

**VCU**



# Latino Needs Assessment:

Health and Safety Needs  
of Latino Children and Families  
Living in Richmond, Virginia  
December 2006



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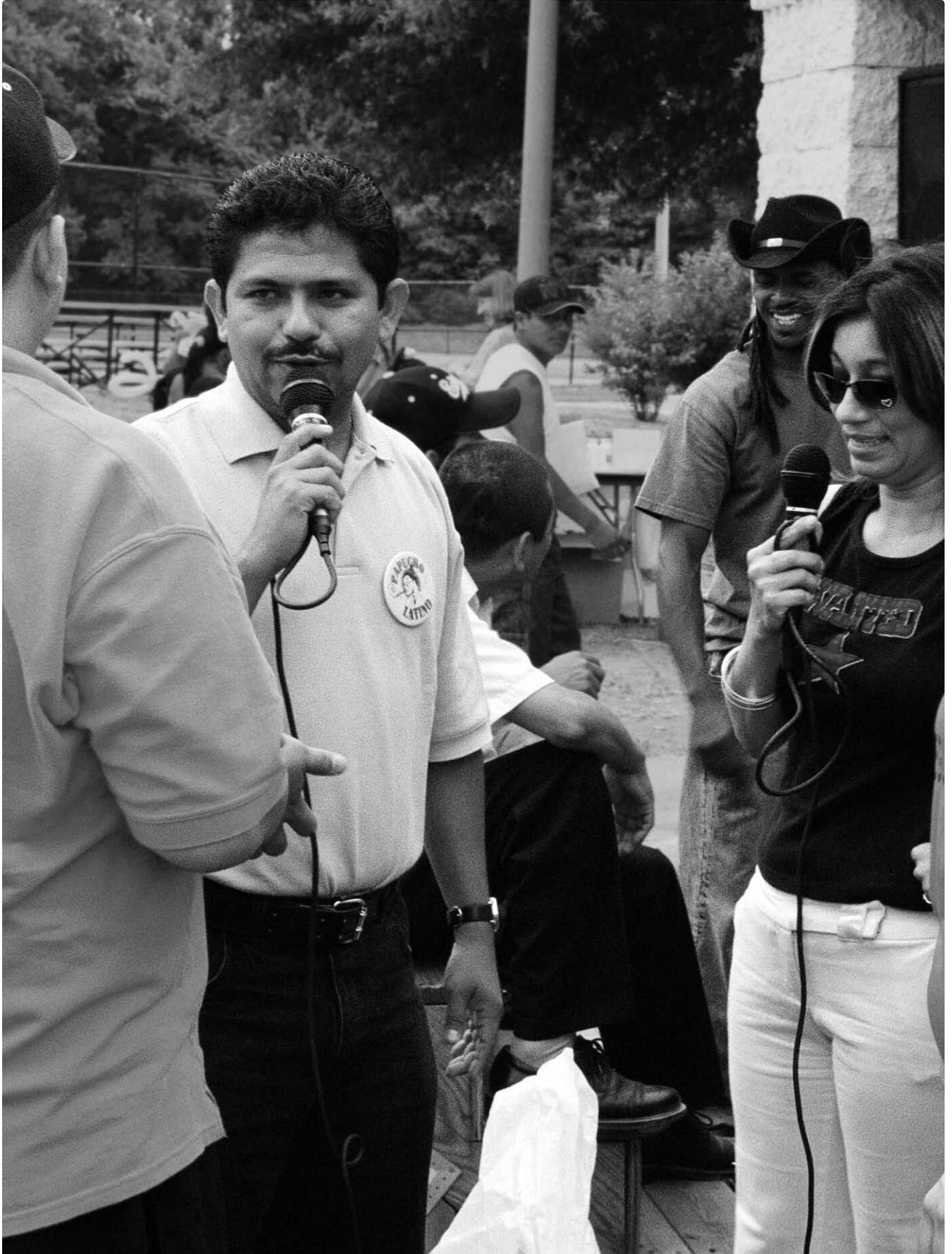
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Selecta 1320 AM Local DJs

# Acknowledgements

This project was conducted through the cooperative efforts of many partners, including the vcu Clark-Hill Institute for Positive Youth Development, City of Richmond Hispanic Liaison Office, vcu Community Solutions, Richmond Behavioral Health Authority, vcu Psychology Department, members of the faith community, Richmond Police Athletic League (PAL), American Red Cross, Refugee and Immigration Services, Colaborando Juntos, and members of the Latino community.

Funding for this project included a grant from the Virginia Governor's Office for Substance Abuse and Prevention (Dr. Corona), vcu Center for the Study and Prevention of Youth Violence supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Dr. Cohen), and the City of Richmond (design and printing).

The authors would like to thank the community organizations that provided support for El Papucho Latino, the community members who helped make the event a success, and the vcu Department of Psychology graduate students who volunteered their time in helping collect and analyze the data. The authors are also grateful to Oscar Contreras, who provided the images from El Papucho Latino that are used in the report. This project would not have been possible without the participation of the Latino residents who shared their perceptions and concerns.

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El Papucho Latino 2005

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La Mezcla Que Baila - AHAR dancer

## Executive Summary

**T**HE LATINO POPULATION in Richmond, Virginia has more than doubled in the last ten years, creating new challenges and opportunities for Latinos and the Richmond community. A needs assessment was conducted to better understand the health and safety concerns and service needs of Latino residents, with a particular focus on children. Data was collected through an anonymous community survey that was completed by 212 Latino adults, 15 interviews with community leaders who work with or are familiar with the Latino community, and focus groups with Latino parents (16 mothers and 7 fathers) and children (6 boys).

### FINDINGS

Many issues emerged in this study. Language was a recurrent concern and was mentioned when participants discussed health and safety concerns and service needs. For example, family members noted that bilingual services are often available at limited times, which often overlap with work schedules. This creates a conflict for many families – i.e., balancing income and health related needs. Language use was also a concern regarding children’s education. Specifically, parents expressed difficulty communicating their concerns regarding their children’s education to school staff. It was also noted that there are “pockets” within the Richmond Latino community that consist mainly of individuals who speak an indigenous language and for whom Spanish is a second language. As such, information presented in Spanish may still be difficult for these individuals to comprehend.

Transportation was also frequently mentioned as critical to meeting the needs of the Latino residents. Some Latino immigrants face difficulties when trying to obtain a driver’s license. Although Latino residents acknowledge that public transportation is an option, for some residents, public transportation may mean a longer time away from home or work. Lack of transportation also affects the education and health of Latinos because residents may miss health appointments and other meetings as a result of limited modes of getting to the location of service.

With respect to children, Latino adults and community members expressed concerns regarding (a) the loss of their Spanish culture and language; (b) engagement in risk

behaviors (e.g., drug use, alcohol use, unprotected sexual intercourse); (c) school-related challenges; and (d) finding affordable childcare.

Residents noted the need for increasing the availability of bilingual services in health care and school settings (e.g., more bilingual staff and more hours/dates when these staff are available), help in understanding how to complete insurance forms, education regarding the health care system, more mobile clinics or health care clinics in neighborhoods with large densities of Latino residents, and mental health services (e.g., trauma, adjustment-related difficulties, domestic or family violence, and substance abuse).

Above all, safety concerns collectively were the topics that survey respondents most worried about, along with discrimination and drug or alcohol problems. Residents also expressed concerns regarding victimization, increasing tensions between the African-American and Latino community, gangs, and communication with the police.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### A. Language Resources

1. Increase the availability of and access to bilingual and bicultural staff so as to increase service utilization.
2. Provide language classes for service providers (e.g., medical Spanish classes) and community residents (ESL and Spanish for Latino residents for whom Spanish is a second language) to bridge the communication barrier.
3. Increase the accessibility of existing ESL classes by
  - (a) offering classes in locations close to the Latino residents;
  - (b) providing child care and homework help during ESL classes for other family members (e.g., mentoring services for children); and
  - (c) offering classes in the evenings (after work or school) and on the weekends.

#### B. Health & Mental Health

1. Increase access to and hours of medical services, exploring the use of more mobile clinics and extended evening and weekend hours of existing services.
2. Expand the “promotoras” program where community members are trained as community health leaders so that

they can share health information and refer individuals to medical resources and services. As part of these efforts, include information on where and how to navigate the health care system in the United States.

3. Educate health care workers on culture specific ways their clients may express distress or physical symptoms as well as culture specific homeopathic treatments.
4. Educate residents regarding insurance options and provide increased assistance in completing forms both for enrollment and renewal.
5. Increase bilingual mental health (e.g., trauma and adjustment), substance abuse, and domestic violence services.

### **C. Cultural Orientation**

1. Continue and strengthen efforts to orient new residents to the City of Richmond and community resources, such as an orientation program or package that would help educate new Latino immigrants to the City of Richmond, available services, and culture.

### **D. Youth Development**

1. Promote positive activities for Latino youth through programs aimed at
  - (a) strengthening family relationships;
  - (b) teaching children skills for engaging in positive health behaviors; and
  - (c) promoting connection to the Latino culture.
 Programs should offer services in Spanish.
2. Increase Latino youths' awareness of and access to after-school activities in order to protect Latino youth from negative outcomes.
3. Hire bilingual staff and educate parents about existing after school programs and how to enroll their children in those programs.

### **E. Parent Education**

1. Implement family-based programs that teach and enhance parents' skills for supervising their children, guide them in talking to their children about sensitive issues such as drugs and pregnancy prevention, and promote parent-child relationships.
2. Offer parent trainings that guide parents on how to deal with the stress associated with acculturating to the U.S. and family dynamics in this new environment.

### **F. Community Building**

1. Create prevention programs aimed at promoting positive inter-ethnic or inter-racial relationships, such as a curriculum on ethnic identity development and relationships in school settings.
2. Educate parents on how to talk to their children about experiences related to discrimination, prejudice, and inter-ethnic conflicts, along with resources available to them.
3. Conduct a more detailed needs assessment, obtaining both African-American and Latino perceptions, so as to elaborate a more comprehensive service development plan to build community across inter-ethnic and inter-racial lines.

### **G. Safety**

1. Increase the number of bilingual police officers so that Latinos can better communicate their concerns to the police.
2. Increase opportunities and activities that foster relationships between police and the Latino community by engaging the police with the community (e.g., Police Athletic League clinics, development of community safety patrols with a police officer).
3. Create a training that will allow Latino residents to understand the process involved when the police are called so as to alleviate some community fears regarding not being taken seriously, or fears of deportation.

The following report provides a summary of the health and safety needs of Latinos living in Richmond. The findings of this study will help the Richmond community and help guide the work of the vcu Clark-Hill Institute for Positive Youth Development, City of Richmond's Hispanic Liaison Office, Richmond Behavioral Health Authority, and their partners in strengthening the Latino and greater Richmond community.

## Introduction



**T**HE LATINO POPULATION in Richmond, Virginia has grown dramatically over the last decade. Between 1990 and 2000, the Latino population in the City of Richmond increased by 167% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). It is important to note, however, that these numbers may underestimate the actual number of Latinos in the City of Richmond and the surrounding areas. Because many of these Latinos are immigrants, it is likely that a substantial number of undocumented Latinos were not counted. Local community leaders, including Latino organizations, pastors, and others, currently estimate 15,000 to 20,000 Latino individuals in the City of Richmond and 75,000 to 100,000 Latino individuals in metropolitan Richmond. In addition, nearly a quarter of the Latino population in the City of Richmond was under the age of 18 in 2000. Given the current and projected growth of the Latino teen population, it is important for policy makers, service providers, and researchers to better understand their health needs. Most studies on Latino adjustment and immigration have focused on cities with a relatively large percentage of Latinos – for example, Cubans in Miami or Mexicans in Los Angeles. Less is known about the demographic make up and safety and health needs of Latinos in smaller-density cities like Richmond.

As a result of the rapid growth of the Latino community in Richmond, health and service agencies have struggled to provide culturally responsive services for Latino children and their families. One area of importance is early childhood service needs. By understanding parental concerns and questions regarding early child development, service providers can effectively promote child health and development. Providing parents of young children services has the potential to benefit the entire family. Research

has shown that Latina mothers who have children with developmental disabilities, such as mental retardation, report high levels of depressive symptomatology (Blacher et al., 1997). Thus, services may help reduce these women's distress as well as help their child gain educational and developmentally-appropriate skills.

In addition to understanding the needs of young children, it is also important to focus on the unique needs of Latino adolescents. Latino youth living in the U.S. are at increased risk for negative health outcomes as a result of exposure to various stressful conditions (e.g., poverty, acculturative stress). For example, Latino adolescents have a higher prevalence of alcohol and drug use, violence, school drop out, and delinquency than other youth (Gonzales, Knight, Morgan-Lopez, Saenz, & Sirolle, 2002; Grunbaum et al., 2004). In addition, pregnancy among Latino youth is a national public health concern. Fifty-one percent of Latino high school students are sexually active compared with 43% of white youth, and sexually active Latino youth are less likely than others to use condoms (Grunbaum et al., 2004). Although pregnancy and birth rates among Latina teens have declined over the past decade, Latinas continue to have the highest teen birth rate among all racial/ethnic groups in the U.S. In 2003, Latina teenagers (15-19 years old) had a teen birth rate of 82.2 births per 1,000 teen females; the birth rate for teens of all other backgrounds was 41.7 (Ryan, Franzetta, & Manlove, 2005). The effect of pregnancy on teenagers, their families, and society as a whole can be profound. Teenage mothers are more likely than others to drop out of school, to require public assistance, and to live in poverty, and are less likely to have effective parenting skills or the social support needed to raise a child (Letourneau, Stewart, & Barnfather,

2004). Conflict arising from acculturation differences between parents and youth may disrupt the close family ties that often protect Latino youth from negative outcomes (Gonzales et al. 2002).

Finally, service providers can benefit from understanding how the presence of the growing Latino population affects the inter-ethnic interactions and relationships in Richmond. Anecdotal evidence suggests increasing racial/ethnic tensions among the various sub-groups. The community at large needs to be aware of the ways in which racial and ethnic interactions are developing and changing as this new ethnic group enters the community. This type of information may be useful in the development and implementation of activities to prevent and reduce violence associated with prejudice and intolerance. This type of understanding is relevant at many levels, for example, parents may need support in helping their children negotiate multicultural interactions and racism, youth may need help in becoming aware of the growing diversity in Richmond and what it means in terms of their own identity and development, and school and community leaders may need assistance in the development of multicultural curricula.



## Process



**A** NEEDS ASSESSMENT was conducted to identify the health and safety needs of Latino children and families. The needs assessment team was particularly interested in (1) characterizing and defining the Latino population in Richmond; (2) identifying areas of unmet need for young children and adolescents; (3) identifying community, family, and individual factors that promote child and adolescent health; and (4) understanding the changing racial and ethnic dynamics. To ensure that the questions asked were relevant to the Latino community, a Steering Committee composed of Latinos from Richmond was convened to identify concerns and service needs. At this meeting, the purpose of the needs assessment was discussed and Steering Committee members were asked for their thoughts and opinions regarding priority areas for the Latino community. The information developed from this committee meeting was then incorporated into the survey.

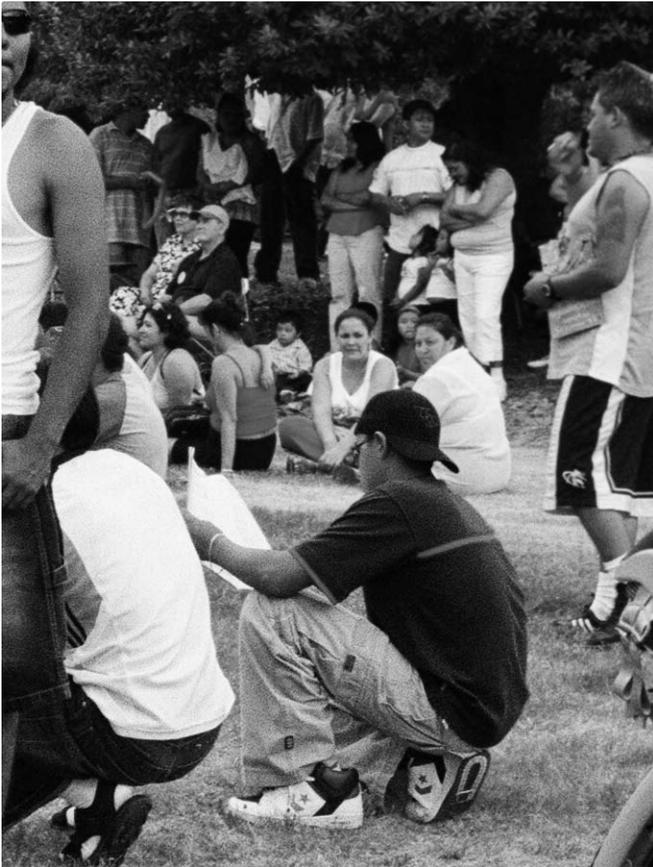
The needs assessment was conducted in three phases. In **Phase I**, a community survey was conducted on the health and service needs of Latino families. Latino adults were asked to complete an anonymous survey that asked about their family composition, educational attainment, ethnic origin, length of time in the U.S., socioeconomic status, perceived concerns, service needs, and suggestions for addressing those needs. Bilingual team members administered the anonymous surveys at community gatherings (e.g., El Papucho Latino, soccer games), and by identifying neighborhoods with a high density of Latinos and conducting door-to-door survey administrations. Participants who completed the survey at El Papucho Latino (a community event sponsored by the City of Richmond Hispanic Liaison Office, Richmond Behavioral Health Authority, Selecta 1320 AM, and VCU) received a raffle ticket for prizes and had their hand marked to prevent individuals from completing multiple surveys.

In **Phase II**, interviews were conducted with community leaders who work with or serve Latino families. The interviews focused on issues related to community-perceived concerns, service needs, service barriers, and ways of promoting safety and health. Interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes and were conducted in the language preferred by the community leader and at the location of the interviewee's choice or by phone. Bilingual, bicultural graduate students in the Department of Psychology conducted the interviews.

Finally, in **Phase III**, focus groups were conducted with Latino parents and youth. Focus group participants were recruited through flyers and word of mouth from a local apartment complex in the City of Richmond with a high density of Latino residents. The focus groups were held in the evening at the apartment complex. Participants received a gift card (\$10 for adults, \$5 for children) to a local store for participating in the groups. Dinner was also provided. All focus groups were conducted in Spanish by bilingual team members. Topics included: (a) problems and barriers faced by adolescents and parents; (b) violence and safety prevention needs; (c) family communication patterns; (d) difficulties parents and adolescents have with each other; (e) attitudes and beliefs about drugs, delinquency, AIDS, and sexual behavior; (f) suggestions for programs or services to address health, child development, and safety needs; and (g) feelings and attitudes about the changing racial/ethnic demographic and subsequent effect on interactions with other individuals.

The interviews and focus groups provided richer data on health and service needs on important topics not naturally amenable to survey research (e.g., identifying the content and context of barriers to health behavior; family relationships).

## Participants



### Community Survey

Two hundred and twelve Latino adults completed an anonymous survey. Over half of the Latino adults were male (57%). Participant's mean age was 33 years, with a range from 18 – 78. Ninety-six percent of the adults immigrated to the U.S. Of these immigrant participants, 54% were from Central America, 28% were from Mexico, 11% were from South America, and 7% were of Caribbean descent (Cuba, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico). The mean length of time participants had spent in the U.S. was 10 years (range= 0 to 53). Ninety-nine percent of respondents completed the survey in Spanish and 74% reported speaking primarily Spanish in their homes. Participants had completed a mean of 8.7 years of education (SD= 4.1); 33% had high school diplomas. Forty-five percent of the participants were married, 39% were single/never married, 10% were living as married/living with a partner, 5.3% were divorced or separated, and 1% other (e.g., widowed). The median household income was \$10,000 to \$19,000/year, with a range from under \$10,000 to over \$70,000 a year.

### Community Interviews

Fifteen community leaders who were familiar with or worked with the Latino community in metro Richmond were interviewed. These community members represented a variety of organizations, including faith-based organizations, schools (public and private), law and government, and media (print and radio).

### Focus Groups

Three focus groups of residents in an apartment complex in the Southside of the City of Richmond were conducted. A total of 16 mothers, 7 fathers, and 6 boys (ages 11-14) participated in the focus groups. Although a focus group with Latino girls was planned, only one child attended.

## Findings

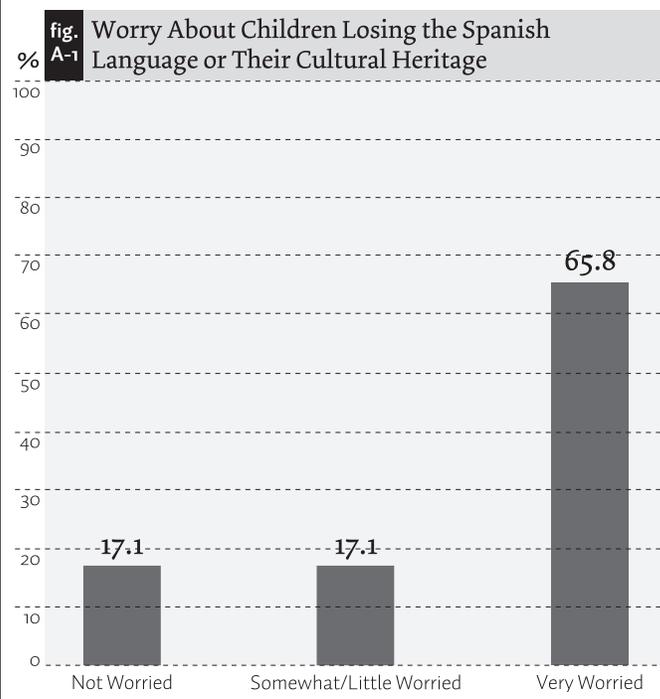
**S**URVEY RESPONDENTS were presented with a list of things that people sometimes worry about. They were asked to rate how worried they were about each statement, using a three-point scale (“not worried,” “somewhat worried/a little worried,” “very worried”). Participants were provided the opportunity to add concerns or service needs that were not explicitly listed. The survey also asked participants how useful they would find various services using a three-point scale (“not at all useful,” “a little useful,” and “very useful”). In presenting the findings, the data from the focus groups and interviews was incorporated to more fully explain the findings from the survey.

Many of the concerns were inter-related. Specifically, language and transportation were mentioned when parents and community members discussed child-related health, and safety concerns/needs. A large percentage of the Latino adults surveyed said that bilingual resources (93.6%), translation services (91.4%), and English classes (97.4%) would be “very useful” services. As an example, community leaders and focus group participants explained that Latinos will often pay more money for their groceries because they do not speak English and are afraid to shop in non-Latino stores. They also noted that some barriers for participation in ESL classes include: class schedules, childcare, and conflicts with work. For example, a community leader noted that although many Latinos want to learn English and attend classes, they often cannot attend because they have to work. Mothers also noted that childcare responsibilities make it difficult for parents to attend classes. Limited English language proficiency also presents a problem in that some skilled and educated Latinos have to take low-wage and blue-collar jobs requiring little education. This often prevents the full use of their skills.

Similarly, 85.2% of Latino adults said that transportation would be a “very useful” service. Specifically, Latino adults noted that the long commute sometimes associated with taking public transportation often created conflicts between work, family, school, and medical demands. For example, parents in the focus groups noted that they were recently experiencing some difficulties with the school bus picking their children up for school. There were some days when the

bus did not arrive and children did not go to school. Because many immigrants did not have licenses or cars, it was difficult for them to get their children to school when the bus did not arrive. Although the parents of the children who missed the bus could have taken their children to school on a public bus, they believed they would miss a large amount of work time, thereby jeopardizing their work position.

The top five concerns residents said they were “very worried” about include (a) burglaries and thefts (79.7%); (b) gang activity (78.1%); (c) drug or alcohol problems (76.6%); (d) discrimination and prejudice (74%); and (e) vandalism or graffiti (71.4%). The top five services that were rated as “very useful” were (a) English classes (97.4%); (b) affordable health care (95.8%); (c) legal services (94.7%); (d) Bilingual resources (93.6%); and (e) translation services (91.4%).



### CHILD CONCERNS AND SERVICE NEEDS

#### *Loss of Spanish Language and Culture*

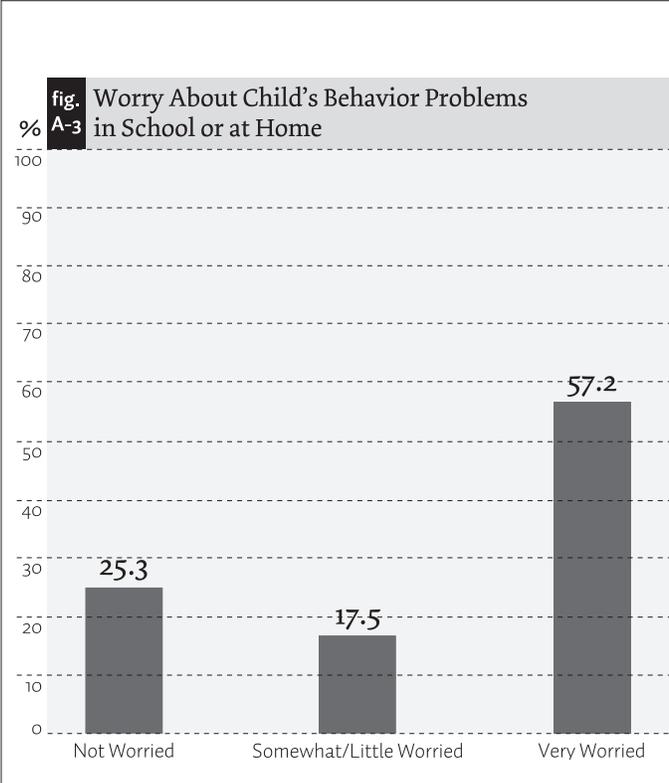
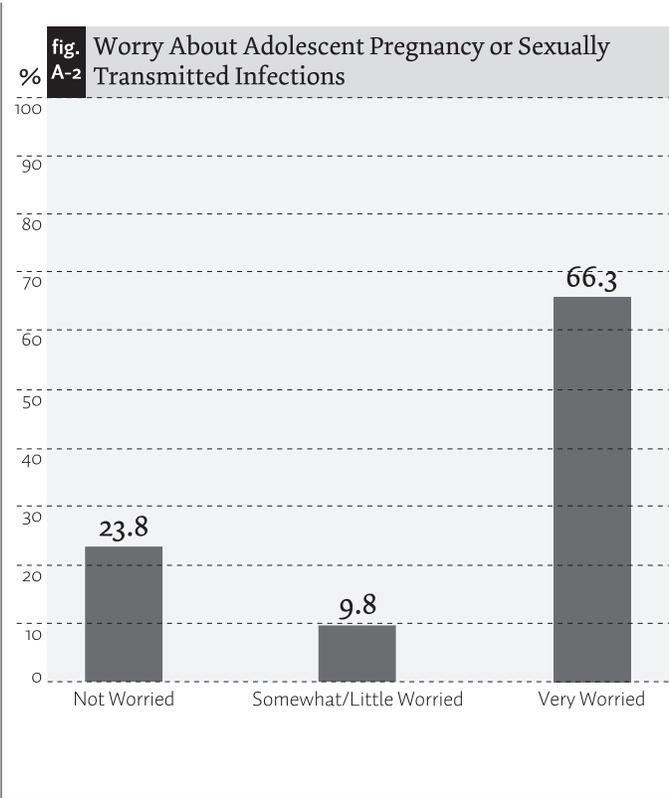
A major concern regarding children was the loss of their Spanish culture and language. Specifically, 65.8% of Latino adults who completed the community survey were “very worried” about this issue (fig. A-1). Focus group members

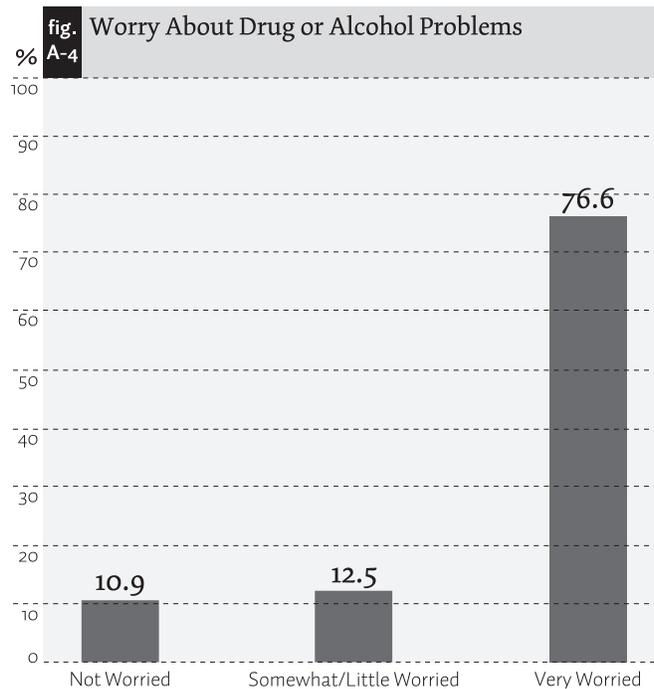
explained that they were especially worried that children would not benefit from the protective factors that their culture has to offer them. Further, they expressed concern regarding what they perceived as a breakdown of the Latino family here in the United States. Factors that contribute to this feeling of decreased family connectedness include (a) language differences between parents and children; (b) shifting parent and child roles that result when children are placed in a position to translate for their parents; (c) discrepancies between U.S. and Latino cultural values; (d) less of an extended family network; and (e) competing work demands that limit parents’ ability to stay involved in their children’s lives.

**Risk Behaviors: Drugs, Alcohol, Sexual Behavior**

Latino adults were also worried about youth risk behavior and behavioral adjustment. Specifically, community survey respondents expressed concern about adolescent pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections (66.3% were “very worried”) and behavioral problems at school or home (57.2% were “very worried,” fig. A-2 and A-3). In addition, 76.6% of Latino adults were “very worried” about drug or alcohol problems (fig. A-4) and 81.5% said that services related to drug or alcohol use would be “very useful.” Women were more worried than men about children’s behavioral problems, adolescent pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections, and drugs or alcohol problems. Focus group members and community leaders noted that Latino youth engagement in risk behaviors was an increasing problem. Factors that contribute to this include (a) poor family relationships; (b) increased exposure or access to illegal substances or weapons; and (c) few perceived after-school resources.

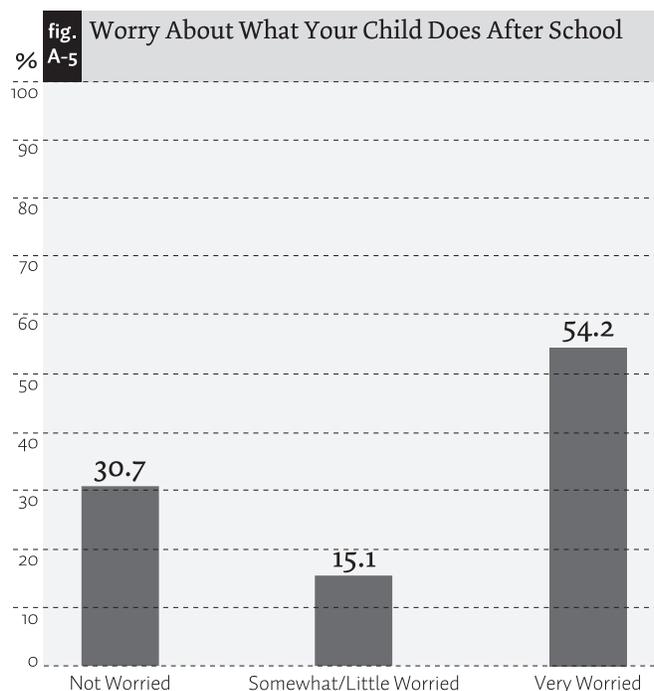
Participants of the focus groups, including the Latino boys, highlighted the fact that children are exposed to alcohol, drugs, and violence in their schools and their communities. The boys said that they are often faced with peer pressure to drink, do drugs, or to have sex, and they felt that children sometimes engage in these negative health behaviors because of poor relationships with their parents (e.g., less parental involvement, poor communication, lack of parental warmth). These boys expressed a desire for their parents to be more involved in their lives. In addition, they noted



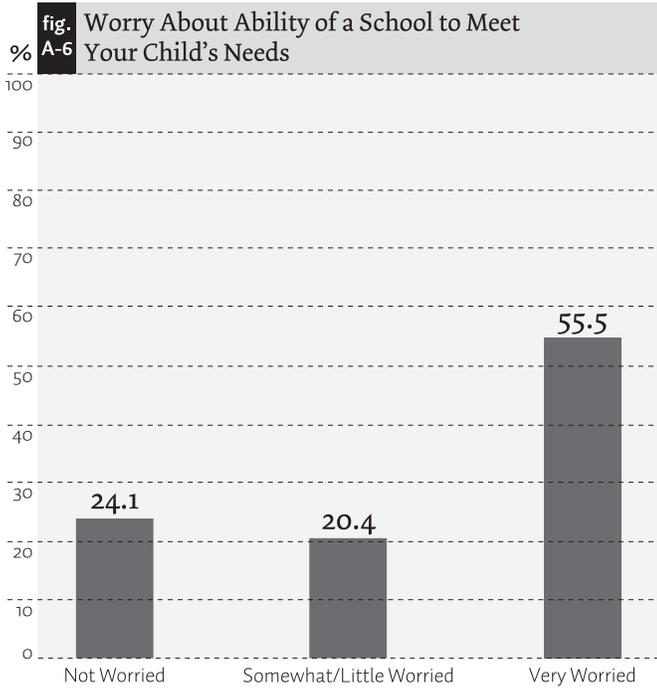


that their parents should talk to them more about the consequences of using drugs. They said that their parents have a lot to teach them about life in general. The boys had mixed feelings as to whether they would want to talk to their parents about relationships, dating, and sexual topics. Some boys said they talk with their parents about these topics, whereas other boys said they would not feel comfortable talking to their parents.

Similarly, parents expressed concern regarding their child's engagement in risk behaviors. One father felt that children's access to drugs and weapons is easier here than in his country of origin and another father said he worries constantly about his children being offered drugs at school, which is something that happened to his son. Another father noted that his "weapon" for combating issues related to drug use was the family but that is harder here since his extended family is more scattered than they were in their country of origin. Specifically, he said that in their country of origin family members lived in the same city so extended family was able to play a big role in monitoring children's activities and staying involved in their lives. However, here in the U.S., many families are scattered throughout various states so the protection afforded by the family is less evident. Some adults believed that the adoption of American values was contributing to their children engaging in more negative health behaviors. One community leader highlighted the confusion for some Latino children, particularly girls, that may arise around issues related to sexuality. Specifically, he said that children are exposed to pressure to engage in sexual behavior and that it is openly discussed in peer settings. However, this is a taboo subject at home, making it difficult for the girls, or children in general, to seek the advice of parents or talk to their parents about issues they may encounter.

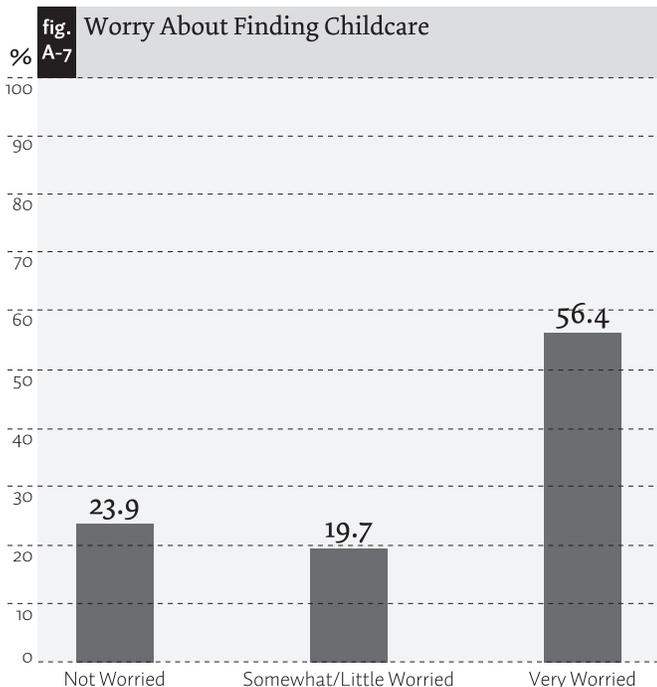


Finally, focus group members and community leaders noted that Latino youth often are not presented with positive activities that may help prevent their engagement in negative behaviors. In fact, 54.2% of survey respondents were "very worried" about what children did after school (fig. A-5) and 85.5% said they would find after-school programs for Latino youth to be "very useful" services.



**School Concerns**

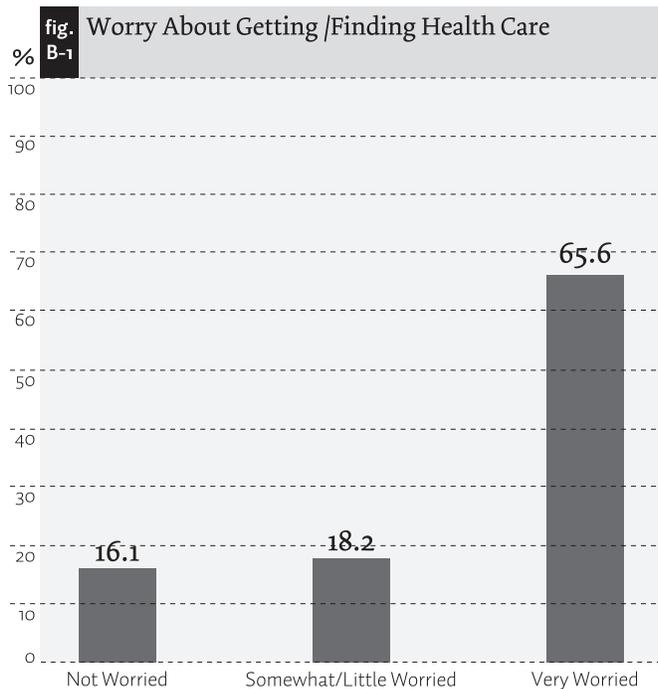
Latino adults were also concerned about the ability of schools to meet the needs of their children. Of the survey respondents, 55.5% were “very worried” and 20.4% were “somewhat/little worried,” totaling 76% of the respondents (fig. A-6). Specifically, focus group parents said that finding bilingual school personnel to help them with their children is often difficult. Some parents also expressed a concern that their children were not learning to speak and write English or Spanish fluently. They worried that their children would not be fluent in either language, thereby negatively affecting their school performance. One father suggested that if teachers could help his children learn English through their Spanish language that perhaps children would fare better in school. In addition, 73.5% of Latinos surveyed said they would find services related to developmental disabilities “very useful,” and 83.6% said the same about school or educational placements. Parents and community members emphasized the importance of informing the Latino community regarding the educational opportunities available to Latino youth.



Adults agreed that their children’s education was important and one way of helping promote more positive youth adjustment. However, many parents expressed being caught in a conflict of stressing the importance of education to children who may not be able to realize their educational potential. Specifically, parents in the focus groups and community members expressed concern that children who are not citizens are not eligible for scholarships or Federal financial assistance, which often makes it difficult for their families to be able to support their educational experiences.

**Childcare**

In terms of childcare, 56.4% of Latino adults said they were “very worried” about finding affordable childcare (fig. A-7) and 81.4% said they would find childcare services “very useful.” Women were more worried than men. Mothers in the focus groups noted that not having available childcare often makes it difficult for them to work and some mothers talked about difficulties associated with childcare for children who are sick. Mothers also talked about the difficulty attending various activities (e.g., ESL classes, medical appointments) because of competing childcare demands.



**HEALTH CONCERNS AND SERVICE NEEDS**

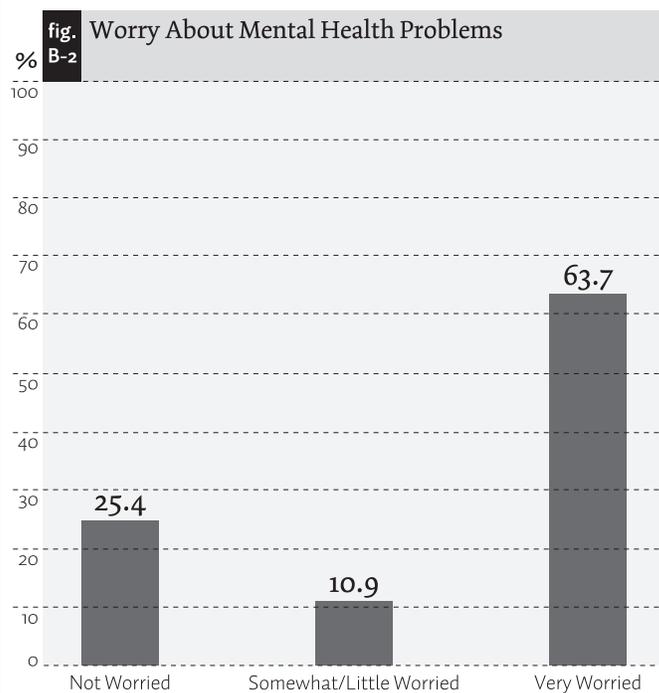
**Healthcare**

Of the survey respondents, 65.6% were “very worried” about getting or finding healthcare, and 18.2% were “somewhat/little worried” (fig. B-1). Affordable healthcare was seen as a “very useful” service by 95.8% of the survey respondents. Focus group parents partly attributed the difficulty in finding healthcare to public transportation (e.g., long commute time) and language issues (e.g., Spanish-speaking staff only available on certain days and at certain times). Although parents acknowledged that they could take public transportation to attend medical appointments, the long commute time created difficulties at work. For example, numerous focus group participants shared stories about having to miss a lot of work for medical appointments and their employer being dissatisfied. This issue was particularly difficult for parents of young children who often get sick frequently.

One community member noted that some Latinos prefer to seek alternative treatments – “la botica.” Another community member noted that in his country of origin (Colombia) people tend to go to the pharmacy for health issues and the

pharmacist helps them find appropriate medication. As a result, some Latinos may not know how the health system here works or where to go first. The recent creation of the “promotoras” program by Cross Over Ministries strives to bridge this gap. The “promotoras” educate the community regarding various health issues and function as liaisons between the community and service organizations to increase service utilization.

Many parents expressed concern seeking services because they were undocumented; others discussed the confusion they face when trying to figure out what forms to complete to receive health insurance. An added difficulty expressed is the fact that in many of these families, some family members are covered by one insurance plan while others are not covered (or are covered by some other form of insurance), causing difficulties for families to seek services from a single health care facility. Some parents also expressed confusion regarding qualifying for services.



**Mental Health**

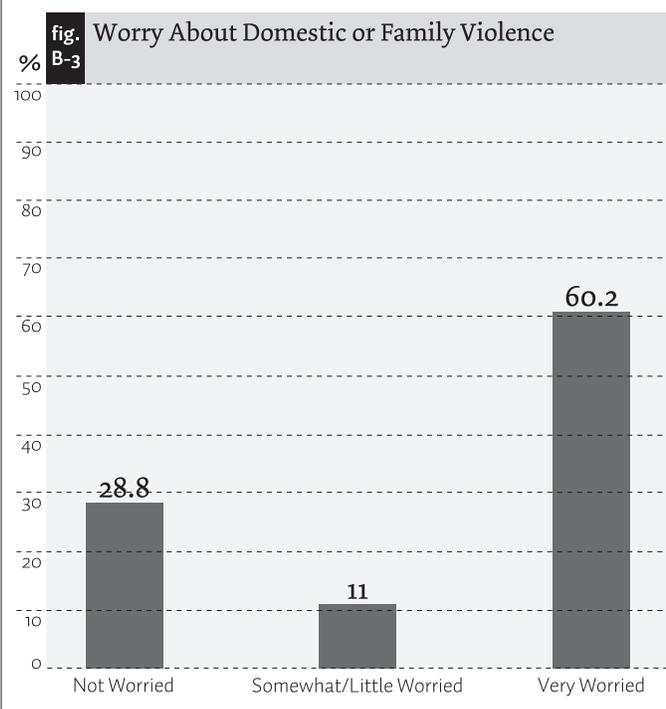
Latino adults were “very worried” (63.7%) about mental health problems (fig. B-2) and 73.5% said that mental health

services would be “very useful.” Women were more worried than men about mental health problems. Specifically, distress associated with traumas was mentioned by community leaders and focus group participants. For some families, the immigration experience was difficult (e.g., loss of loved ones, abuses, etc.) and many Latinos experience stresses associated with acculturation and discrimination (see below). Thus, programs focusing on trauma-related and adjustment-related symptoms were identified as gaps in services.

**Parenting/Family Dynamics**

As noted above, parents expressed concern regarding their child’s acculturation to U.S. norms and behaviors. Children were described as acculturating to American values and behaviors at a faster rate than their parents. This differing rate of acculturation can sometimes lead to conflicts or shifting roles within the family. For example, one child jokingly noted that because his parents rely on him for translating information, he can hide some things about his behavior or school performance from them. Parents were also acutely aware of the difficulties they encounter because of language related issues. One father, for example, described feeling isolated from his children because he was the only family member who did not speak or understand English. As one community member noted, children take on more parenting roles or adult responsibilities when they are the communicators in their families.

Parents also discussed the difficulties they encounter in parenting their children given the different values and expectations regarding child behavior in the U.S. and their countries of origin. For example, parents in the focus groups noted that children in the U.S. are taught to be independent and autonomous from their parents. They might be encouraged, for example, to leave home at a younger age. In contrast, Latino parents emphasize family connectedness and expect their children to remain closer to home and more connected to their families. One community member said that it is not common for Latino youth to leave home until they are married or if they do leave home to attend college, for example, they return when they are finished.



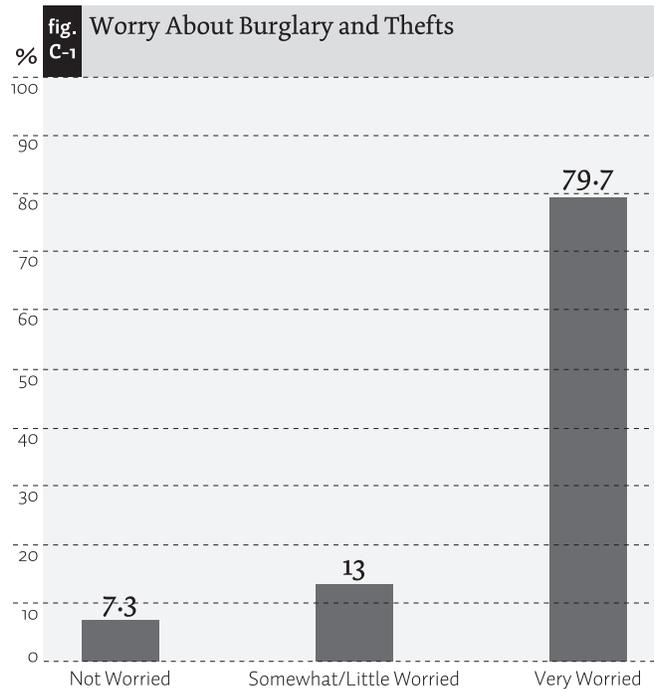
Many participants also noted that their extended familial support is less here than in their country of origin. Although most people agreed that grandparents often play a key role in helping children learn about their cultural traditions, they indicated that there are few grandparents playing this role in Latino families in the Richmond area. Finally, the Latino boys in the focus group said they wished their parents could be more involved in their lives. They felt they could learn quite a bit from their parents’ life experiences. They expressed a desire to do things like play soccer, swim, and participate in other sports with their parents.

Finally, 60.2% of Latino adults were “very worried” about domestic and family violence and 89.4% said that domestic/family violence programs would be “very useful” (fig. B-3).

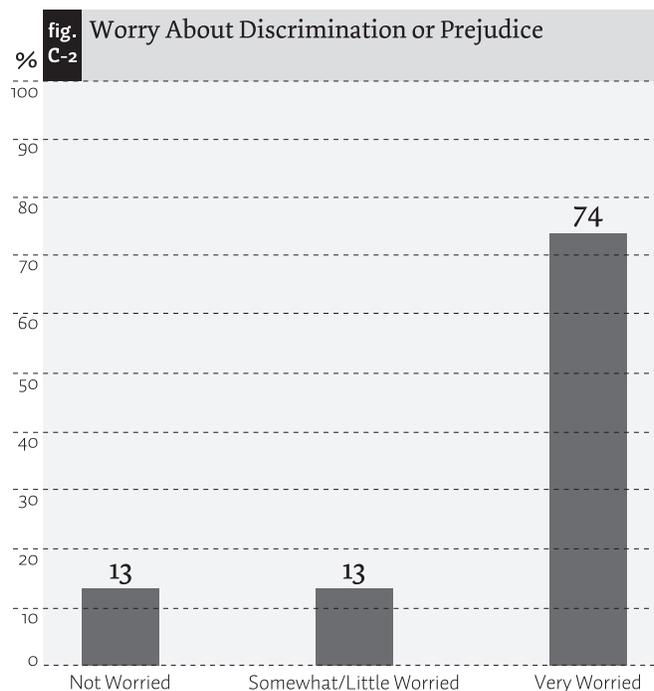
**SAFETY CONCERNS AND SERVICE NEEDS**

**Burglaries and Thefts**

Ninety-three percent total of Latino adults were worried about burglaries and thefts, with 79.7% being “very worried” and 13% being somewhat/little worried” (fig. C-1). Immigration status was very prominent in parents and community leaders’ discussions regarding victimization.



For example, some parents believed they were “targets” for burglaries, robberies, thefts, and sexual assaults because they were viewed by aggressors as not being likely to call the police out of fear of being deported. In fact, one community member told a story about a 13-year old child who was allegedly raped and whose mother was hesitant to report the incident to the police because of her fear of being deported. This mother was helped to report the rape and the family received assistance. Another community member noted that individuals without papers often do not have bank accounts, so these individuals frequently carry around cash and become targets for thefts or violence. For some families, safety concerns were related to increasing tensions between the African-American and Latino communities (see below). Finally, parents in the focus groups also reported feeling that, if they did call the police, they worried that the police would not respond quickly. The parents were also apprehensive about difficulty communicating their concerns to the police (e.g., few bilingual police officers), and discussed fears that the police officers would not understand their perspectives.

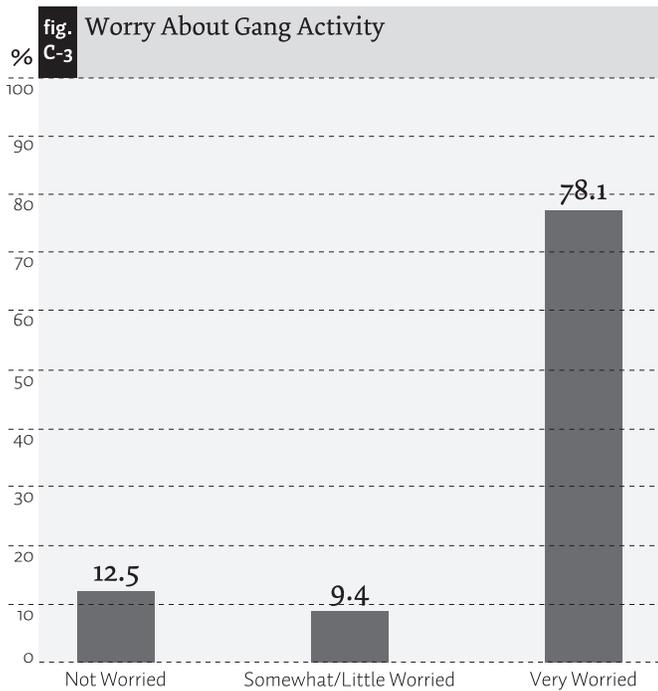


#### *Inter-ethnic/inter-racial Relationships*

Parents and community leaders noted an increasing tension between African-Americans and Latinos in their communities. Latino residents reported feeling “victimized” by some African-Americans. The boys in the focus groups also talked about the difficulties they experience with some African-American students. They described fights on the bus and at school. They also talked about the conflicts between Latino and African-American adults that they have witnessed in their neighborhoods.

#### *Discrimination or Prejudice*

Seventy-four percent of Latino adults were “very worried” about discrimination or prejudice (fig. C-2). Women were more worried than men. When asked about experiences regarding discrimination or prejudice, Latino parents and community members discussed the increasing tensions between the African-American and Latino communities in their neighborhoods (see above). In addition, some mothers felt that their children were discriminated against at school because they were immigrants.



**Gangs**

From survey results, 78.1% of Latino adults were “very worried” about gang activity (fig. C-3). One community leader noted that some children view gangs as a resource and often turn to gangs for protection. Another community leader said that parents have to work so much to support their families that they are not supervising their children as well, nor are they as involved in their children’s lives as they would like to be. Latino adults were also “very worried” about vandalism or graffiti (71.4%) in their neighborhoods.

**WORK-RELATED CONCERNS AND SERVICE NEEDS**

Eighty-four percent of Latino adults were worried about finding work (68.6% were “very worried” and 15.7% were “somewhat/little worried”), and 90.3% said job placement or career counseling would be a “very useful” service. One community leader described the Latino community as very hard working. Parents, however, noted that it is difficult to find jobs and they also struggle with competing demands (e.g., childcare and work). Some parents felt that they are discriminated against at work because of their immigrant status – specifically, some parents noted feeling underpaid and taken advantage of or never being paid by employers.

**OTHER SERVICE NEEDS**

Community members and parents expressed a need for a class or an orientation session to American culture and society in general that would also include important information for living in Richmond. They noted that, upon arriving in the United States, it is often difficult for immigrants to understand how to access various services, and the different rules and regulations regarding schooling, work, and family life. Several focus group participants viewed the City of Richmond Hispanic Liaison Office as a valuable resource that somewhat plays this role. Finally, over 90% of Latino adults noted legal services would be “very useful.” Over 80% noted that government assistance programs would be “very useful.” In addition, 96% noted that affordable housing services would be “very useful” or “somewhat useful.”

Additional graph data can be found at the end of the report.

## Conclusions & Recommendations



**M**ANY ISSUES EMERGED in this study. Language was a recurrent concern and was mentioned when participants discussed health and safety concerns and service needs. For example, family members noted that bilingual services are often available at limited times, which often overlap with work schedules. This creates a conflict for many families – i.e., balancing income and health related needs. Language use was also a concern regarding children’s education. Specifically, parents expressed difficulty communicating their concerns regarding their children’s education to school staff. It was also noted that there are “pockets” within the Richmond Latino community that consist mainly of individuals who speak an indigenous language and for whom Spanish is a second language. As such, information presented in Spanish may still be difficult for these individuals to comprehend.

Transportation was also frequently mentioned as critical to meeting the needs of the Latino residents. Some Latino immigrants face difficulties when trying to obtain a driver’s license. Although Latino residents acknowledge that public transportation is an option, for some residents, public transportation may mean a longer time away from home or work. Lack of transportation also affects the education and health of Latinos because residents may miss health appointments and other meetings as a result of limited modes of getting to the location of service.

With respect to children, Latino adults and community members expressed concerns regarding (a) the loss of their Spanish culture and language; (b) engagement in risk behaviors (e.g., drug use, alcohol use, unprotected sexual intercourse); (c) school-related challenges; and (d) finding affordable childcare.

Residents noted the need for increasing the availability of bilingual services in health care and school settings (e.g., more bilingual staff and more hours/dates when these staff are available), help in understanding how to complete insurance forms, education regarding the health care system, more mobile clinics or health care clinics in neighborhoods with large densities of Latino residents, and mental health services (e.g., trauma, adjustment-related difficulties, domestic or family violence, and substance abuse).

Above all, safety concerns collectively were the topics that survey respondents most worried about, along with discrimination and drug or alcohol problems. Residents also expressed concerns regarding victimization, increasing tensions between the African-American and Latino community, gangs, and communication with the police.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### A. Language Resources

1. Increase the availability of and access to bilingual and bicultural staff so as to increase service utilization.
2. Provide language classes for service providers (e.g., medical Spanish classes) and community residents (ESL and Spanish for Latino residents for whom Spanish is a second language) to bridge the communication barrier.
3. Increase the accessibility of existing ESL classes by
  - (a) offering classes in locations close to the Latino residents;
  - (b) providing child care and homework help during ESL classes for other family members (e.g., mentoring services for children); and
  - (c) offering classes in the evenings (after work or school) and on the weekends.

**B. Health & Mental Health**

1. Increase access to and hours of medical services, exploring the use of more mobile clinics and extended evening and weekend hours of existing services.
2. Expand the “promotoras” program where community members are trained as community health leaders so that they can share health information and refer individuals to medical resources and services. As part of these efforts, include information on where and how to navigate the health care system in the United States.
3. Educate health care workers on culture specific ways their clients may express distress or physical symptoms as well as culture specific homeopathic treatments.
4. Educate residents regarding insurance options and provide increased assistance in completing forms both for enrollment and renewal.
5. Increase bilingual mental health (e.g., trauma and adjustment), substance abuse, and domestic violence services.

**C. Cultural Orientation**

1. Continue and strengthen efforts to orient new residents to the City of Richmond and community resources, such as an orientation program or package that would help educate new Latino immigrants to the City of Richmond, available services, and culture.

**D. Youth Development**

1. Promote positive activities for Latino youth through programs aimed at
  - (a) strengthening family relationships;
  - (b) teaching children skills for engaging in positive health behaviors; and
  - (c) promoting connection to the Latino culture.
 Programs should offer services in Spanish.
2. Increase Latino youths’ awareness of and access to after-school activities in order to protect Latino youth from negative outcomes.
3. Hire bilingual staff and educate parents about existing after school programs and how to enroll their children in those programs.

**E. Parent Education**

1. Implement family-based programs that teach and enhance parents’ skills for supervising their children, guide them in talking to their children about sensitive issues such as drugs and pregnancy prevention, and promote parent-child relationships.
2. Offer parent trainings that guide parents on how to deal with the stress associated with acculturating to the U.S. and family dynamics in this new environment.

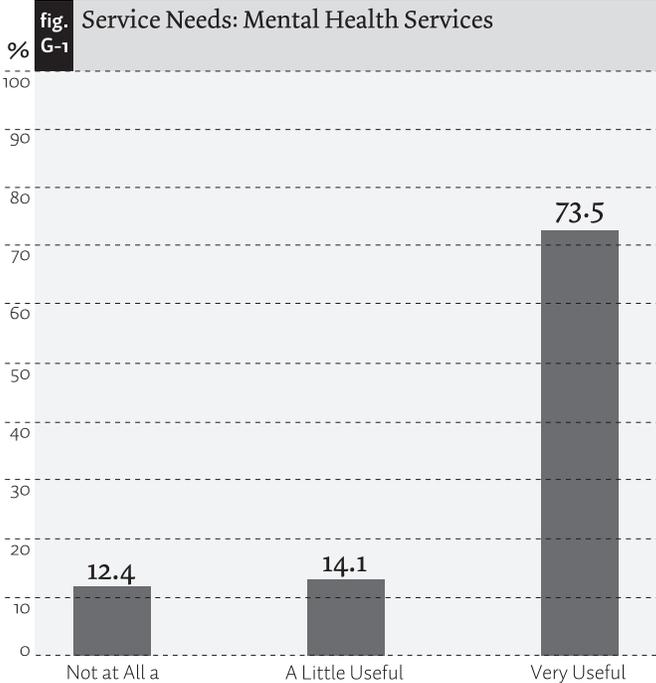
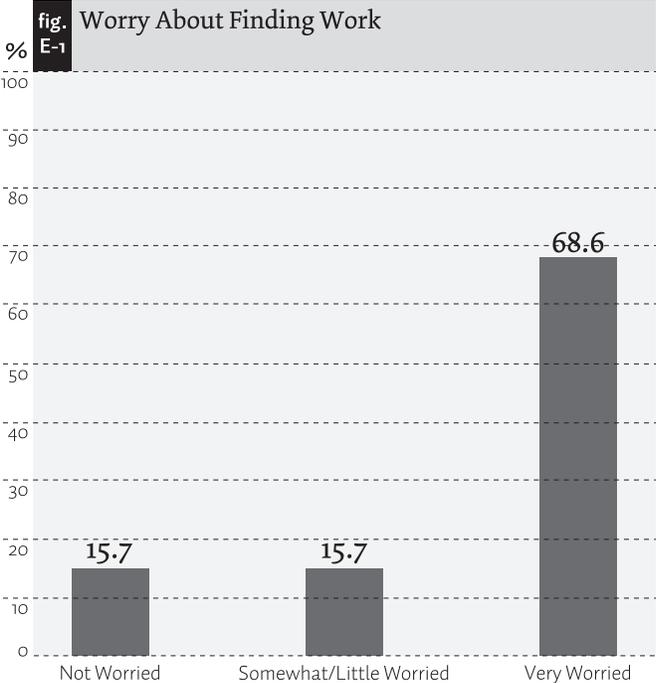
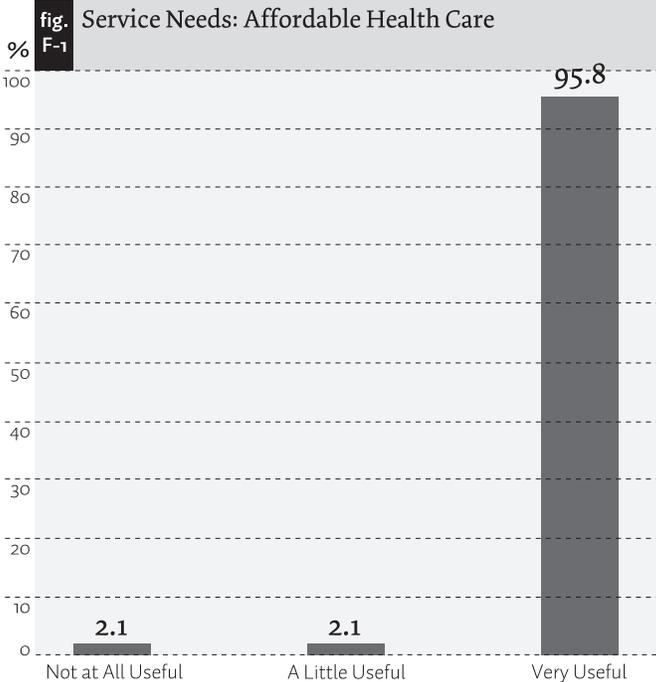
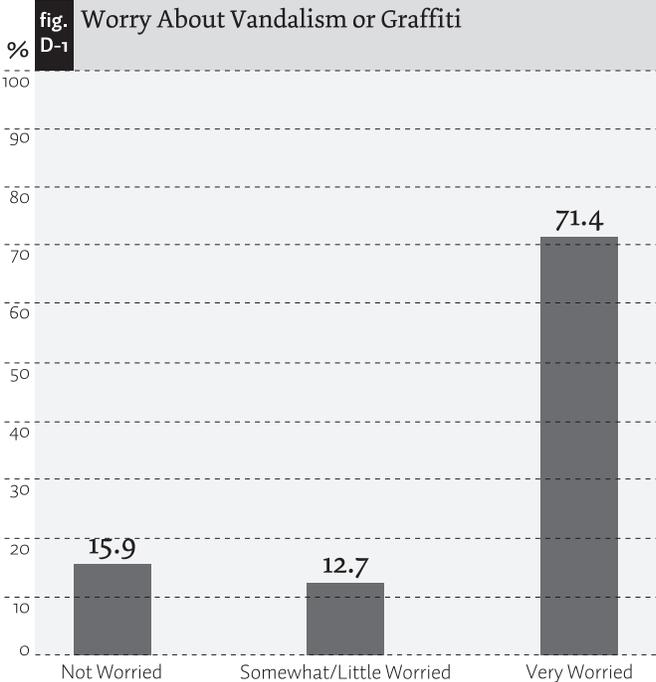
**F. Community Building**

1. Create prevention programs aimed at promoting positive inter-ethnic or inter-racial relationships, such as a curriculum on ethnic identity development and relationships in school settings.
2. Educate parents on how to talk to their children about experiences related to discrimination, prejudice, and inter-ethnic conflicts, along with resources available to them.
3. Conduct a more detailed needs assessment, obtaining both African-American and Latino perceptions, so as to elaborate a more comprehensive service development plan to build community across inter-ethnic and inter-racial lines.

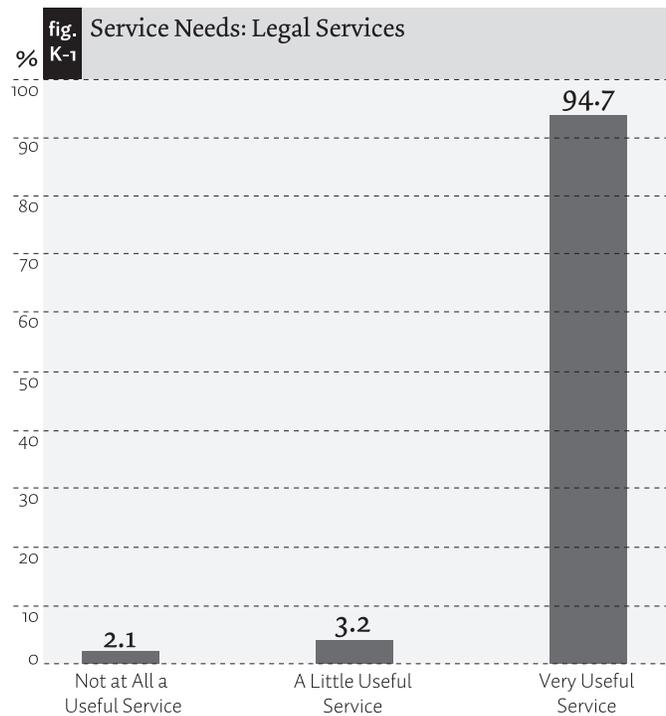
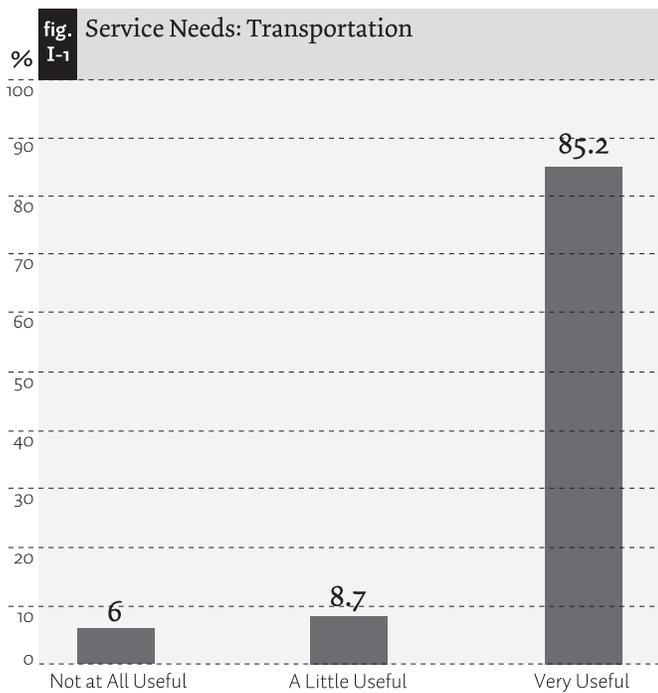
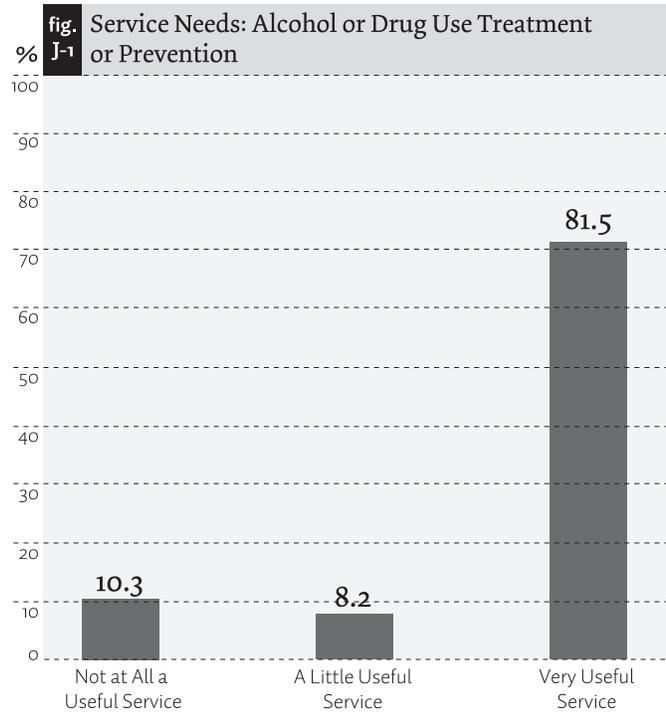
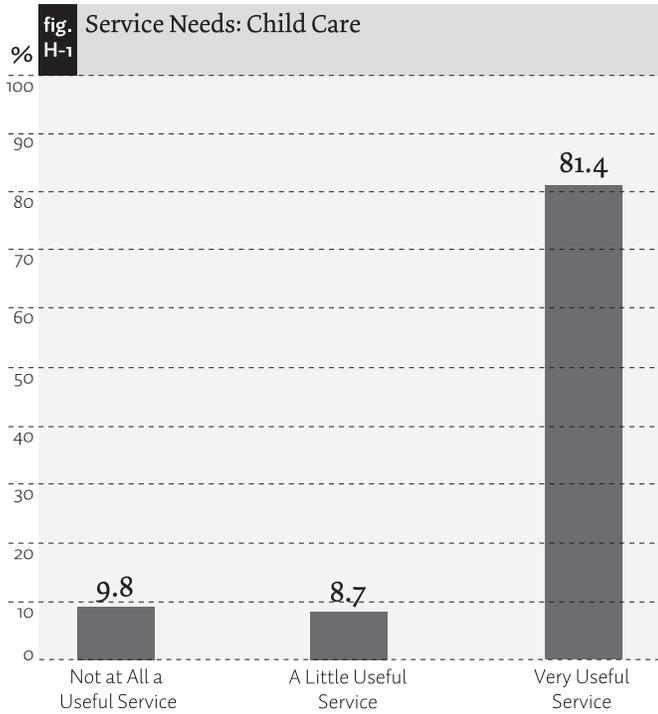
**G. Safety**

1. Increase the number of bilingual police officers so that Latinos can better communicate their concerns to the police.
2. Increase opportunities and activities that foster communication between police and the Latino community by engaging the police with the community (e.g., Police Athletic League clinics, development of community safety patrols with a police officer).
3. Create a training that will allow Latino residents to understand the process involved when the police are called so as to alleviate some community fears regarding not being taken seriously, or fears of deportation.

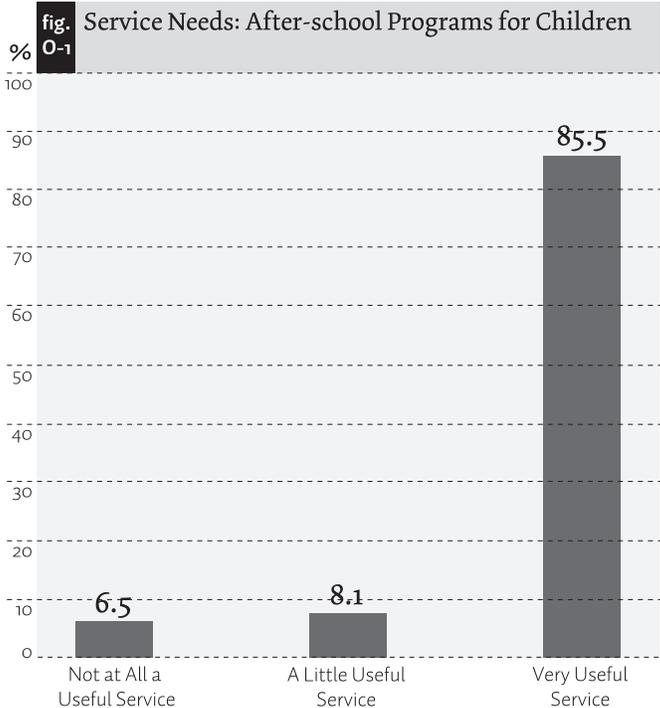
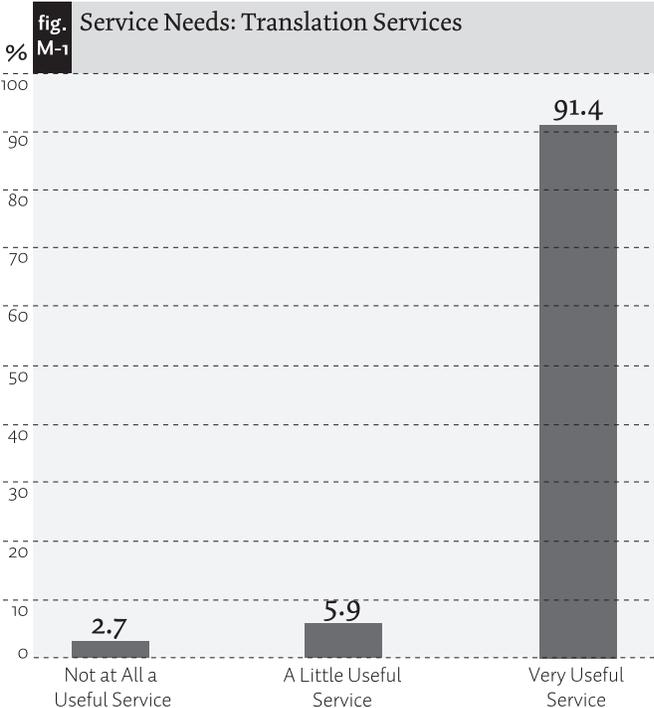
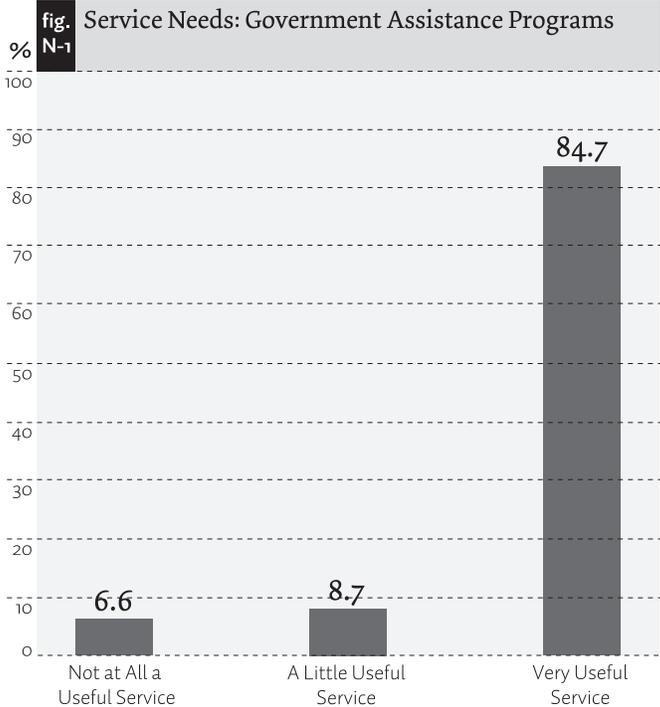
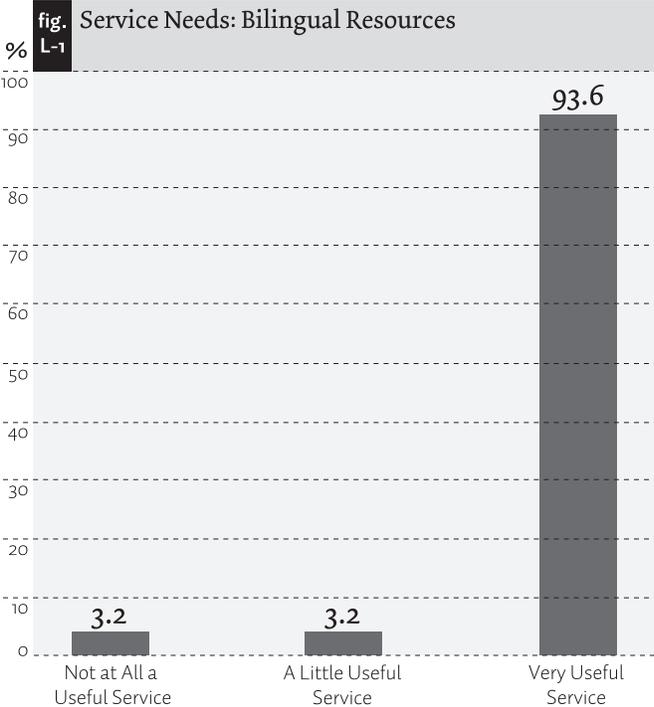
Additional Graph Data



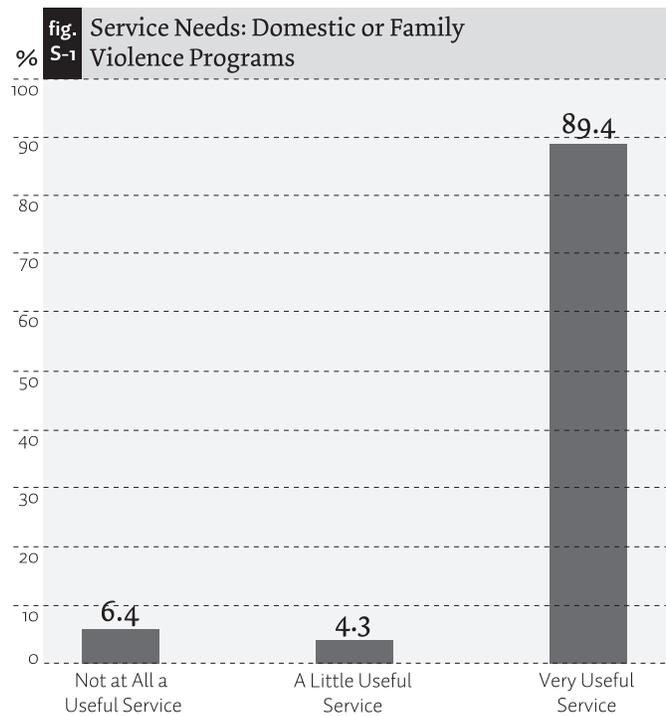
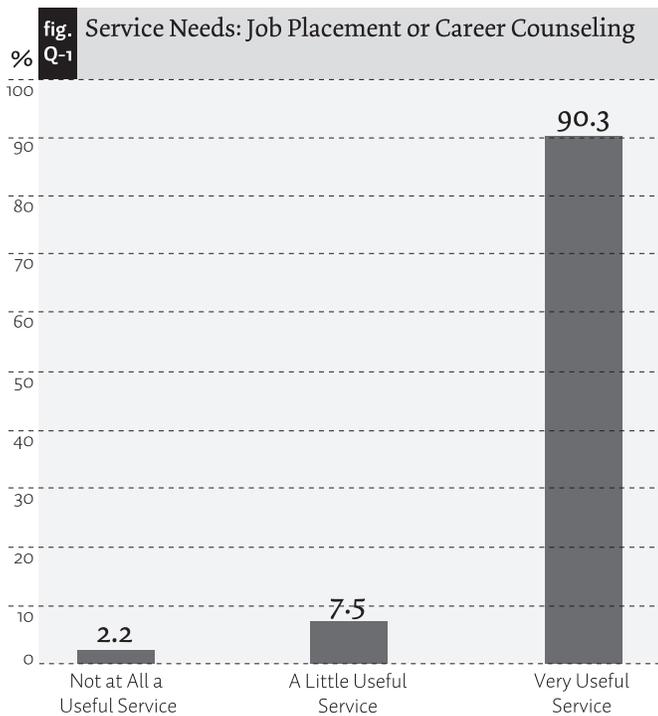
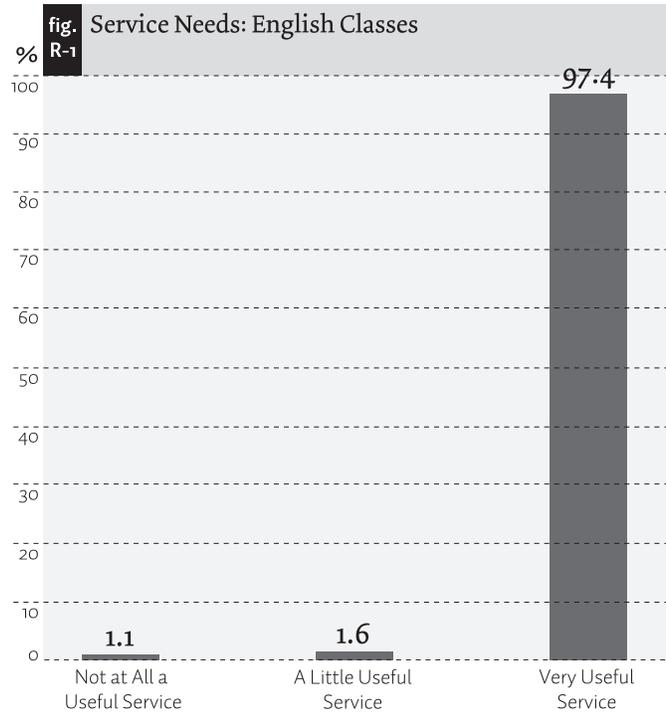
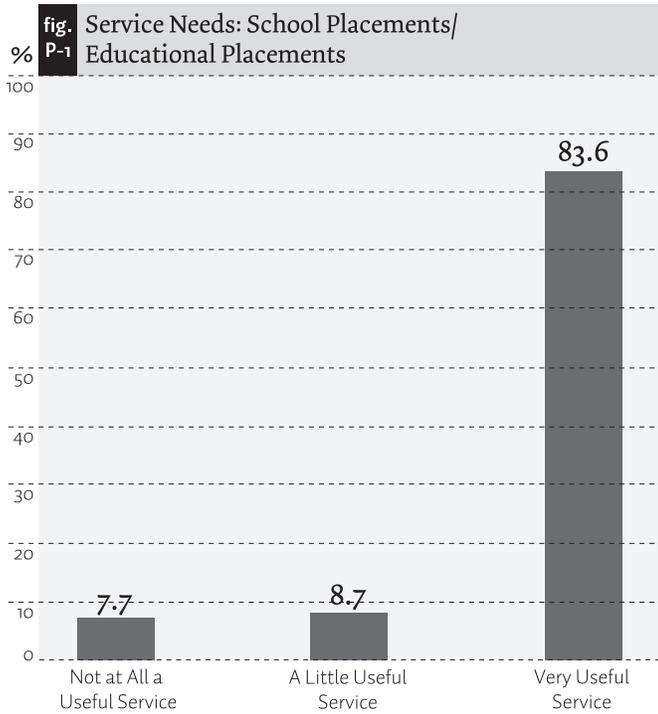
Additional Graph Data



Additional Graph Data



Additional Graph Data



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<http://www.richmondgov.com/citizen/multilang>

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