

- **33%**
  - Have had personal business shut down or seen drop in revenue

- **29%**
  - Lost their job

### How COVID-19 affected finances

- **42%**
  - Used up all or most of savings to help pay for family's expenses

- **33%**
  - Postponed or cut back on health-related expenses

- **32%**
  - Borrowed money from friends or family

- **32%**
  - Skipped a monthly car, rent, or mortgage payment

- **32%**
  - Postponed or quit education

- **27%**
  - Applied for a loan from a bank or credit union

- **26%**
  - Borrowed money from a pay-day or easy loan company with a high interest rate

- **23%**
  - Moved or changed housing situation

- **2%**
  - Other
How much money families currently have in savings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $100</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Between $100 and $500</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Between $500 and $1000</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Between $1000 and $3000</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Between $3000 and $5000</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Between $5000 and $10,000</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>More than $10,000</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Refused</td>
<td>11%</td>
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Biggest fears

71% fear they will not keep up with basic expenses like rent/mortgage, utilities, or food due to layoffs or pay cuts

70% fear that they or someone in their household will lose their job

67% fear that they or someone in their household will lose health insurance

“As parents we do not receive any help, and rent just goes up and up. We had some savings, hoping for rent payments to be frozen, but had to use it so we don’t get evicted.”

—Lucia Cielo, Brooklyn, NY
Latino families are asking for more federal, state, and local government aid, regardless of immigration status—especially for housing.

Key assistance needed

**Housing Help**
- 80% of families need help lowering monthly payments for housing, rent, and mortgages.

**Help for Kids**
- 82% support allowing all children who are U.S. citizens to be eligible for stimulus checks, regardless of their parents’ immigration status.

**Help for Immigrants**
- 76% support allowing undocumented immigrants who currently pay federal income taxes to be eligible for stimulus checks.

How to help stabilize housing insecurity

- Lower monthly payments: 80%
- Financial assistance to support rent or mortgage payments: 78%
- No help needed: 49%
- Other support: 5%
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solutions families support</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INCLUDE UNDOCUMENTED FAMILIES</td>
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<tr>
<td>Allow undocumented immigrants who currently pay federal income taxes to be eligible for stimulus checks ........ 76%</td>
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<td>Allow all children who are U.S. citizens to be eligible for stimulus checks, regardless of their parents’ immigration status ........ 82%</td>
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<tr>
<td>SICK LEAVE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ensure paid sick leave for all workers – so that those who are sick or have sick family members can take time off without losing pay ........ 81%</td>
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<tr>
<td>VIRUS TESTING</td>
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<tr>
<td>Funding for more coronavirus testing for all ........ 80%</td>
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<tr>
<td>COVID-19 TREATMENTS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Funding for coronavirus treatment for all ........ 80%</td>
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<tr>
<td>BUSINESS LOANS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create a new fund for small business and self-employment loans, just for people who missed out on the first round ........ 78%</td>
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<tr>
<td>VOTING</td>
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<tr>
<td>Funding for states to provide vote-by-mail or absentee voting for people who do not want to vote in-person ........ 77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNEMPLOYMENT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expand unemployment insurance so that people who are still out of work because of coronavirus will continue to receive unemployment benefits ........ 76%</td>
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<tr>
<td>STATE FUNDING</td>
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<tr>
<td>Funding for state and local governments that are running out of money due to the crisis, so that they can continue to provide essential services and will not cut jobs ........ 75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOUSING HELP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial assistance to support rent or mortgage payments ........ 78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAREER HELP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Additional support for career counseling ........ 61%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Additional support for education counseling ........ 67%</td>
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“The government should provide more help to support workforce and education development of adults, especially undocumented people. I really hope the U.S. continues the DREAM Act, because it was the only way I was able to grow professionally and educationally.”

—Ofelia Bucio, Homestead, FL
African Americans are most likely to be involved in police shootings, with Latinos close behind. Latino men are 1.4 times more likely to be killed by a police officer than whites. In response to the murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, and the resulting protests and civil unrest, Latino parents are taking the opportunity to talk with their families about the similar violence they’ve experienced, and how Black Lives Matter is a collective struggle.

Many Latino parents have experienced police brutality personally, and are worried their children will also face persecution and violence.

The findings

- 89% of parents used the George Floyd video as an opportunity to speak with their children about racism and racial bias
- 36% of respondents have experienced an incident of excessive force by law enforcement
- 81% of parents are concerned their child may experience excessive force in their lifetime
“The sea of faces included young Latinos who had marched before, during the immigrant rights movement a decade ago...There was no doubt in these protesters’ minds: Their fights against racism are bound up together.”


How Latinos relate to the pain and frustration of the Black Lives Matter movement

81% of parents are concerned that their child may experience excessive force by law enforcement at some point in their lives

88% of families agree that Latinos face similar experiences with law enforcement

“I want my children to learn more about Black history, not just during the month of February. I want to see more Black politicians, law enforcement, and entrepreneurs so that our children know that they can be more than just athletes and music artists.”

—Esperanza Olan, Alamo, TX

Click to read Esperanza Olan’s story
Latino Decisions

The leader in Latino political opinion research, Latino Decisions is comprised of credentialed research scientists with established publication records, rigorous methodological training, and experience with large-scale collaborative research projects. Latino Decisions produces the most accurate information about Latino political attitudes, experiences, and engagement. More information at latinodecisions.com.

Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors

Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors creates parent leadership approaches to assist families in building a strong early childhood foundation for their development in reading, math, technology, and health. The evidence-based program has served over 112,000 families in more than 380 cities, creating stronger parent advocates and better education outcomes for children across the U.S. Find out more at ap-od.org.

Survey Methodology

Latino Decisions collected opinions from 1,195 Latino parents and grandparents using a blended approach that included online surveys, and live telephone interviews conducted via landlines and cell phones. The survey was available in English or Spanish and carries an overall +/- 2.8% margin of error, with larger margins for sub-samples. Upon completion, the data were weighted to match the U.S. Census ACS for parents and grandparents of Latino origin. The survey was conducted from June 12 to June 19, 2020. This survey’s results are to our knowledge the most comprehensive study of Hispanic/Latino families regarding COVID-19.

Share this report with your legislators, school district leaders, and lawmakers.

Click here for further resources and press contacts
A very special thanks to all the parents who lent their voices to this report, and the family-serving organizations who served as trusted liaisons: Esperanza Olan and family, Lucia Cielo and family, Maria Ventura and family, Joana Perez and family, Ofelia Bucio and family, Dr. Gabriel Sanchez and the Latino Decisions team, Cypress Hills Childcare Corporation, Redlands Christian Migrant Association, UTRGV Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership, and St. Anne’s Center.

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