



## **WHEDco COVID-19 Survey Brief**

### **September 2020**

The COVID-19 global pandemic has caused massive death, sickness, and disruptions to economic and social systems. COVID-19 has had an especially immense impact on communities of color globally, including in New York City, where the Bronx has been particularly hard hit.

In order to better understand how COVID-19 has impacted the communities WHEDco works with, WHEDco's Research, Policy and Evaluation Department, in collaboration with WHEDco's program areas, designed and administered a survey to WHEDco clients, participants, families, tenants, childcare providers, and small businesses. The survey focuses on impacts related to COVID-19 sickness and death; economics, including employment/business status, rent payments, and food insecurity; overall well-being and mental health; and children's learning and well-being. The survey is intended to inform WHEDco's program development to better address specific community needs. It will also be used externally for fund development and advocacy.

The survey opened on June 22, 2020 which coincided with Phase Two of the reopening process in New York City as established by New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo. At that time, a number of businesses were allowed to re-open, such as office-based jobs, real estate, select retail, cleaning services, and personal care services, including hair salons and barber shops. This was a fairly significant step in signaling a transition from the worst of the initial wave of the pandemic in NYC. A large number of WHEDco clients work in these industries and, thus, a number of respondents returned to work at that time. The survey remained open through August 3, 2020.

A total of 1,162 surveys were completed, with the majority completed via Survey Monkey (1,007). Most surveys were administered verbally by WHEDco staff. The survey was available in English and Spanish. A total of 875 surveys were collected in English and 287 in Spanish.

This brief presents findings and key takeaways from overall respondents, as well as disaggregated responses with a focus on the notable differences between English- and Spanish-speaking respondents, and by program areas with more than thirty respondents.



### Overall Survey Findings

Respondents were affiliated across WHEDco programs, though more than half of respondents were Home-Based Child Care providers.

WHEDco Program Connection	Frequency	Percent
Home-Based Child Care Provider	628	54.0%
Family in the Early Childhood Discovery Center/Head Start	204	17.6%
Family in Home-Based Childcare	149	12.8%
Tenant in a WHEDco Building	84	7.2%
Family who has received Family Support Services	58	5.0%
Family in After School Program	31	2.6%
Participant in Bronx Music Heritage Center Classes or Shows	3	0.3%
Program Connection Unknown	3	0.3%
Small Business Owner	1	0.1%
In Multiple Programs	1	0.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,162</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Respondents lived in more than 90 zip codes throughout New York City. Below are the most common zip codes, all of which are located in the Bronx and Brooklyn. The highest proportion of respondents lived in 10452, the zip code around WHEDco’s Urban Horizons building.

Zipcode	Frequency	Percent
10452	258	22.4%
10456	79	6.9%
10459	57	5.0%
10453	47	4.1%
10451	44	3.8%
10457	37	3.2%
11208	34	3.0%
11233	32	2.8%
10458	31	2.7%
11212	29	2.5%



## Overall Responses to COVID-19 Impacts:

### *Sickness/Death*

- The majority of respondents (almost 90 percent) stated that no one in their family had been sick with COVID-19. Nevertheless, this means 134 people indicated someone in their family had been sick with COVID-19.
- About seven percent of the survey takers had someone in their family die due to COVID-19. That is, 82 people lost a family member to COVID-19.
- Of the ten percent of respondents who indicated that someone in their family had been sick with COVID-19, about 26 percent stated that they experienced a COVID-19 related death in their family.

### *Economic*

- About 45 percent of respondents have lost their jobs or had to close their business.
- Half of the respondents have been able to access some form of government assistance.
- About 35 percent of respondents have not been able to pay their monthly rent in full.
- Close to 12 percent of respondents indicated they did not have enough food for their family during this time.

### *Overall Well-Being/Mental Health*

- Almost half of respondents have experienced more negative emotions (feeling sadder, angrier, more anxious or down than typical) during this time.
- The three greatest concerns for respondents were their health and safety, their finances, and their overall mental well-being.

<b>What are you most concerned about for yourself right now?</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<i>Having Enough to Eat</i>	18
<i>My Business</i>	7
<i>My Finances</i>	257
<i>My Health and Safety</i>	679
<i>My Job</i>	48
<i>My Overall Mental Well-Being</i>	125
<i>My Social Life</i>	24



*Impacts on Children* (a little more than 500 people responded to at least one of the questions about children under 18):

- Almost half of the respondents with children under the age of 18 have witnessed more negative emotions (feeling sadder, angrier, more anxious or down than typical) from their children during this time.
- About 75 percent of the respondents with children think their experience with remote learning has been positive.
- Just over 55 percent of parents indicated that they would send their children back to in-person classes.
- About half of parents stated that they would need to find childcare if the DOE implements some form of remote learning.
- Parents' top three concerns for their children were their health and safety, their education/academics, and their overall mental well-being.

#### What are you most concerned about for your children right now?

	Frequency	Percent
<i>Their Education/Academics</i>	102	19.5%
<i>Their Having Enough to Eat</i>	1	0.2%
<i>Their Health and Safety</i>	305	58.2%
<i>Their Overall Mental Well-Being</i>	75	14.3%
<i>Their Physical Fitness</i>	6	1.2%
<i>Their Social Life</i>	17	3.2%
<i>What They Will Do This Summer</i>	18	3.4%

When respondents were asked if they had any additional thoughts, the most common sentiments were that the pandemic is depressing and overwhelming and that they have been scared, worried, and unsure about everything, especially their/their family's health and safety. A number of families also reported the positive element of increased family bonding during the pandemic. The table below depicts the keywords from their responses.



### Additional Thoughts

Keyword	Frequency
COVID-19 is a Depressing, Overwhelming, Difficult Time	59
Scared and Unsure	37
Family Bonding	22
Doing Okay/Well	20
Financial Issues	10

When respondents were asked what additional resources would be helpful, the most common requests from respondents related to financial help. People wanted more food in the form of cards, pantries, or food stamps. Rental assistance was also a need. People also needed help pertaining to their children, including activities, academic support, and food/snacks. The table below depicts keywords from their responses.

### Additional Resources

Key word	Frequency
Assistance with Finances	100
Food - Pantry, Cards, Food Stamps, Meals	49
Counseling	26
Activities and Academic Supports for Kids	24
Summer Camp	20
PPE	14

### Disaggregated Survey Findings

In order to better understand if there were differences in responses based on respondents' primary language or which program a respondent was affiliated with, responses were disaggregated by language and by program for any program in which there were more than thirty responses. The following are some key points in which there is a substantial difference to the overall responses.



### *Sickness/Death*

- While about 8 percent of English-speaking respondents stated that someone in their family was sick with COVID-19, about 25 percent of Spanish-speaking respondents had someone in their family who had been sick.
- Thirty six percent of respondents who received Family Support Services had someone in their family who had been sick with COVID-19, and 12 percent reported that someone in their family had died.
- Families in the Early Childhood Discovery Center/Head Start were also more likely to indicate a family member had been sick with COVID-19 (17 percent). Less than three percent of respondents who were affiliated with WHEDco as a Family in Home-Based Childcare experienced the loss of a family member due to COVID-19.

### *Economic*

- About 40 percent of English-speaking respondents stated that they or a family member lost their job or had to close their business, yet more than 60 percent of Spanish-speaking respondents experienced job loss or business closure.
- Spanish-speaking respondents have had a harder time paying their rent in full (48 percent) than English-speaking respondents (70 percent).
- Almost 65 percent of families in the Early Childhood Discovery Center/Head Start indicated someone in their family lost their job or had to close their business. Yet, only 3 percent indicated they experienced food insecurity.
- In comparison, only about 33 percent of families in Home-Based Childcare experienced job loss or business closure in their families but 20 percent stated they did not have enough food for their family during this time.
- Although a comparatively smaller percentage of Family Support Services clients indicated job loss or business closure – 36 percent – only 50 percent of the Family Support Service clients have been able to pay their rent in full and a slightly higher than the overall average of respondents (17 percent) indicated they have been food insecure during this time.
- Forty percent of Home-Based Child Providers indicated they closed their business or that someone in their family lost their job.
- Only 22 percent of respondents who are WHEDco Tenants responded they have not paid their rent in full.
- An extremely high percentage of WHEDco Tenants (75 percent) have been able to access unemployment, Paycheck Protection Program, or another form of government assistance.



### *Overall Well-Being/Mental Health*

- Over 60 percent of Spanish-speaking respondents experienced more negative emotions during this time, compared with fewer than 50 percent of English-speaking respondents.
- There was a higher proportion of Early Childhood Discovery Center/Head Start families (nearly 60 percent) who indicated they experienced more negative emotions than usual during this time.
- In contrast, a substantially lower percentage of clients who receive a Family Support Service (nine percent) indicated experiencing more negative emotions during this time.

### *Impacts on children*

- About 75 percent of the English-speaking respondents with children stated that their experience with remote learning has been positive, while close to 84 percent of Spanish-speaking respondents had a positive experience.
- About 50 percent of Spanish-speaking respondents indicated they would not send their children back to in-person school, compared to only 40 percent of English-speakers.
- Respondents who were families in Home-Based Childcare (38 percent) and families in the Early Childhood Discovery Center/Head Start (about 44 percent) and in particular Family Support Services (just 3 percent) were less likely to respond that their children were experiencing more negative emotions during this time.
- Only 45 percent of Families in Family Support Services answered they had positive experiences with remote learning.
- In contrast, almost 84 percent of WHEDco Tenants had a positive experience with remote learning.

### **Key Takeaways**

- Although the percentage of respondents who experienced a COVID-19 sickness (just over 10 percent) and death (around 7 percent) in their family is not especially high, a number of people did experience sickness (134) and death (82) – and families in Family Support Services (36 percent) and Spanish-speaking respondents (25 percent) did experience a high proportion of sickness. Moreover, unease about health and safety is respondents' main concern, so there has been a substantial impact to the community's health.
- Yet, there is an even greater impact on people's employment/business (45 percent have had lost their job or had to close their business), as well as the ability to pay rent (about 35 percent have not paid their rent in full) and a lesser but still considerable impact on food insecurity (12 percent have not had enough food to feed their family during this time).



Much of the lesser impact on food insecurity is a result of WHEDco assistance in the form of grocery cards, meals, and food pantry/giveaways. It is thus paramount to continue this level of food access assistance and ensure that it is extended even further across programs, as well as to increase access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and/or other food related benefit assistance. In addition, there must be expanded assistance for people who have not paid their rent in full to be prepared, perhaps by preparing to apply for a One Shot Deal, once the eviction moratorium ends in New York State (it is currently set to end October 1, 2020, though it may be extended again).

- One of the weightiest impacts of COVID-19 is on mental health. Half of all respondents (and over 60 percent of Spanish-speaking respondents) reported experiencing more negative emotions during this time. As fears and anxiety related to health and safety, finances, and people's children all intersect and exacerbate each area, many people are in a very challenging situation. It is much more difficult for people to connect and support each other during this time, so it will be of utmost importance, especially as we head into the fall and winter, for WHEDco to provide safe, supportive spaces for individuals and families (building off the family bonding that has taken place during the pandemic), as well as cohort groups to connect over enjoyable activities, such as arts, crafts, music, and games.
- Finally, the impacts on children are also tremendous, particularly on children's emotional well-being (half of respondents indicate their children have experienced more negative emotions). In addition, the experience with remote learning and comfort level in sending children back to school is noteworthy, especially for Spanish-speaking respondents; and as there are constantly changing plans from the Department of Education, it will be crucial for WHEDco to support children's social-emotional development directly, as well as parents, especially those whose primary language is Spanish, and parents not affiliated with a WHEDco school- or home-based program, such as the families in Family Support Services.