

Results from the JONAH COVID-19 Community Survey

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OVERVIEW

This report summarized results from a community survey that asked residents in the tri-county area (Chippewa, Dunn and Eau Claire counties) about the impact of COVID-19 on their lives, particularly Wisconsin's Safer At Home Order. Specifically, the survey focused on how social determinants of health, such as housing, food, healthcare, internet access, transportation, and income have been impacted by COVID-19 societal changes, with the goal of using results to inform future programming to meet local needs.

Background: In response to the effects of COVID-19 on our community, creating distance between clients accessing services combined with a presumed rise in need for services, JONAH initiated a community survey. The survey was created in collaboration with partner organizations who typically work to provide services with a goal of using information collected to meet local needs, especially for those at the margins.

Community partners that shared JONAH's concerns collaborated on the creation and distribution of the survey: **JONAH took the lead of the project, in partnership with the following organizations: Black and Brown Womyn Power Coalition, Chippewa Valley Street Ministry, The Community Table, Eau Claire Chamber of Commerce, Eau Claire City/County Health Department, El Centro, EXPO, Family Promise, Feed My People, JONAH Immigration Task Force, Literacy Chippewa Valley, Power Up Project, and Sojourner House**

Partners developed survey questions to capture residents' access to social determinants of health (SDOH), and also asked specific questions about the impact of COVID-19 on employment, income, and mental health. Survey questions included both multiple choice as well as open-ended questions to gather additional information on people's experiences.

Survey methods: We created the survey in English, Hmong and Spanish, and residents had the option to complete it on line or on paper. Several partner organizations handed them out to their clients. JONAH worked to get the survey to as many residents in the tri-county community as possible. WEAU and Volume One both reported on the survey to help in distribution. We had partners in all three counties, and offered drop off locations, mail-in address, email collection, and in person pickup.

The survey was released for distribution on May 20, 2020, and was closed on June 30, 2020.

Once all the surveys were collected, translated back to English, and input into one file, they were sent to a volunteer analyst at UWEC. Team members reviewed results to identify important highlights and patterns.

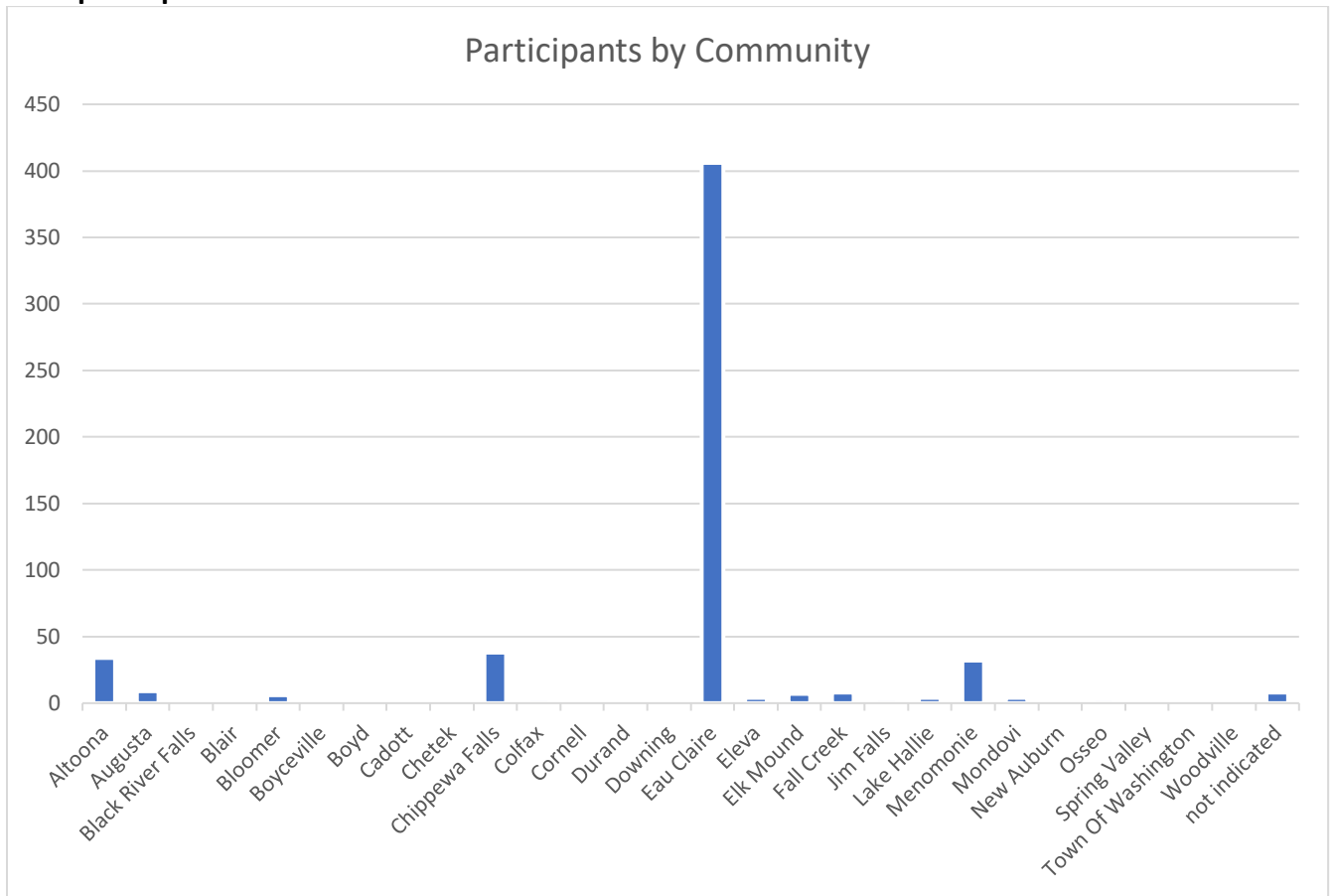
Through the collection efforts 605 people completed the survey. A number of people outside the tri-county area participated and were removed from the final analysis. This left 583 participants remaining.

[A sample of the survey can be found here.](#)

Survey results revealed two important takeaways: mental health is a top issue for many in the Chippewa Valley, and that populations of color have a higher need for access to public services. Each of the partners have used this information to direct their programming focus.

RESULTS

Who participated:



Other Participant Demographics:

- Of those answering the question, 75% were female, 24% male, 1% non-binary or transgender.*

- 60% were married; 40% were either unmarried, divorced, or widowed.*
- 5% were 18-24 years old, 29% were 25-39, 39% 40-60, and 27% over 60.*
- 91% were white; 9% were non-white or of mixed ethnic backgrounds.*
- 92% of respondents had at least some college; 33% had some form of graduate degree (masters/doctorate/JD). For 6.2% high-school was the highest education they completed. 1.3% did not finish high school.*
- 14% had a household income under \$20,000. Another 26% had an income between \$20K and \$45K. 39% of the respondents had a household income over \$75K.*
- 13% of respondents lived alone. The most common situation was with one other person (37% of respondents). Another 40% lived with 2, 3, or 4 other people.*
- Of the 485 people who were living with other people, 43% (208) had children under 18 in their home.*

** Source: Analysis report by April Bleske-Rechek, UWEC Psychology.*

Our Findings*

- 98% said they have a place to sleep.
- 92% own or rent a home or apartment.
- 95% feel safe in their living situation (another 3% feel safe sometimes).
- 97% have enough food to eat most days or every day.
- 97% have the transportation they need most days or every day.
- 83% can get the healthcare they need. There are some who are uncertain or unsure of their status.
- 96% have internet available to them; others have it only on their phone or through the library or a hotspot.
- 63% work FT or PT; 24% are not working; 12% don't usually work.
- 48% said they were connected to a faith community or similar supportive practice.
- 47% said their job was affected by COVID; 53% said their job was not affected.
- 25% said their income decreased; 68% said it stayed the same; 7% said their income increased.

Key Mental Health Patterns:

- 57% said they struggle some or most days; 43% said they are not struggling or doing okay
- 35% said they never felt sadness, fear, or hopelessness about their ability to cope; 48% said they sometimes did; another 17% did often or always.
- Change in Income: Those whose income has decreased experience more frequent sadness, fear, hopelessness about ability to cope compared those whose income has increased due to COVID.
- Household Income: Those in the low-income brackets experience more frequent sadness, fear, hopelessness about ability to cope. In the lowest bracket, 50% experience hopelessness often or always.
- Gender: Men and women are similarly likely (16%) to feel hopelessness often or always, but men are more likely than women to never feel hopelessness.

- Faith community: Those who do not have a faith community are more likely (21%) than those who do have a faith community (12%) to feel hopelessness often or always.
- Marital status: Those who are not married are more likely (24%) than those who are married (12%) to feel hopelessness often or always.
- Respondents whose job was affected by COVID feel hopelessness about their ability to cope more often than those whose job was not affected.
- Those who are connected to a faith community are more likely (48%) to say that, overall, they are NOT struggling during this time, compared to those who are not connected to a faith community (37%).

* Source: Analysis report by **April Bleske-Rechek, UWEC Psychology.**

Race findings:

We took a closer look at SDOH by race to see if there were any disparities occurring in the community.

Question number	American Indian/Alaskan	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White
4 - safe	80% yes, 20% some	96% yes, 4% no	80% yes, 20% no	100% yes	95% yes, 3% some, 1% no
5 - food	60% every, 20% some, 20% most	92% every, 8% most	40% every, 40% most, 20% some	65% every, 25% most	90% every, 8% most, 2% some, 0% never
6 - transportation	40% every, 30% most, 20% some, 10% never	96% every, 4% most	40% every, 40% some, 20% most	87.5% every, 12.5% most	91% every, 6% most, 2% some, 1% never
7 - health	90% yes, 10% not really	85% yes, 12% some	60% yes, 40% some	62.5% yes, 37.5% no	85% yes, 12% some, 4% no
8 - internet	50% yes, 30% no, 20% some	96% yes, 4% some	80% yes, 20% some	100% yes	94.5% yes, 5% some, 0.5% no
9 - working	50% no, 40% yes, 10% normal	92% yes, 8% no	60% no, 20% normal, 20% yes	75% yes, 12.5% no, 12.5% normal	63% yes, 23% no, 14% normal
10 - job impacted	60% no, 30% yes, 10% no answer	68% no, 32% yes	80% no, 20% yes	75% yes, 25% no	52% no, 48% yes
11 - income	60% same, 20% increase, 20% decrease	88% same, 12% decrease	80% same, 20% decrease	62.5% same, 37.5% decrease	68% same, 25% decrease, 6% increase
12 - overall	50% some, 30% not, 20% most	68% not, 28% some, 4% most	60% some, 20% not, 20% most	62.5% some, 25% most, 12.5% not	50% some, 42% not, 8% most
13 - sad	40% some, 30% never, 30% often, 0% always	60% some, 36% never, 4% often, 0% always	40% some, 20% always, 20% often, 20% never	62.5% some, 12.5% never, 12.5% often, 12.5% always	48% some, 34% never, 14% often, 3% always
14 - faith	90% no, 10% yes	72% yes, 36% no, 8% no answer	60% no, 20% yes, 20% no answer	62.5% yes, 37.5% no	51% no, 45% yes, 2% other

From this data, based on those participating, it is quite clear that those who identify as American Indian/Alaskan and Black have a harder time accessing safe housing, food, transportation, and internet. Healthcare access was a large concern for those who identify as

Black. Employment rates for those who are American Indian/Alaskan and White were lower than expected. The ability to have access to food was also lower for the Hispanic community than expected. All race groups struggled with mental health and income, but, based on results from participants, those who identify as American Indian/Black/Hispanic indicated they struggled more often with mental health and the Hispanic community saw the highest percentage of income decrease.

Findings of those with children:

With children home from school we also looked more deeply into what was indicated by participants who had children living with them.

Of those participants who completed the survey and have children under 18 years living in their home:

Data of those with children in the home	Data from overall survey participants
Only 75% have access to transportation everyday	Compared to 90% of survey participants overall
82% are working	Compared to only 62% overall
53% job impacted by COVID-19	Compared to 46% overall
31% income was decreased	Compared to 25% overall
Overall coping: 55% are doing okay	Compared to 46% overall
49% felt feelings unable to cope with sometimes	Compared to 48% overall
50% of participating families are not connected to a faith community	Compared to 52.9% overall

The largest comparison that stood out was that access to transportation was drastically lower for those with children. Also, more families were employed. All other areas not reported above here were similar to the overall numbers.

Open-ended questions: Struggles Revealed and Positives Highlighted

Trends

The main trends we saw in the expanded comments sections were:

- Mental health: concerns about safety/health/family, struggling in isolation, schedule stress with children home
- Mental health: benefits to staying home more and slowing down, less work/school/life pressure
- Income stress: unemployment benefits not showing up, job loss
- Physical Health increase: slowing down, eating better, services more available

Question #15 asked what was harder about COVID-19. Of the 580 participants who answered the question:

220	38%	Expounded on struggles with lack of social connection and difficulty getting what they needed in the community (places closed and need to stay home)
97	17%	Stressed serious mental health concerns
65	11%	Expressed concern for family members
60	10%	Expressed concern for their children’s wellbeing and explaining circumstances, 28 additional stressed concerns over helping them with school
48	8%	Mentioned specifically work or unemployment stress
40	7%	Mentioned fear around income (not being able to afford basic needs)
21	4%	Shared serious fears around grocery access: health fears while shopping, and certain items not available
5	1%	Indicated that needed a place to live
2	.3%	Shared negative experiences of racism against them
1	.2%	Had serious transportation concerns as their biggest struggle

Question #16 asked what in life was easier or good during COVID-19. Here is what participants said (many mentioned more than one of these) – 558 answered:

Mental Health Improvements, in these categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self-care, down time 59 - Slowing down/less busy/simpler 55 - Job is easier/working from home/less pressure 40 - More relaxation/mental health better 22 	176	32%
Time/Connections with Family	136	24%
Nothing, mental health worse	78	14%
Getting projects done around the house/hobbies/creativity	44	8%
NA or no answer	38	7%
Not having to travel	29	5%
Physical health improved/sleeping better/eating healthier	29	5%
Saved money/less spending	25	4%
Grateful for what have, not sick, routine, people keeping each other safe	23	4%
Nature/weather/outdoors/garden	14	3%
Curbside pick up/drive thru/online/services	11	2%
Kept their job	9	2%
Less traffic	7	1%
More income: unemployment compensation/stimulus check	7	1%
Pets	6	1%
Health care easier	4	.7%
Housing better	4	.7%
“I don’t know”	4	.7%
Connecting with neighbors	4	.7%
Gas money cheaper/spend less on	3	.5%

Social media	3	.5%
Staying off media	3	.5%
Landlord deferred rent/no eviction	2	.4%
Virtual church	1	.2%
No telemarketers	1	.2%
The bus	1	.2%
Teaching kids to wash their hands	1	.2%
Too much relaxing/TV	1	.2%

Question #17 asked where people were finding positive relationships during this time, 568 responded:

274	48%	Specific instances of family members
133	23%	Friends
81	14%	Reference work as where they find human connection
69	12%	State "home", in general
47	8%	Church or God
36	6%	Neighbors
30	5%	They haven't/not sure/nowhere/none/?
8	1%	Groups
7	1%	Same as before
6	1%	From pets
5	.8%	From volunteering
3	.5%	Businesses
2	.4%	Self
1	.2%	Counselor
1	.2%	Nature
1	.2%	Relationships are strained
168	30%	Mention that these connections came from various versions of online/phone connection

Question #18 asked people what was one thing they really could have used during this time for help. Those 515 people that answered the question said:

Nothing / things are good	83	16%
At home schooling support	59	11%
Social connection	48	9%
Health care: general access and information, including eye/dentist appointments	37	7%
N/A, ?, or I don't know	35	7%
Accurate news and data statistics	35	7%
Money – financial support, rent deferments, utility assistance, unemployment benefits and process support	33	6%
Personal purchases – many items not available at stores, including Personal Protection Equipment, hand sanitizer, businesses open	31	6%
Food access (some can't afford, some low immune system, some places not open or transportation with, certain products not available, prescriptions)	29	6%

Leadership from government	19	4%
A job	14	3%
Things to do – parks open, places to exercise, entertainment	13	3%
Mental health access	12	2%
Assurance / peace of mind	8	2%
People following the rules	8	2%
Internet service	7	1%
Face masks	6	1%
Church	5	1%
Access to COVID testing	5	1%
Childcare	5	1%
Ways to help other people	5	1%
Support/Advice for small businesses/freelancers	4	1%
Haircut	4	1%
Kids activities/parenting support	4	1%
Space to work from home	3	1%
A home	3	1%
Transportation	2	.4%
All of the above	1	.2%
Police presence at work/safety	1	.2%
Better landlord	1	.2%

Question #19 asked what participants if they knew something someone else really needed, 534 responded:

Money, unemployment benefits/support with process, rent deferments, utility help	180	34%
Mental health support/tips	68	13%
Better news coverage / data	52	10%
Grocery delivery	51	10%
Childcare	47	9%
Access to food	34	6%
NA, ?, I don't know	29	5%
All of the above	22	4%
Social connections	19	4%
Nothing	18	3%
Healthcare access	13	2%
Schooling support	11	2%
Internet	11	2%
Leadership	10	2%
Elderly support	10	2%
Delivery services	7	1%
Basic needs supplies	6	1%
Direction – what to do	5	1%
A job	5	1%
Support with using technology	5	1%
Housing	4	1%
Small business support	4	1%

Interpreters/translating/hearing impaired for information	3	1%
transportation	3	1%
Essential worker benefits	3	1%
COVID testing	2	.4%
Face masks	2	.4%
Place to exercise	1	.2%
Stay open	1	.2%
Stay closed	1	.2%
Employer support	1	.2%
Farmer support	1	.2%
Haircut	1	.2%
Library delivery	1	.2%
Alone time away from family	1	.2%
Parenting tips	1	.2%
Faith	1	.2%
Stock market guidance	1	.2%
Financial benefits for immigrants	1	.2%

Quotes that represent larger trends – both positive and negative

“The mental health of our community was completely ignored. I have friends who are devastated by this. Two marriages destroyed. Lives demolished. It’s awful.”

“The hardest is living alone without family. With only one or two close friends as I am retired and older but usually very active, it feels like this ripping away of everything important has aged me!”

“I’m so sad, I feel like a different person.”

“It would be nice for people to understand that the financial struggles they are facing is what elderly and disabled people go through all the time.”

“This pandemic has shown me how to appreciate the little things in life and the time that I have in a day. I don’t want to go back to the hustle and bustle of pre-COVID times.”

“We were suddenly able to house hundreds of un-housed people and deliver meals 5x per week to children in their neighborhoods. This would have been declared “impossible” before.”

“I’m eating healthier since I’m cooking almost all my own meals now and not going to restaurants or grabbing quick snacks on the run.”

FINAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Takeaways From Our Survey:

- 48% have had moments they have had unable to cope (either sometimes, often or always)
- 57% said struggling most/every day
- Change in income and low income were more likely to have experienced this inability to cope – 47% of participants' jobs were affected by COVID.
- Individuals with no connection to a faith community were more likely to experience inability to cope, and those who were not married also had a greater likelihood of not coping.

People were asked if they wanted someone to follow up with them for support, and Libby Richter - community social worker at the Eau Claire Public Library reached out to those individuals.

Other COVID-19 Survey Comparison:

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) did an online survey** between June 24 and 30, 2020. 5,412 people participated. It found that 41% of participants were struggling with mental health.

By age:

75% 18-24

67% unpaid caregivers

66% less than high school diploma

54% essential workers

52% age 25-44

Considered serious suicide:

31% unpaid caregivers

26% 15-24

22% essential workers

19% Hispanic

15% Black (verify)

** Source: <https://www.cnn.com/2020/08/13/health/mental-health-coronavirus-pandemic-cdc-study-wellness/index.html>

Recommendations and Next Steps:

Partners agreed that as COVID-19 continues the issues revealed in this survey may change. Concerns about the long-term impact of job loss, social distancing, and lack of funding sources for programming were concerns. Partners also agreed that a further look at racial disparities regarding SDOH, and why they might be occurring, in our community is needed.

JONAH intends to open up a core team for individuals looking for a community connection around values for those not connected to a faith group. They will also build more intentional relationships with racial groups in our community and offer implicit bias trainings as part of their leadership training material. JONAH will also connect with congregations and other groups to look at a grocery delivery service.

The Community Table adapted their programming to meet needs during COVID-19 – they made their meals carry out, started offering snack bags and a food pantry. The fact that individuals in the survey revealed how valuable the Community Table programming is to them and that their organization’s demographics changed during COVID-19 encourages them to continue with their adapted programming.

The Black and Brown Womyn Power Coalition will use this data, which reveals community needs, to determine where to focus in their programming.

The Eau Claire City/County Health Department found that working with this group strengthened existing partnerships with Chippewa Valley community organizations. In the midst of continuous change, the survey gave us the opportunity to listen to the voice of the Chippewa Valley to further affirm and shift some of the work we are doing, especially to reach our most vulnerable populations; those experiencing job and/or insurance loss, rural populations, and our non-English speaking populations. The broad response helped inform the needs and barriers people face in accessing reliable health information and care from a local perspective. Many are searching for resources, or help for the first time. An example of the informed projects includes one-page Community Resource documents in [English](#), [Spanish](#), and [Hmong](#). This resource aims to help those in need have a place to start when searching for general resources, medical services and insurance, transportation, and internet.

Feed My People has recognized there is a greater need and has made a commitment to support that need through continuing the pop-up pantries.

Literacy Chippewa Valley will be focusing on the long-term impact of COVID-19 on their clients.

Closing:

JONAH hopes that the data collected in this survey will be looked at by multiple groups and that it will shape the direction of efforts and attitudes throughout.