

This update to the Livingston County Community Initiatives Council Community Assessment was completed in November 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

I. Background

Since the publication of the 2019 Community Needs Assessment, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the priority of need for resources and initiatives in Livingston County. A secondary assessment was conducted to capture **some** of the emerging needs since March 2020. Because of the urgent and widespread needs affecting all sectors of the community, the COVID-19 Community Assessment update is intended to provide some **initial** information to describe the scope of this crisis on our community currently and to support the many different responses that will be required to address emerging, evolving needs.

The needs assessed will guide community partners' response to the crisis and inform services to those affected by the crisis. It is significant to note that Congressional action will permit FY20 and special supplemental Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funding to serve families at or below 200% of the federal poverty level (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020)

II. The Survey

To measure the emerging needs of Livingston County since the pandemic, an online follow-up survey was created through Survey Monkey. The structure and style of the survey mirrored the 2019 Community Needs Assessment (CNA) survey, however the questions were less extensive. In addition to the online survey, paper versions of the survey were distributed via the four currently CIC-funded delegate agencies and Livingston County Human Service departments. Responses were collected between October 22, 2020 and November 5, 2020. Similar to the CNA Survey, the survey was distributed to reach all sectors of the community, including recipients of services and programming funded with CSBG dollars, community members at large, and key stakeholders. Notifications of the surveys availability were published on the Livingston County website & social media, in the Workforce Development newsletter, on Hometown Radio WDNY Dansville, and at display tables in the Government Center in Geneseo. Additional qualitative information was collected from community stakeholders and service providers to complement the survey responses. 197 individuals identified three top concerns in Livingston County. Of those 197 individuals, 53 were CSBG eligible.

III. National, State and Local public health crisis

State and local health authorities responded to the outbreak by placing restrictions on travel, business and recreation that have had a number of impacts on the community (CAP, 2020). As a result of this unprecedented public health crisis, the Community Initiatives Council is updating its Community Assessment because there is currently a significant impact on the community, and a number of short-, intermediate- and longer-term impacts are expected. The immediate impacts of COVID-19 have been felt across all sectors of society. In particular, some of the greatest impacts have been in areas of food, housing, employment, health, education, childcare, and transportation.

IV. Key Findings

In the COVID-19 Addendum survey, participants were given a list of seven options and asked to select the top three greatest concerns facing Livingston County since March 2020. Options included (ranked by most rated need):

1. Lack of good work paying a livable wage
2. Difficulty finding and affording housing
3. Difficulty with schools
4. Not enough food
5. Lack of childcare
6. Lack of transportation
7. Poor health

These responses are categorized as “Employment,” “Housing,” “Education,” “Food,” “Childcare,” “Transportation,” and “Health,” respectively. **Figure 1** below reports the percent of survey respondents who identified each category as one of their top three concerns. The figure includes both the percent of total survey respondents (N = 197) and the percent of CSBG-eligible respondents (N = 53). As shown in Figure 1, the top three concerns that total survey respondents identified included employment (22.8%), education (16.9%), and housing (16.4%). Similarly, CSBG-eligible respondents were most likely to identify employment (25.2%), housing (17.6%), and education (15.1%) in their top three concerns since March 2020.

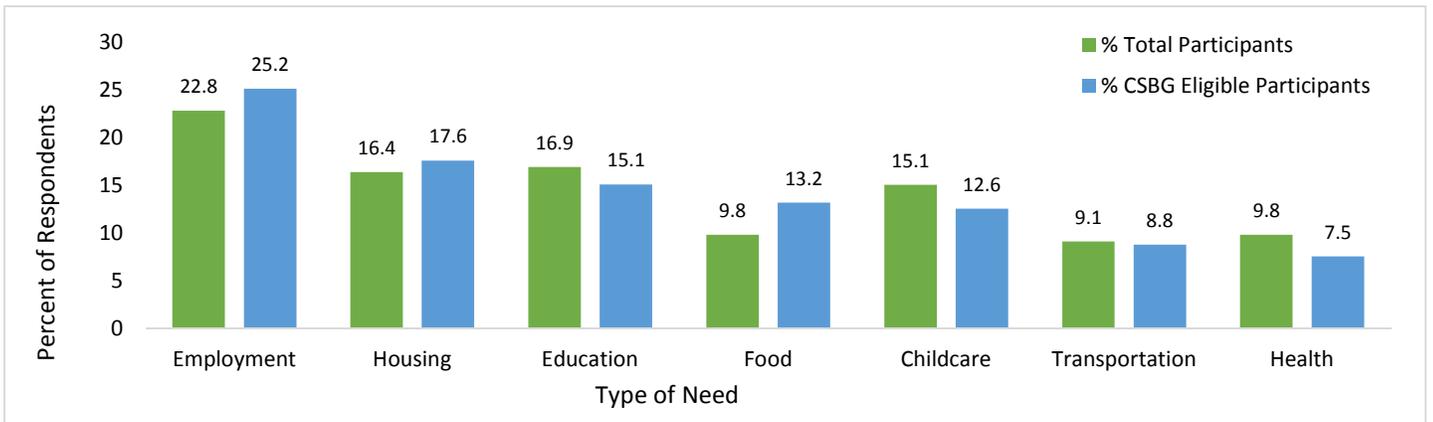


Figure 1. Percent survey respondents identifying needs as a top concern in Livingston County since March 2020. Data was collected from the Livingston County Community Initiatives Council COVID-19 Addendum Survey, 2020.

The findings from the COVID-19 Addendum survey are the same as the top needs identified in the 2019 Community Needs Assessment. These similarities may indicate that COVID-19 is exacerbating preexisting needs in Livingston County. To identify if needs have changed within broad category, respondents were asked to select *specific* needs that they and their friends/family have experienced since March 2020. The results are reported in the next sections.

a. Employment

Since March, businesses have struggled to provide stable employment due to social distancing guidelines and lack of funding to bolster safety measures. Livingston County is no exception – the majority of survey respondents identified employment as *the largest* identified need since March 2020. **Figure 2** describes specific employment concerns identified by survey respondents. The greatest concerns that respondents identified regarding employment include jobs not paying enough (22%), jobs not having benefits (15.9%), and closed or limited business sectors (14.2%). CSBG-eligible respondents expressed the greatest concerns that jobs do not pay enough (24.7%), jobs do not have benefits (14.4%), and jobs do not have work flexibility (13.4%).

Similar to the COVID-19 Addendum survey, the Community Needs Assessment Survey in 2019 previously identified that jobs are not paying enough and not providing benefits. However, these concerns may be exacerbated by limited business sectors and concerns about getting sick at work. According to Data USA (2018), the most common sectors that Livingston County residents work in include Educational Services, Health Care and Social Assistance, Manufacturing, and Retail Trade, and Accommodation and Food Services. These sectors are also among the sectors potentially hit hardest by COVID-19 (Boston Consulting Group, 2020). Employment continues to be a concern in Livingston County, with added complications from the pandemic.

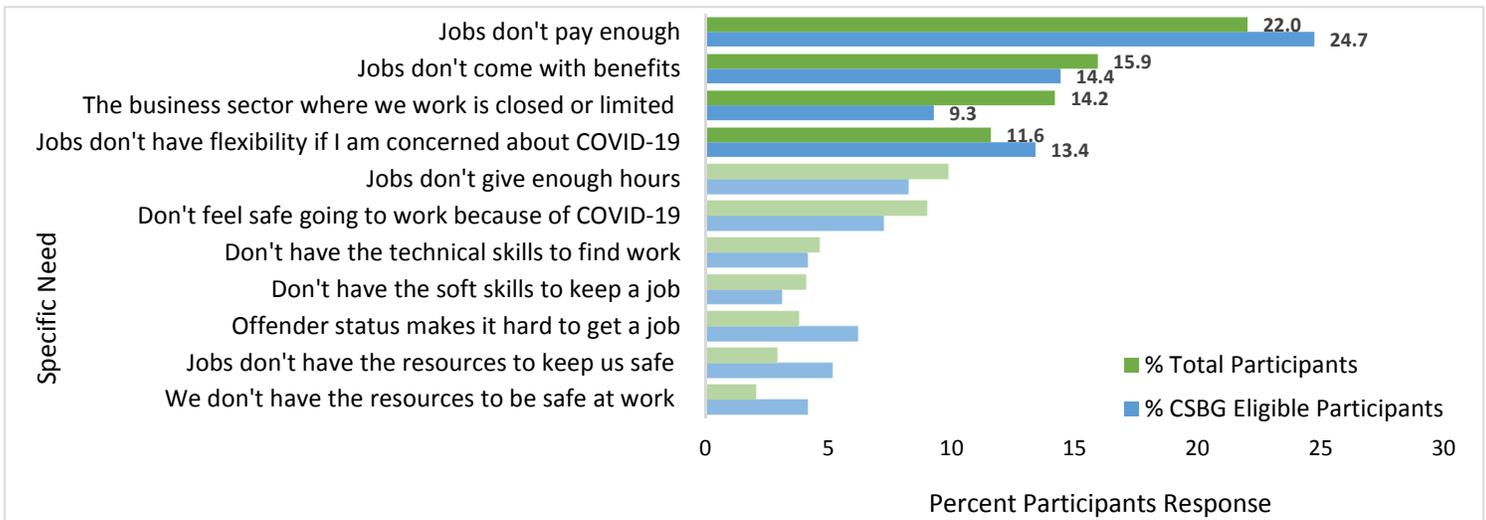


Figure 2. Percent survey respondents identifying specific employment needs since March 2020. Data was collected from the Livingston County Community Initiatives Council COVID-19 Addendum Survey, 2020.

b. Housing

The second most identified need in Livingston County was housing. **Figure 3** describes specific housing concerns identified by survey respondents. Respondents were most likely to indicate specific problems such as high rent or mortgage (26.7%), difficulty finding housing (25.3%), and affordable housing is too far from employment opportunities (17.5%). CSBG-eligible respondents identified the same specific concerns, where 31.3% reported having high rent or mortgage, 23.4% having trouble finding affordable housing close to work, and 21.9% having trouble finding housing in general.

These specific housing needs are similar to those identified in the 2019 Community Needs Assessment survey. State relief programs have been attempting to address housing concerns through postponing evictions and providing rental assistance. Housing may continue to be a concern as policies on eviction change and housing problems are delegated to the town courts.

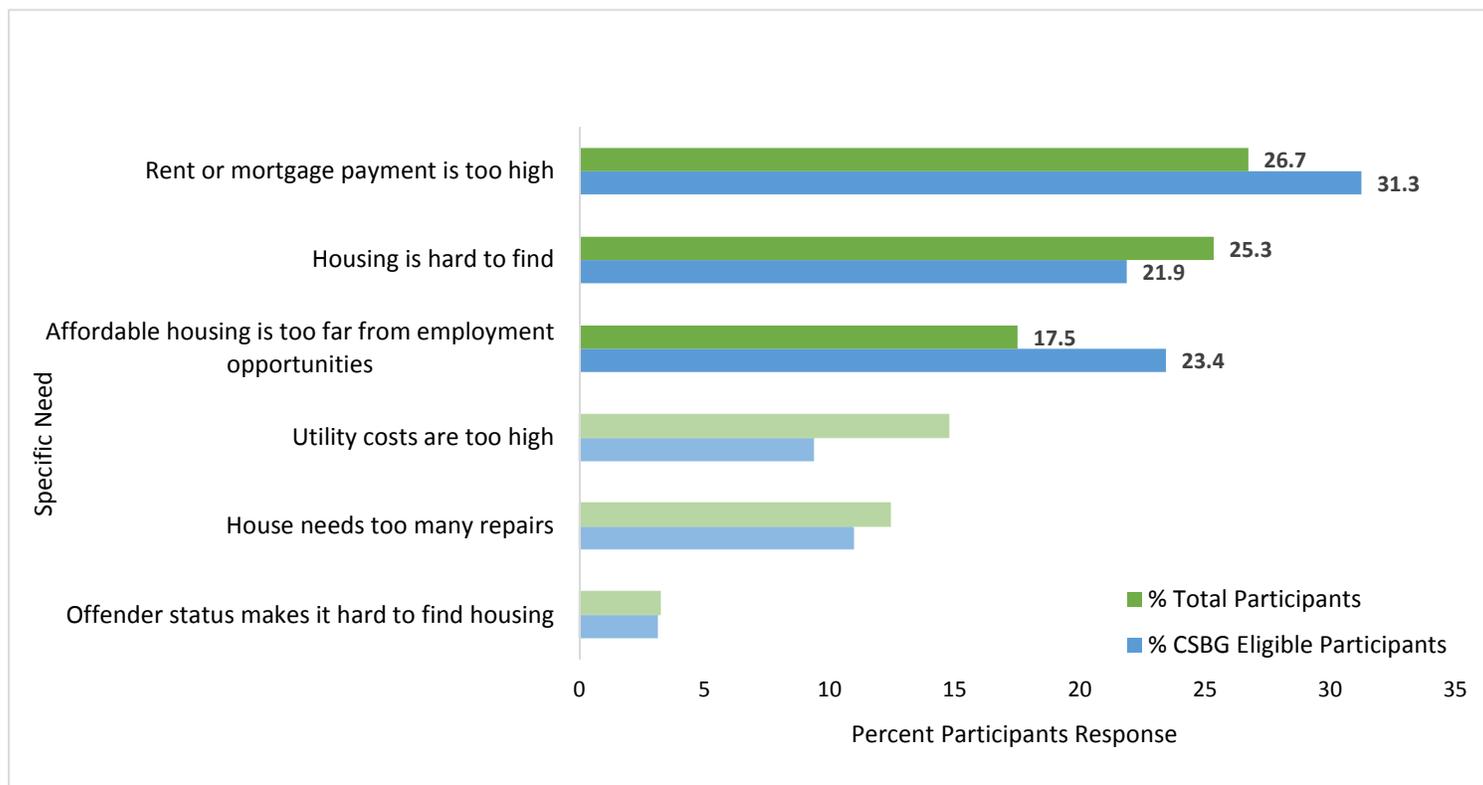


Figure 3. Percent survey respondents identifying specific housing needs since March 2020. Data was collected from the Livingston County Community Initiatives Council COVID-19 Addendum Survey, 2020.

c. Education

The third most identified need in Livingston County is education. Although education was a top concern in the 2019 Community Needs Assessment survey, the specific concerns have changed since March 2020. **Figure 4** describes specific education concerns identified by survey respondents. Respondents have the greatest concern with sending their kids to school (33.3%), having technology for remote learning (28.9%), and accessing vocational opportunities (15.6%). CSBG-eligible respondents identified concerns with sending kids to school (37.1%) not having adequate technology for remote learning (28.6%), and the cost of post-secondary education (17.1%). Education continues to be a national concern and is compounded by employment concerns.

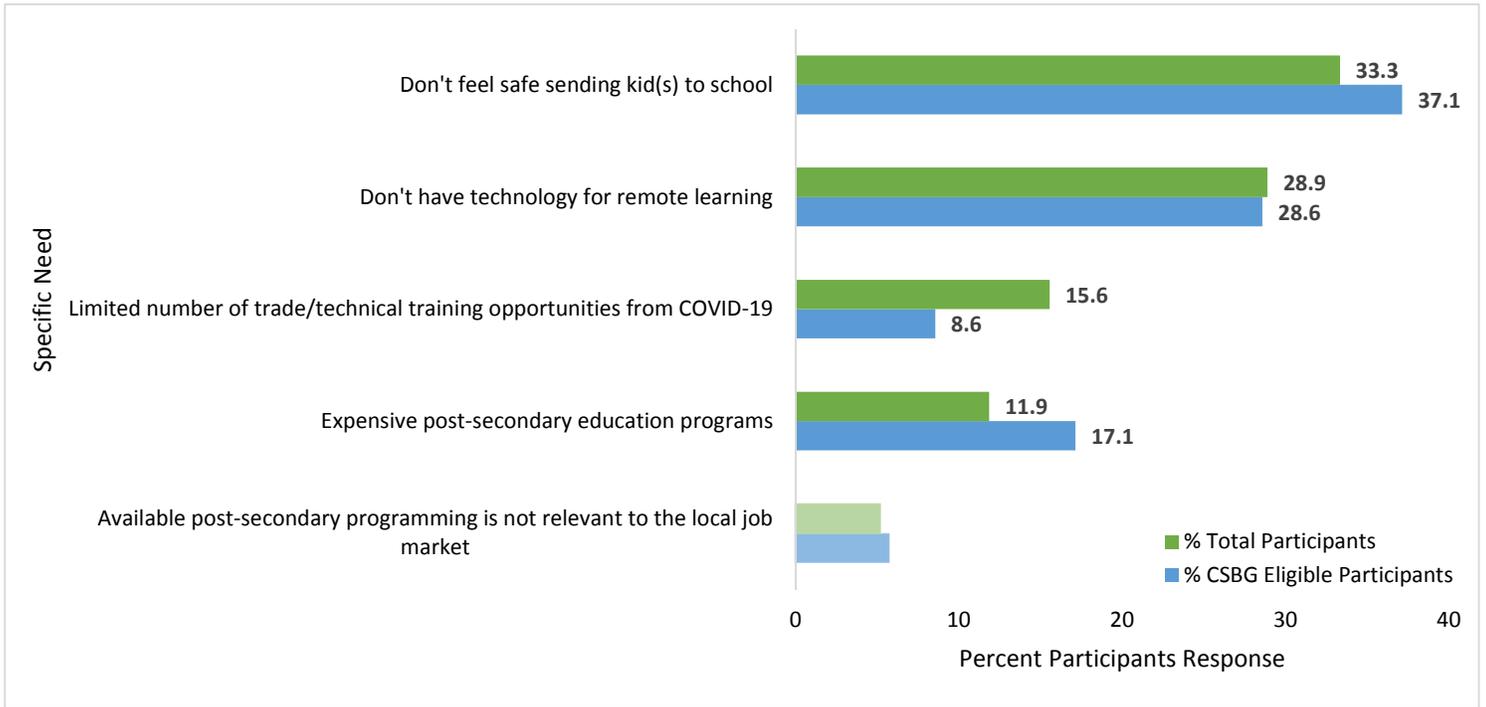


Figure 4. Percent survey respondents identifying specific education needs since March 2020. Data was collected from the Livingston County Community Initiatives Council COVID-19 Addendum Survey, 2020.

d. Food

While the majority of respondents did not indicate food as a concern in their top three concerns, food insecurity is a growing concern in CSBG-eligible respondents. **Figure 5** describes specific food concerns identified by survey respondents. While total respondents (54.2%) and CSBG-eligible respondents (62.1%) identified money being the main food-related concern, there were differences in other needs. CSBG-eligible respondents were less likely to indicate that the food they preferred were not available and that they had difficulty getting to the store. The specific food concerns are consistent with the concerns outlined in the Community Needs Assessment Survey in 2019. There are multiple reasons that may contribute to food not being rated as a top need since March, including a coordinated distribution of food services over the summer and free meals for students. A review of these reasons can be found in Section VI. County Progress to Date.

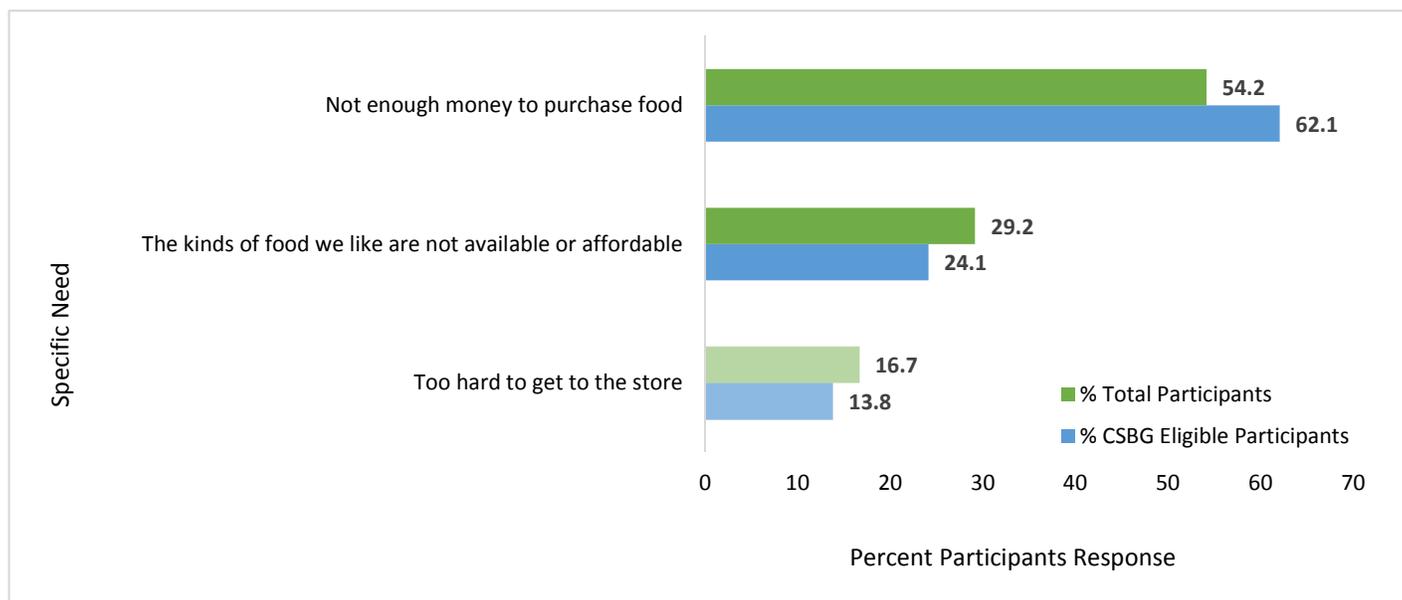


Figure 5. Percent survey respondents identifying specific food needs since March 2020. Data was collected from the Livingston County Community Initiatives Council COVID-19 Addendum Survey, 2020.

e. Childcare

While childcare was not used in the 2019 Community Assessment Survey, it was an anticipated need for parents trying to balance working and education. **Figure 6** describes specific childcare concerns identified by survey respondents. Respondents were most likely to indicate specific problems such as not having affordable childcare to work (24.9%), childcare facilities are not available during evenings (19.2%), worried about kids getting sick (17.8%), and childcare providers not having adequate resources to facilitate remote learning (17.8%). CSBG-eligible respondents identified the same specific concerns, but identified concerns about safety, remote learning concerns, and number of daycare slots equally.

The concerns identified by community members are shared with childcare providers. In August 2020, the Childcare Council conducted a survey asking 38 providers in Livingston County their greatest needs. The main needs included cleaning supplies (50% responded), chrome books (39.5%), crafts (34.2%), and staffing (26.3%). Similar to community members, childcare providers seem to be concerned about adhering to safety measures and accommodating remote learning.

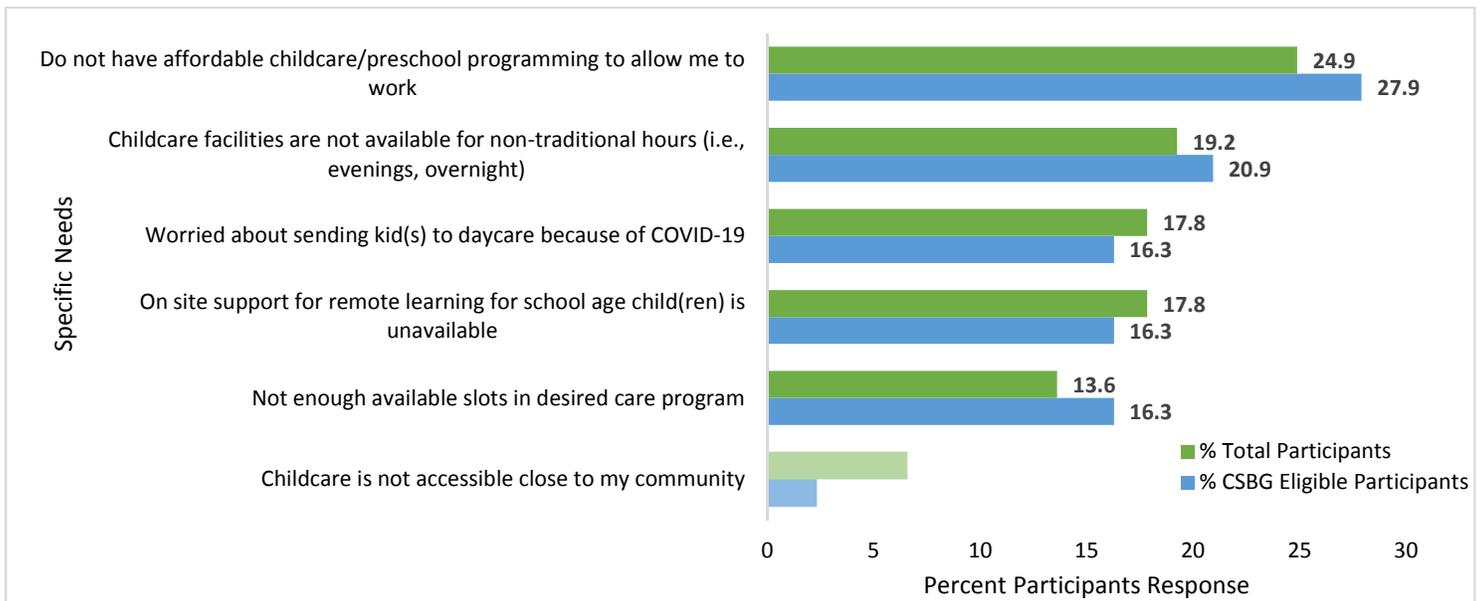


Figure 6. Percent survey respondents identifying specific childcare needs since March 2020. Data was collected from the Livingston County Community Initiatives Council COVID-19 Addendum Survey, 2020.

f. Transportation

Transportation was another less identified need in Livingston County not addressed in the 2019 Community Needs Assessment. **Figure 7** describes specific transportation concerns identified by survey respondents. Respondents were most likely to indicate specific problems obtaining a car loan (28.6%), paying traffic tickets and fines (20.6%), and having expensive car repairs (17.7%). CSBG-eligible respondents identified problems obtaining a car loan (31.6%), paying traffic tickets and fines (23.7%), and not having a driver's license (13.2%).

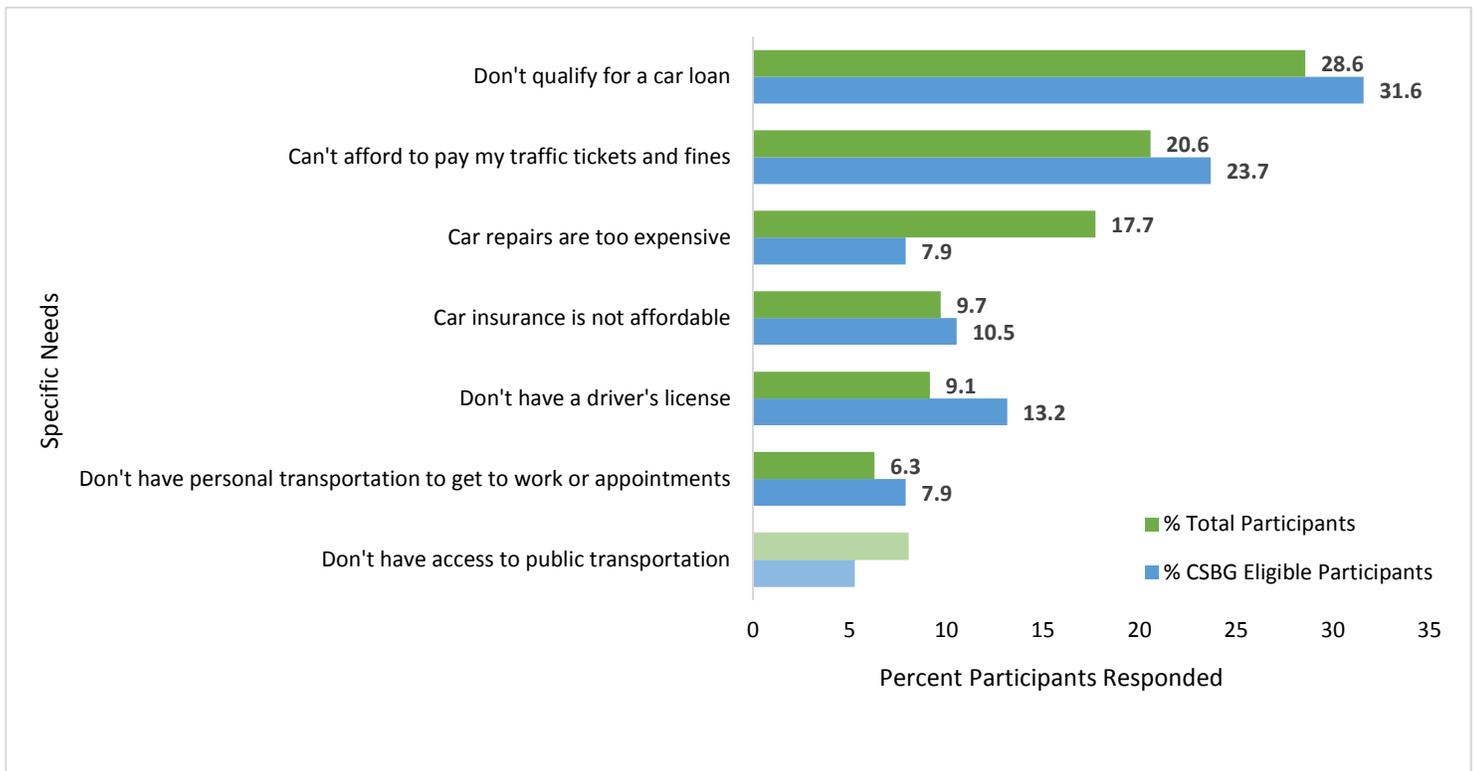


Figure 7. Percent survey respondents identifying specific transportation needs since March 2020. Data was collected from the Livingston County Community Initiatives Council COVID-19 Addendum Survey, 2020.

g. Health

Health and safety was the least most identified need in Livingston County. **Figure 8** describes specific health and safety concerns identified by survey respondents. CSBG-eligible and total participants differed in top concerns. Respondents were most likely to indicate not knowing who to ask for guidance about decisions related to COVID-19, not knowing where to get tested for COVID-19 (15.1%), not feeling safe going to appointments (11.8%), and not having the technology for telehealth appointments. CSBG-eligible respondents identified problems not feeling safe going to appointments (13.9%), not knowing who to ask for guidance about decisions related to COVID-19 (11.1%), and not having enough culturally sensitive or bilingual mental health providers (11.1%).

These results complement other survey results conducted by the Livingston County Department of Health (LCDOH). While community partners were generally satisfied with the LCDOH health updates, internal and community members communication was identified as a weakness in the health department’s SWOT Analysis and 2018-2020 strategic plan (Livingston County Department of Health, 2020). These observations, paired with dynamic guidance and misinformation may contribute to the confusion that community members have. Additionally, enhancing health equity in the community was identified as a key focus in the strategic plan by hiring bilingual staff, enhancing cultural competency, and addressing stigma (Livingston County Department of Health, 2020).

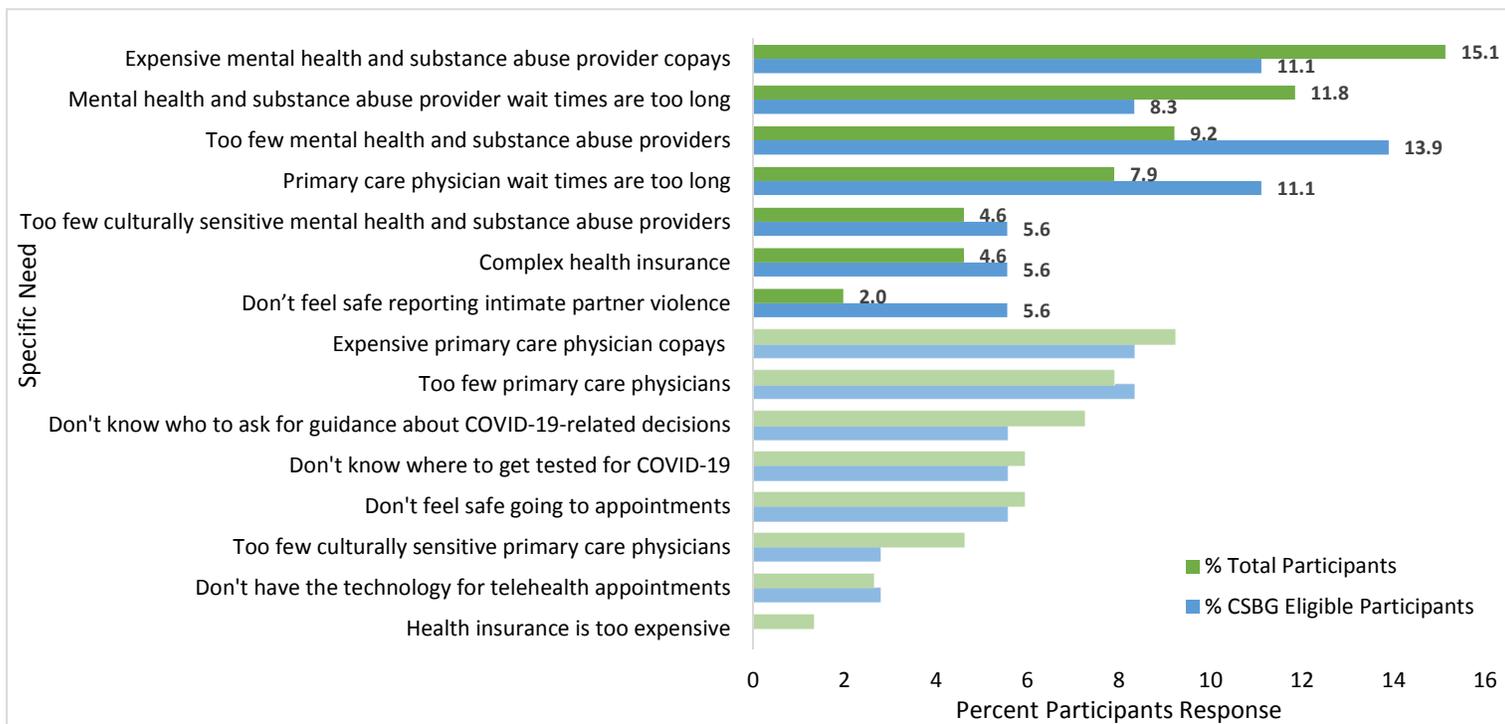


Figure 8. Percent survey respondents identifying specific health needs since March 2020. Data was collected from the Livingston County Community Initiatives Council COVID-19 Addendum Survey, 2020.

h. Other Needs

After respondents were asked about their specific needs, they were given the opportunity to comment on needs that were not outlined in their initial responses. Many of the concerns reflected choices in the survey, such as “unaffordable choices in stores” or “fear of COVID-19 infection”. One of the greatest barriers noted was not having the internet or resources for remote learning at home or in childcare. Community members overwhelmingly noted that parents have to balance their work schedules with their kids’ remote learning, especially if their kids need to quarantine or isolate. Other respondents mentioned that regarding remote learning “staff do not have technological aptitude to handle the tech needs” of their students. Both total respondents and CSBG-eligible respondents identified this need. These comments describe the intersecting complications of education, childcare, and employment in Livingston County that may not have been adequately captured in the structured sections of the survey.

V. Anticipated long-term impacts

The needs above are already established through initial data and anecdotal reports from customers, staff, board members and community stakeholders. Based on these already-observed events, it is likely that there will be near-term (1-3 months) and longer-term (greater than 3 months) impacts that that require immediate planning. A partial, but not complete, list of the anticipated impacts include:

- *Exacerbated housing issues:* Due to the immediate economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, renters face one or more months where they may lack the funds to pay rent; homeowners with a mortgage may miss mortgage payments.
- *Prolonged employment issues:* Sudden layoffs and other employment disruptions are being addressed by emergency response measures; however, it is anticipated that long-term recovery efforts will be required to help customers reconnect to the workforce, particularly those for whom employment assistance has not previously been required.
- *Prolonged agency capacity issues:* Policies limiting in-person staff/customer interactions may be in place for an extended period of time and agencies will need to maintain remote work and remote customer-interaction infrastructure to be responsive to these needs in a more sustainable capacity.
- *Prolonged community resource/coordination issues:* The short-term community coordination needs cited in this Assessment are presumed to continue into the long-term. Current conditions may persist for an extended period; recovery efforts will require coordination; ongoing community preparedness to guard against a future outbreak will also require ongoing convening and new community readiness strategies based on what is shown to be effective during the current crisis.

VI. County Progress to Date

Since March 2020, the county has taken steps to address emerging community needs. First, Livingston County departments and delegate agencies adapted their services to increase community safety. These adapted approaches to serving the community include phone and online meetings, outdoor events, screenings, personal protective equipment distribution, and regular sanitizing. The county continues to provide services within employment, housing, food, childcare, and health. Although COVID-19 impacted employment, the Office of Workforce Development maintained funding to run their Summer Youth Employment Program. To address housing needs, Catholic Charities and Chances and Changes are partnered to work with individuals who are facing eviction. Between June and August, 37,397 food boxes were ordered by Foodlink pantries to serve towns across Livingston County, and over 8,000 households utilized these services over the summer. Additionally, the schools provided free meals to their students over the summer, potentially reducing food needs. In September, the county distributed PPE and sanitizing solution to most of the childcare providers in Livingston County. Finally, the Livingston County Health Department works diligently to communicate the most updated guidance to protect the community against COVID-19, as well as the case numbers in the county.

VII. Conclusion

- To address the emerging issues from COVID-19, the Community Initiatives Council created a follow-up survey to ask residents of Livingston County their needs since March 2020.
- **Employment, housing, and education** were the top reported needs by both total survey respondents and CSBG-eligible survey respondents.
- For areas such as employment, food, and housing, the survey results indicate the crisis may be **exacerbating preexisting needs** of Livingston County.
- For needs such as childcare, education, and health and safety, **COVID-19-specific challenges** were identified by survey respondents.
- Survey respondents identified the balance of work, education, and childcare as a major challenge after March.
- CSBG-eligible respondents indicated unique needs in some areas including not having flexible jobs, unable to afford post-secondary education, remote learning in childcare, low number of daycare slots, not having a driver's license, not knowing who to ask for guidance about decisions related to COVID-19, and not having enough culturally sensitive or bilingual mental health providers.
- Livingston County and delegate agencies have responded to the pandemic through safety protocols and adapted services.
- Future efforts should be made to address the needs in Livingston County as the effects of the pandemic continue.

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