



Report on the Status of Women and Girls in Sonoma County

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Introduction

The Report on the Status of Women and Girls: Sonoma County, 2023 relies on two types of data in order to provide a comprehensive picture of individuals self-identifying as women in the county. County-wide data are drawn from large, published databases, while more-targeted information is provided by women through the 2021 Voices of Sonoma County Women survey.

For a view of Sonoma County women, the report draws heavily on county, state, and national data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey program, as well as other large databases. While the 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates are the most recent data available from the U.S. Census Bureau, the Report frequently cites data averaged over a 5-year period in order to reduce the margins of error based on sample size. Although pooling the data over multiple years diminishes what is known about the current year, multiple-year estimates provide more statistically reliable numbers.

The 2021 Voices of Sonoma County Women survey (Voices survey) was developed and administered—both in English and Spanish—by the Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women. Seven hundred eighty women began the English-language survey and a median of 471 women completed most of the questions (respondents did not answer every question).¹ A smaller group of Spanish-speakers is represented, with 53 women beginning the survey and a median of 21 completed most of the questions.² Survey responses have been analyzed by race/ethnicity, parental status, and position along the economic spectrum. Note that not every respondent answered every demographic category mentioned above, inherently introducing some limitations into our analyses of responses by those categories. We have made note of those limitations in the appropriate tables. Where appropriate, we have included quotes that respondents included in their survey throughout the Report. Where necessary, these quotes have been edited for clarity.

The integration of these two perspectives of women in Sonoma County—at the county-wide level, as well as at the very specific level of Voices survey respondents—results in a more complete understanding of women's issues and challenges. Although the Voices survey respondents do not represent the demographics of Sonoma County women as a whole, their voices offer a more direct insight to challenging issues that many women in the county face today.

Please see the Editors' Note at the end of this Report for more information on the data reported herein and its meaning, as well as definitions of some terms used throughout the Report.

¹ Survey respondents were allowed to skip any question they wanted to, while some questions were based on a positive response to a previous question and were therefore self-limiting.

² Survey respondents were allowed to skip any question they wanted to, while some questions were based on a positive response to a previous question and were therefore self-limiting.

Executive Summary

The Report on the Status of Women and Girls: Sonoma County, 2023 shows some positive trends that hint at a strong recovery for women post-COVID-19, and continued gains in equity. There are also areas in which the status of women appears to be heading toward a less equitable position in post-pandemic times. In these cases, monitoring and policy intervention may be warranted. Corroborating data can be found in the 2023 Report parentheses.

Demographics. *Sonoma County's community of women is increasingly diverse, both in terms of ethnic and sexual identities.*

- The representation of Latinas in Sonoma County has increased from 24% in 2011-2015 to 26% in 2016-2020, while the proportion of African American women and Asian American women has each appeared to increase only slightly. White women still comprise the majority of the county's women, but the proportion has decreased from 66% in 2011-2015 to 64% in 2016-2020. (See Snapshot section)
- In 2015-2017, 93% of the county's women identified as heterosexual and 7% as gay/lesbian, bisexual, or other. In 2018-2020, 89% of Sonoma County women identified as heterosexual and 10% as gay/lesbian, bisexual, or other. (See Snapshot section)

Employment. *Participation of Sonoma County women in the workforce is holding steady, while earnings have increased; women's earnings continue to inch toward parity with men.*

- Labor force participation of women in Sonoma County was 74% in 2011-2015, increasing to 76% in 2016-2020. And unemployment of women between the ages of 20-64 years, which averaged 7% in 2011-2015, dropped to 3% in 2016-2020. In 2021, the annual unemployment rate for Sonoma County women and men was 7%, but monthly unemployment rates for women and men had dropped to around 3% by fall 2022. (Tables 13 and 14)
- While the types of occupations held by women overall have not changed significantly, median earnings increased by 15% from \$47,000 in 2011-2015 to \$54,000 in 2016-2020. (Table 2)
- From 2016-2020, Sonoma County women earned 88% of what men earned, compared to the state and nation where women earned 87% and 81%, respectively, of what men earned. (Table 3)

Economic Security. *Sonoma County women appear to be less economically secure than men but tend to fare better than women across the state.*

- A greater proportion of Sonoma County women than men live in poverty, 10% of women compared to 8% of men in 2016-2020. But the poverty rate for women has decreased slightly from 12% in 2011-2015 to 10% in 2016-2020. (Page 23)
- The greatest poverty rate among families is for those headed by single women caring for their own children. For married-couple families with one or two children, the poverty rate is 3%, while 21% of single-mother families with one or two children live in poverty. Across California, the poverty rate for married-couple families with one or two children is 6% and for single-mother families is 29%. (Table 9)
- With three or four children, the poverty rates of families are high, but have dropped significantly from 2011-2015 to 2016-2020. For single-mother families with 3-4 children in Sonoma County, the poverty rate dropped from 49% in 2011-2015 to 32% in 2016-2020. Statewide, over half of single mothers with 3-4 children live in poverty; in 2016-2020, 57% lived in poverty, down from 64% in 2011-2015. (Table 5)

Housing and Single-Woman Households. *Ninety-two percent of Sonoma County’s housing units are occupied. Nearly 1 in 3 of Sonoma County’s 189,000 occupied households is headed by a woman without a spouse present.*

- The number of households headed by single mothers caring for their own children under the age of 18 decreased from 10,541 households in 2011-2015 to 8,763 in 2016-2020. (Table 6)
- Individuals and families are generally more economically secure when assets include home ownership. Home ownership of family households headed by single women has increased from 42% in 2011-2015 to 50% in 2016-2020. However, home ownership among families headed by single women is significantly less than the average for all families, of which 61% own their own homes. (Table 8)

Health. *With a life expectancy at birth of 84.2 years, Sonoma County women tend to outlive men in the county by four years. Ninety-five percent of Sonoma County women are covered by health insurance, compared to 93% of men. However:*

- Women tend to delay getting needed medical care at a greater rate than men. In 2021, 28% of Sonoma County women delayed seeking needed medical care compared to 25% of men. In 2019, 17% of women compared to 7% of men delayed getting medical care. (Page 33)
- The percentage of women reporting a diagnosis of asthma, diabetes and heart disease has increased from 2013-2015 to 2018-2020. In 2018-2020, a greater proportion of women in the county were suffering from these conditions than are women across the state. The incidence of asthma and other chronic respiratory conditions, in particular, are likely impacted by the many recent wildfires in Sonoma County and surrounding northern California counties. (Table 11)
- Sonoma County health assessments in the wake of the 2019 Kincadee fire indicated that 24% of households reported at least one member suffering from depression as a result of the fires of 2017 and 2019. Participants in the Voices survey noted that the COVID-19 pandemic heightened their stress levels, causing the percentage of women feeling stressed or very stressed to rise from 36% pre-pandemic to 90%. (Page 35)

Caretaking Responsibilities. *In the majority of families nationwide, the responsibility for daily family care—providing needed care for children as well other family members—has primarily been the responsibility of the woman in married couples of mixed-gender partnerships.*

- While both mothers and fathers across the nation report spending more time on family care during the pandemic, in the majority of families—whether one or both parents were working from home or not—the mother assumed the primary responsibility for childcare and school learning. (Table 18)
- Respondents from the Voices survey reported that access to quality, affordable childcare was one of the most significant challenges they faced, with this issue rising to higher levels of concern for women of color. (Page 37)
- Care for aging parents was an issue for 21% of Voices survey respondents; care of parents was listed as an important issue by one in four American Indian/Alaska Native and white women alike, followed by 18% of Latina and 17% of African American women. (Page 37)

Paid Family and Medical Leave was mentioned by respondents to the 2021 Voices of Sonoma County Women survey as an important strategy to assist families that are coping with care of children and other family members.

Recommendations

The following recommendations, based on data in this report, are offered to the Commission on the Status of Women as a body dedicated to understanding the needs and challenges faced by women in the county, and in its capacity as an advisory body to the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors.

1. **Demographics.** The proportion of Sonoma County women who identify as heterosexual has decreased by four percentage points over the decade, reaching 89% in recent years. With increasing diversity, especially with respect to gender identity and sexual orientation, care must be taken to ensure that all Sonoma County residents have their voices heard. The County should examine its policies (with respect to employment, economic security, housing, and health) to ensure that such policies do not increase the marginalization of under-served communities.
2. **Employment and Earnings.** The median earnings of Sonoma County women are 88% that of men, up from 80% a decade ago. The county should examine its role in providing opportunities for education, career training, employment, and career advancement specific to women to ensure that this earnings gap continues to decrease and is not erased by disruptions (e.g., working from home) caused by COVID-19.
3. **Economic Security.** A greater percentage of Sonoma County women than men live in poverty (10% and 8%, respectively). Among families, the greatest poverty rate is experienced by households headed by single women: 5% of all families live in poverty while 14% of those headed by single women live in poverty. One in five single mothers (with no spouse present) caring for her own children lives in poverty in Sonoma County: where there are 1-2 children in the home, 21% live in poverty; with 3-4 children, the poverty rate is 32%. The greater the number of children, the greater the financial need and the smaller the proportion of women in the labor force.³ The Commission is urged to explore paths for impoverished women and their families to escape poverty, including career training opportunities, financial management resources, family support services and to make recommendations to the County Board of Supervisors on successful practices.
4. **Housing.** Nearly one-third (29%) of *all* Sonoma County homeowners with a mortgage and nearly half (48%) of renters experience housing costs that are 35% or more of their income. These numbers are roughly comparable to those across the state, where 29% of homeowners with a mortgage and 45% of renters experience housing costs that are 35% or more of their income.⁴ One of the most significant challenges mentioned by respondents to the Voices survey is the lack of affordable housing in Sonoma County. This problem is not unique to Sonoma County, but it needs attention from all levels of government to find ways to make housing more affordable.
5. **Health.**
 - a. In 2019, 17% of Sonoma County women delayed getting needed medical care and that rose to 28% in 2021. In 2021, roughly 12% of Sonoma County women cited difficulty in finding primary care and 6% cited difficulty in finding specialty care. Cost was another factor contributing to delayed medical care with 6% indicating that their insurance was

³ U.S. Census Bureau. 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. (2021) Table B23003: Presence of Own Children Under 18 Years of age by Age of Own Children Under 18 Years by Employment Status for Females 20-64 Years. (Selected for Sonoma County women). <http://data.census.gov>

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau. 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. (2021) Table S1101: Households and Families. <http://data.census.gov>

not accepted for general care and 10% for specialty care.⁵ The appropriate county agency should determine which barriers in the county health system most deter those in need of access to and service at medical clinics and find ways to mitigate the process.

- b. In 2019, one in four households reported at least one member suffering from depression as a result of recent multiple fires, and during the pandemic, the percentage of Sonoma County women feeling “stressed” or “very stressed” rose from 36% to 90%. The county should ensure that mental health services are accessible and sufficiently funded to address these very real needs of all Sonoma County residents.
- 6. *Caretaking responsibilities.*** In the majority of family households headed by partnered mixed-gender couples, the woman traditionally fulfills the major caretaking role—of children, home, and other family members. In partnered couples of the same gender, domestic chores appear to be more equitably shared.
- a. The Commission should consider ways to discover how caretaking responsibilities are equitably divided—especially where both parents work.
 - b. Respondents to the Voices survey mentioned the value of Paid Family and Medical Leave in lessening the stress on working parents, especially women. The County should encourage its agencies to adopt such policies and advocate for FML throughout the business community.
- 7. *General.*** The proactive approach of the Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women in understanding and advocating for improvement in the status of the county’s women is commendable. In future surveys the Commission undertakes, it is urged to find ways—through increased funding or collaboration with other agencies, for example—to reach a target group that aligns with the demographics of the entire county. This will ensure that the insights of all women are valued and heard.

⁵ 2021 California Health Interview Survey (CHIS). (2021) Subject Area: Access and Utilization: Barriers. <https://ask.chis.ucla.edu>

A Snapshot of Sonoma County Women

Population⁶

Total	495,078	496,801
Women	252,261	254,144
Men	242,817	242,657
	51%	51%

Over the past decade, women have composed just over half (51%) of Sonoma County's population. Among Sonoma County women and men, 12% identify as having a disability.⁷

Racial/Ethnic Distribution of Sonoma County Women⁸

Total Women	252,261	254,144
African American	1%	2%
Asian American	4%	5%
Latina	24%	26%
White (not Hispanic)	66%	64%
Others	4%	5%

Note: The U.S. Census Bureau only allows one choice, although "two or more races" is an option. In this table, responses for African American and Asian American women are those who identify only with that race; white includes those who identify as white (only) but not with Hispanic origin. Survey respondents who identify a Hispanic origin can identify with any race.

The population of Sonoma County is slowly becoming more racially and ethnically diverse, as the proportion of people of color increases. Still, in the latest 5-year figures, nearly two out of three of the county's women are white, not of Hispanic origin.

Racial/Ethnic Distribution of Voices Survey Respondents

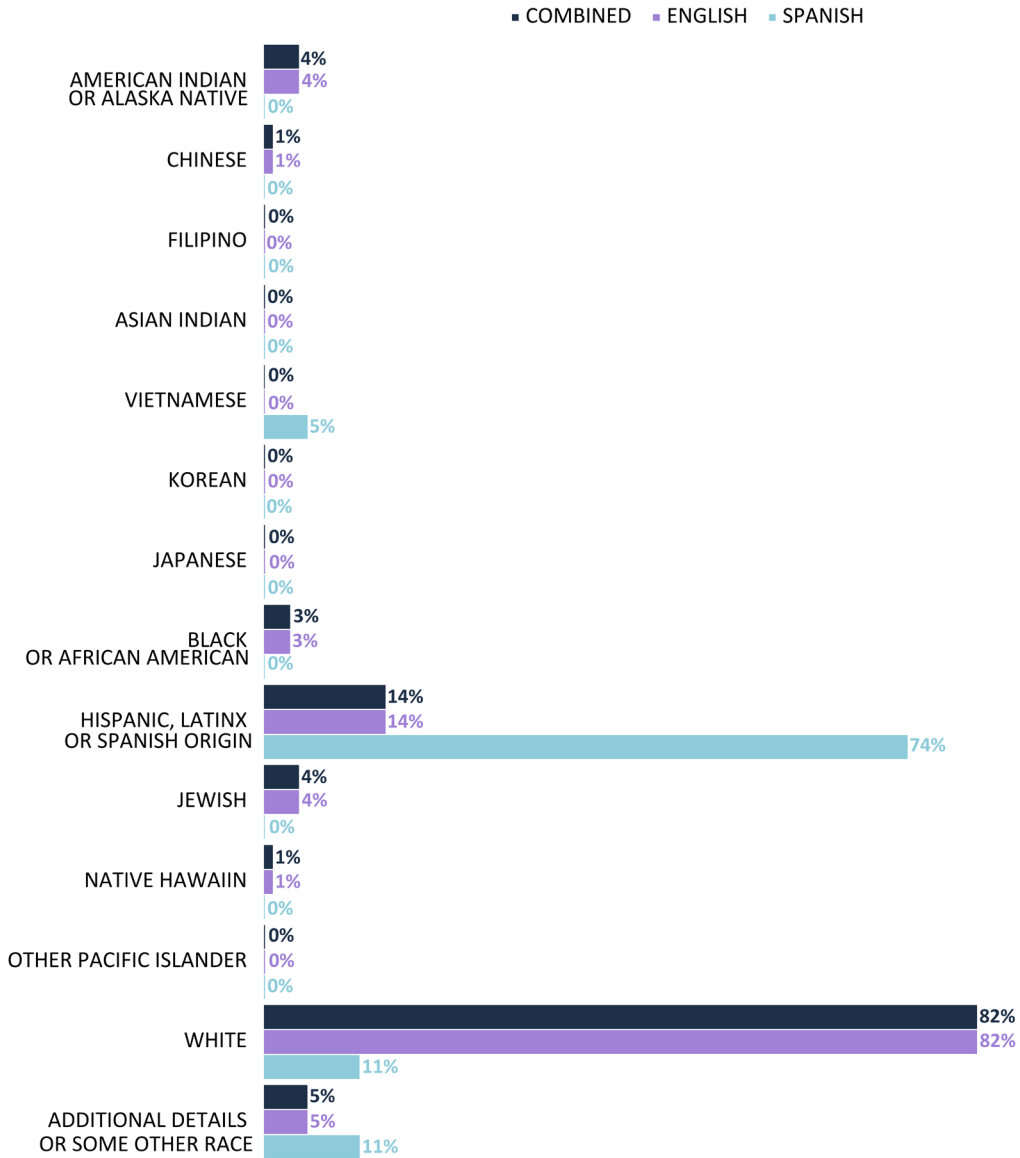
In the Voices survey, Hispanic/Latinx respondents were underrepresented among survey respondents, making up approximately 26.5% of the county population but only 14.32% of survey respondents. Asian/Asian American respondents were likewise underrepresented (0.47% vs. 4.9%), while white respondents were overrepresented, and African American respondents were approximately proportionate to county demographics. While the U.S. Census survey allows only one choice when selecting racial identity, the Voices survey provided people with multiple options. It may be possible that some differences are reflected in these additional identity categories as well.

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 and 2020 American Community Surveys 5-year Estimates. Table B01001: Sex by Age. <https://data.census.gov>

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table DP02: Selected Social Characteristics. <https://data.census.gov>

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 and 2020 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates. Tables B01001B, D, H, I: Sex by Age. <https://data.census.gov>

FIGURE 1 SELF-REPORTED RACE/ETHNICITY OF VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS



Median Age (in years)⁹

	2006-2010	2011-2015	2016-2020
Women	41.2	42.6	44.0
Men	37.8	39.2	40.9
Total	39.5	40.8	42.4

The median age of women and men in Sonoma County has increased from 41 years to 42 years in the past decade.

⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2010, 2015, 2020 American Community Surveys 5-year Estimates. Table B01002: Median Age by Sex. <https://data.census.gov>

Median Age of Women by Race/Ethnicity, 2016-2020¹⁰

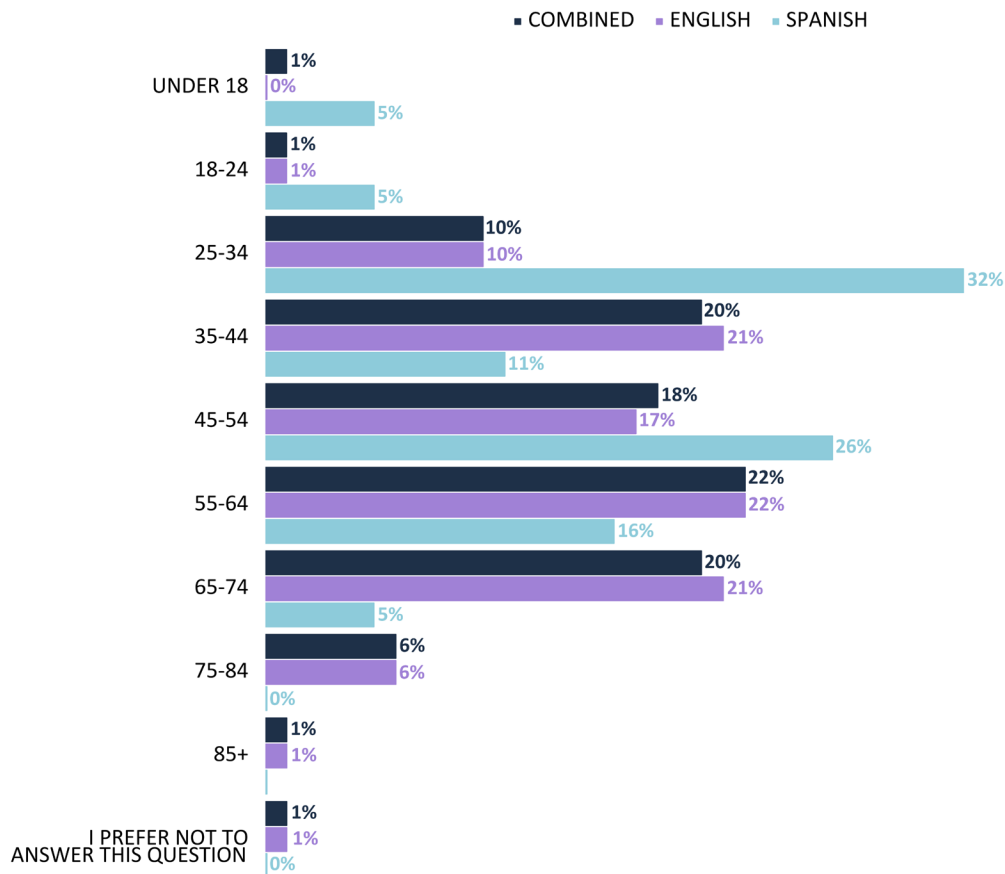
All women	African American	Asian American	Latina	White (not Hispanic)
44.0	34.1	43.5	29.0	52.9

Among women, whites not of Hispanic origin are the oldest (with a median age of 53 years), while Latinas are the youngest (median age of 29 years).

Age Distribution of Voices Survey Respondents

The majority of respondents to the Voices survey range between age 35 and 74. Respondents to this question on the Spanish survey skewed younger than respondents on the English survey. This observation could be a result of the survey’s sampling bias, which means that the participants in the survey may not be representative of the entire population. It could also be influenced by the younger median age of Latinas in Sonoma County.

FIGURE 2 AGE DISTRIBUTION OF VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS



Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

In recent years, the California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) has asked respondents to self-identify their sexual orientation and gender identity. Fewer women are now identifying as heterosexual and more di-

¹⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates. Tables B01002, B01002B, D, H, I: Median Age by (selected for women). <https://data.census.gov>

iversity in sexual orientation is reported.¹¹ The sexual orientation of Sonoma County women essentially mirrors that of the state.

Sexual Orientation of Sonoma County Women

	Sonoma County Women 2015-2017	Sonoma County Women 2018-2020	California Women 2018-2020
Heterosexual	93%	89%	90%
Gay or lesbian	3%	1%	2%
Bisexual	4%	7%	5%
Other	0.3%	2%	3%

Due to the limited number of respondents from Sonoma County, the statistics concerning gender identity between 2019 to 2021 were not reliable or had to be suppressed. The majority of adults (98.7%) and teens (98.1%) identified as cisgender, indicating their gender identity aligns with their assigned sex at birth rather than being transgender or gender non-conforming. It’s fair to say that 2% or less of Sonoma County women and men identify as transgender over the 2019-2021 period.¹²

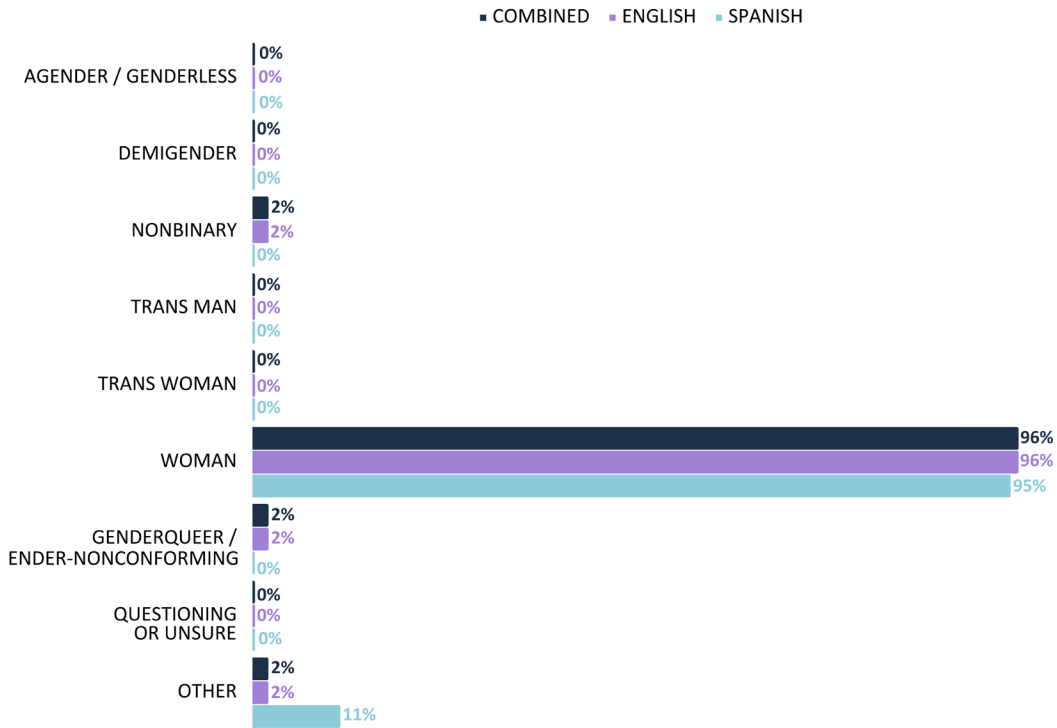
Gender Identity of Voices Survey Respondents

The Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women provided a wide range of choices for respondents to indicate their gender identity in the Voices survey. Most respondents to the Voices surveys identified as “women.” That said, a significant enough portion of respondents chose some other self-identification. Consequently, during this analysis of Voices survey findings, we refer to the respondents as *respondents* to affirm the variety of gender identities expressed here.

¹¹ California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) for the years listed. Subject area: Sexual Orientation. Despite pooling the data over three years, the sample population is small, and the results may be statistically unstable. UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, the Fielding School of Public Health. <https://ask.chis.ucla.edu>

¹² California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) for the years listed. Subject area: Gender Identity. Despite pooling the data over three years, the sample population is small, and the results are statistically unstable or suppressed. UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, the Fielding School of Public Health. <https://ask.chis.ucla.edu>

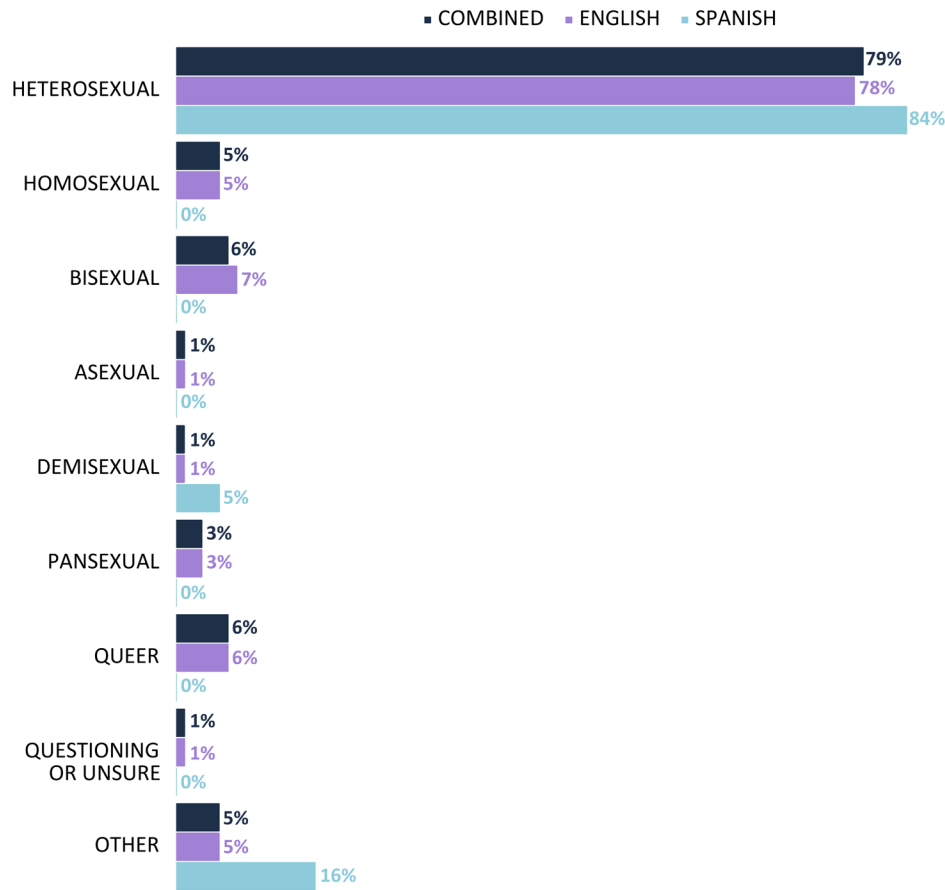
FIGURE 3 GENDER IDENTITY OF VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS



Sexual Orientation of Voices Survey Respondents

Similar to the format of the gender identity question, in the 2021 Voices survey, the Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women provided a wide range of choices for respondents to indicate their sexual orientation. Respondents to the Voices survey disproportionately identified as heterosexual (approximately 79%).

FIGURE 4 SEXUAL ORIENTATION OF VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS



Marital Status of Women, 15 years and over¹³

Of the 214,964 females living in Sonoma County who are 15 years and over:

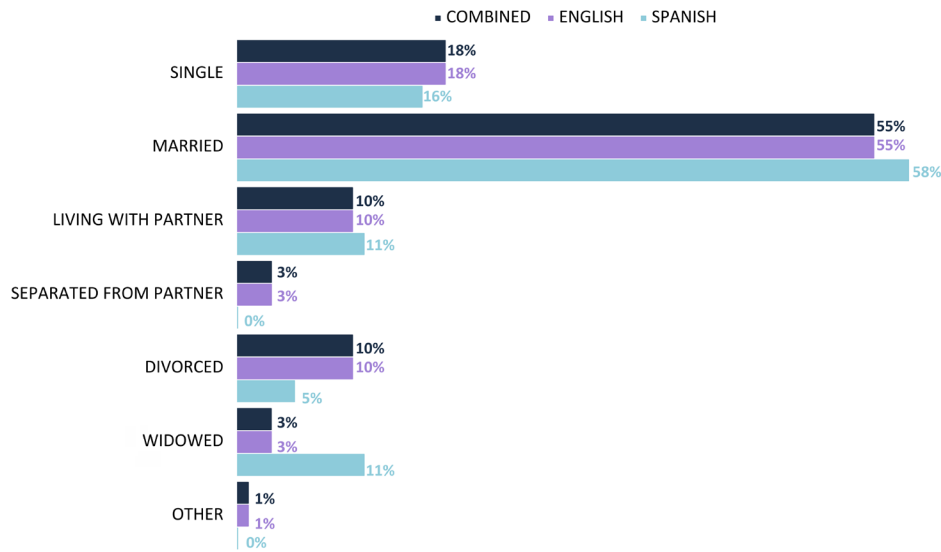
- 29% have never been married (98% of teens have never been married);
- 44% are married and living with their spouse;
- 5% are married, but their spouse is absent;
- 8% are widowed; and
- 15% are divorced.

Marital Status of Voices Survey Respondents

The majority of Voices survey respondents, in both the Spanish and English Voices surveys, indicated they were married, though nearly 20% identified as single.

¹³ U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table B12002: Marital Status by Age for the Population 15 Years and Over. <https://data.census.gov>

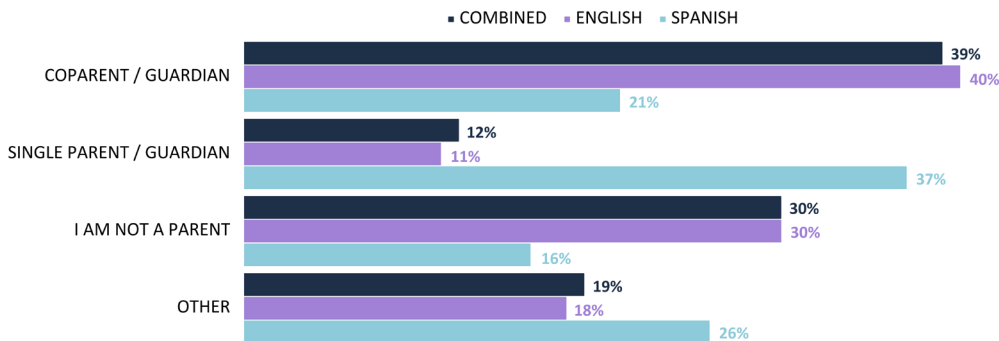
FIGURE 5 MARITAL STATUS OF VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS



Parental Status of Voices Survey Respondents

Almost 40% of respondents to the Voices survey indicate they are parenting or co-parenting, with several others indicating they are parents of adult children. Spanish survey respondents were three times as likely to be single parents, half as likely to be co-parenting, and half as likely to be single than respondents to the English-language survey.

FIGURE 6 PARENTAL STATUS OF VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS



Poverty

Over the five-year period from 2016-2020, 10% of women and girls in Sonoma County were living on income below the Federal Poverty Level.¹⁴ Family households had a poverty rate of 5%, but for households headed by women with no spouse present, that rate nearly tripled to 14%.¹⁵

¹⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table S1701: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months. <https://data.census.gov>

¹⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table S1702: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months of Families. <https://data.census.gov>

The Poverty Rate of Sonoma County Families

	All families	Married couple	Female Householder, no spouse present
Total	5%	3%	14%
With related children under 18 years of age	9%	5%	19%

In households where children under the age of 18 are present, the poverty rate is higher than those where no minor children live: nearly one in five households headed by single women caring for their own or related children lived in poverty.

Employment and Earnings¹⁶

	All Sonoma County women	Women with children under 18 years of age
Percent in labor force	76%	76%
Unemployment rate	4%	3%

Note: These figures are for the population 20-64 years of age and represent an average over 2016-2020.

Median Earnings of Full-time Working Women, 16 Years and Over¹⁷

All women	African American	Asian American	Latina	White
\$53,817	\$59,677	\$61,083	\$37,366	\$61,962

Note: These figures are for full-time working women 16 years and over with earnings and represent an average over 2016-2020.

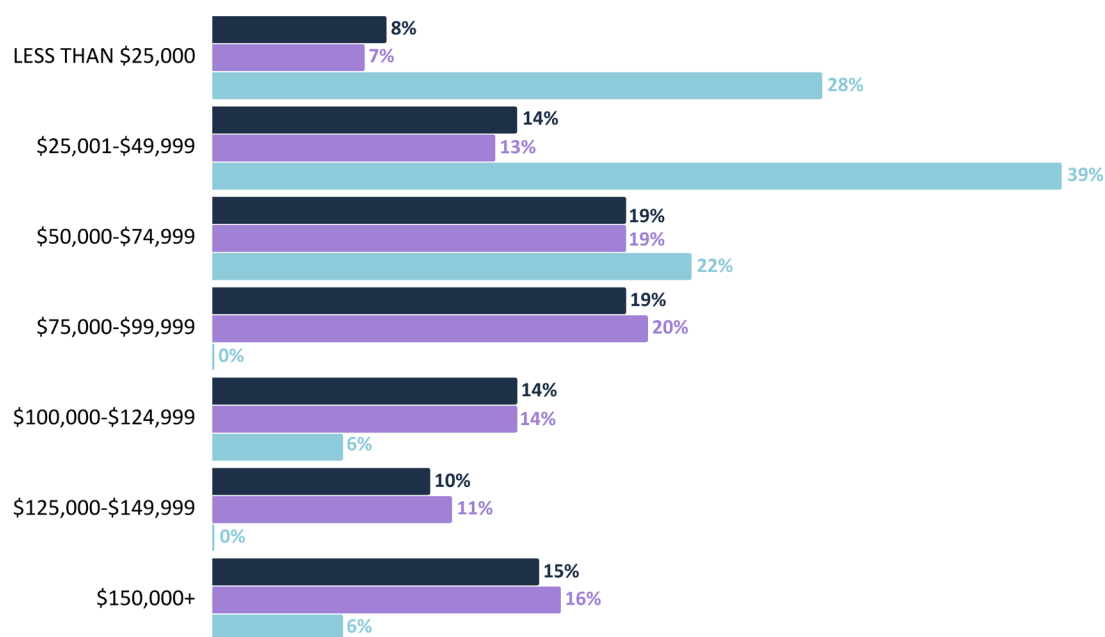
Annual Household Income of Voices Survey Respondents

The yearly earnings of respondents to the English-language Voices survey tended to concentrate between \$50,000 and \$99,999. Spanish-language respondents were more likely to skew towards the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum, with the majority of participants indicating that they earn less than \$75,000 per year.

¹⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table S2301: Employment Status. <https://data.census.gov>

¹⁷ U.S. Census Bureau. 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Tables B20017, B20017B, D, H, I: Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months (in 2020 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) by Sex by Work Experience in the Past 12 Months for the Population 16 Years and Over with Earnings in the Past 12 Months. <http://data.census.gov>.

FIGURE 7 ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME OF VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS



Educational Attainment

In 2016-2020, among all Sonoma County women who are 25 years or over, 38% have a 4-year degree or higher:¹⁸ (This figure is up from 34% of women with 4-year college degrees or higher in 2011-2015.) The allocation is as follows:

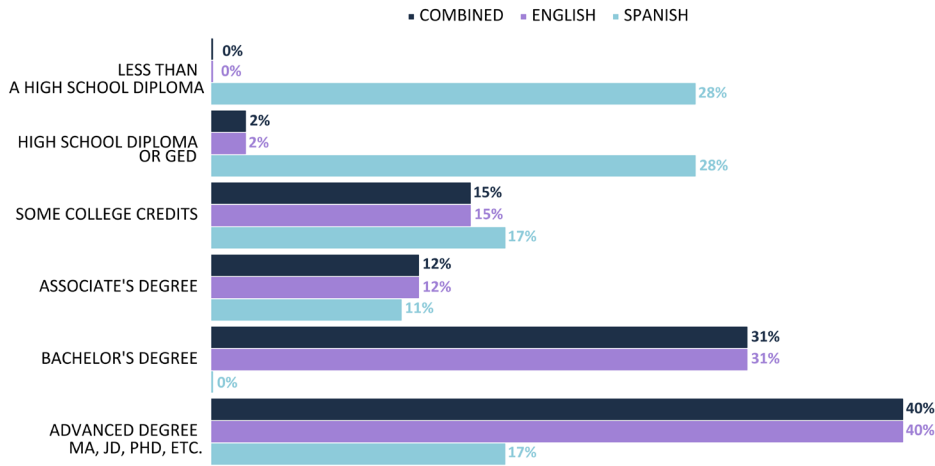
- 10% have less than a high school education (2% have no formal education);
- 17% have a high school diploma or equivalent;
- 25% have some college;
- 11% have an associate degree; and
- 38% have a 4-year college degree or higher (10% have a master’s degree, while 4% have a professional degree or doctorate).

Educational Attainment of Voices survey Respondents

In general, respondents to the Voices survey were more likely to have advanced degrees compared to the general population. Spanish-language respondents were less likely than English-language respondents to have college degrees and more likely to have a high school diploma or below.

¹⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table B15002: Sex by Educational Attainment for the Population 25 Years and Over. <https://data.census.gov>

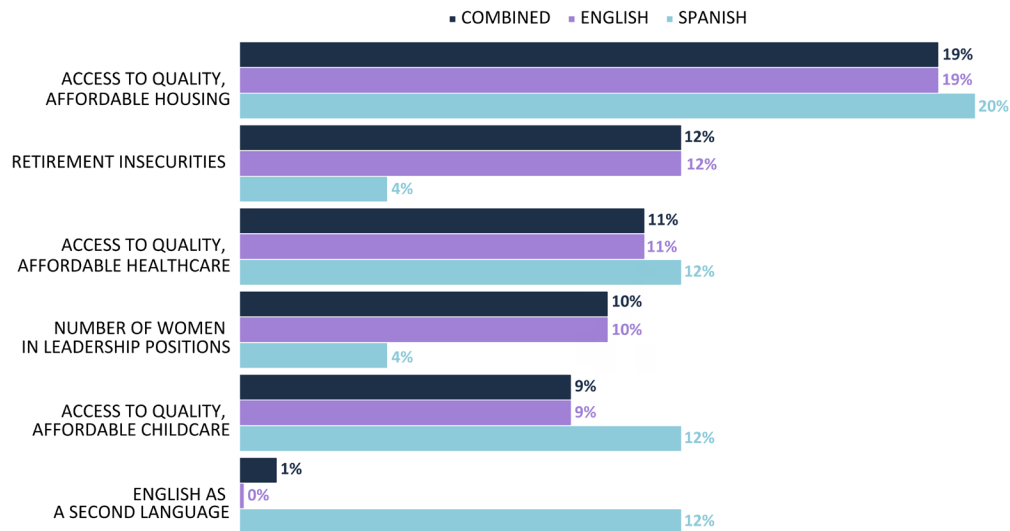
FIGURE 8 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS



A Snapshot of Challenges Facing Voices Survey Respondents

The Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women issued their Voices survey in 2021, during the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic. We asked respondents to indicate the most important challenges they were currently facing in their day-to-day lives. Respondents indicated the most important challenges were access to quality, affordable housing (19%), followed by retirement insecurities (12%) and access to quality, affordable healthcare (11%). We have summarized the most common list of challenges below and discuss them in greater detail under some general headings throughout the report.

FIGURE 9 CHALLENGES FACING VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS¹⁹



A summary comparison of the Sonoma County women represented in the U.S. Census Population Profile and 2021 Voices of Sonoma County Women respondents may be found in the Editors’ Note.

¹⁹ Respondents in both Voices surveys were asked to list the most important challenges they were currently facing. They were given the option to list up to 5 options. In this chart, we have combined the top 5 challenges from both surveys. Since the top five were largely similar but somewhat different, we have included six options, indicating a survey choice that Spanish survey respondents included in their top five that English respondents did not.

Employment and Occupations

Over three-quarters (76%) of women residing in Sonoma County, including women caring for children under the age of 18, are in the labor force. Among single mothers who head households and whose children are under the age of 18 years, 86% are in the labor force.²⁰

Nearly three out of four (73%) of all Sonoma County women—including the 46,400 mothers with children under the age of 18 years—are employed. Eighty-one percent of men are employed.²¹

Unemployment Rate

Sonoma County's 5-year average unemployment rate for the population 16 years and over during 2016-2020 was 4.4%: the rate for women was 4.2% while that for men was 4.6%.²²

The unemployment rate varies by age of the women and men in the labor force and is highest for teens. For Sonoma County women 16-19 years of age, the unemployment rate is 11%; for women 20-24 years of age, the unemployment rate is 9%. The unemployment rate for women 25-29 years of age is 5%.²³

Working from Home

While not all jobs can be done remotely, working from home is not a new concept in many occupations. In general, a greater proportion of women than men have worked from home. In 2016-2020, an average of 10% of Sonoma County women worked from home compared to 8% men. This was a slight increase from 2011-2015 when 8% women and 6% men worked from home.²⁴ In 2020, during the initial stages of the pandemic, 34% of Sonoma County women compared to 20% of men reported working from home.²⁵ The sudden and dramatic increase in opportunities to work from home in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic is covered in more detail in the section on COVID-19 (Pages 39-40).

While some employees are now returning to the office for one or more days a week, it is likely that employers will offer more opportunities in the future for remote work. Tracking of professional jobs available nationally suggested that by the end of 2022, 25% of high-wage jobs would be carried out remotely; the increase in remote working opportunities is projected to increase into 2023.²⁶ One study indicated that as of early 2023, 27% of employees across the U.S. worked remotely.²⁷

Occupations

From 2006-2010, 41% of Sonoma County's full-time, year-round employed labor force 16 years and over

²⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table S2302: Employment Characteristics of Families. <https://data.census.gov>

²¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table S2301: Employment Status. <https://data.census.gov>

²² U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table B23001: Sex by Age by Employment Status for the Population 16 Years and Over. <https://data.census.gov>

²³ U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table S2301: Employment Status. Unemployment figures are not disaggregated by gender by this source. <https://data.census.gov>

²⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 and 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table S0801: Commuting Characteristics by Sex. <https://data.census.gov>

²⁵ 2020 California Health Interview Survey (CHIS). Subject area: COVID-19. UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, the Fielding School of Public Health. <https://ask.chis.ucla.edu>

²⁶ Robinson, B. (Feb. 2022) Remote Work is Here to Stay and Will Increase into 2023, Experts Say. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/bryanrobinson/2022/02/01/remote-work-is-here-to-stay-and-will-increase-into-2023-experts-say/>

²⁷ Zippia: Flynn, Jack. (June 13, 2023) "25 Trending Remote Work Statistics [2023]: Facts, Trends, and Projections. <https://www.zippia.com/advice/remote-work-statistics/>

were women; in 2016-2019, that percentage has not significantly changed (42%). Likewise, the distribution of women among broad occupational clusters has not changed significantly. Of those holding sales and office jobs, the majority (57%) are women. Of women and men in occupations dealing with natural resources, construction and maintenance, only 4% are women.²⁸ These figures mirror those of the state.

Table 1. Percent of Sonoma County Women Employed Full-Time in Occupational Clusters, 2016-2020

	Sonoma County	California
Management, business, science and arts	47%	46%
Service	47%	47%
Sales and Office	57%	57%
Natural resources, construction and maintenance	4%	5%
Production, transportation and material moving	23%	22%
TOTAL	42%	41%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Economic Security

Earnings

Sonoma County women and men who worked full-time over the year in the period 2016-2020 earned more than their counterparts across the state and the nation.²⁹

Table 2. Median Earnings of Full-Time Workers Over the Past 12 Months³⁰

Years	Sonoma County		California		U.S.	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
2006-2010	\$42,000	\$53,000	\$41,000	\$49,500	\$36,000	\$46,500
2011-2015	\$47,000	\$53,000	\$43,500	\$50,900	\$39,200	\$49,500
2016-2020	\$54,000	\$61,000	\$50,700	\$58,000	\$44,200	\$54,300

Note: Based on the margins of error in the Census values, earnings have been rounded to the nearest \$1000 for Sonoma County and to the nearest \$100 for both California and the U.S.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2010, 2015, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Not only have Sonoma County women earned more than their counterparts across the state and nation over the past decade, their median earnings have increased at a higher pace. Earnings of Sonoma County women increased by 29% from the 5-year period 2006-2010 to 2016-2020, compared to 24% for California women and 23% for women across the nation.

However, Sonoma County women as a whole have lower median earnings than men, and this holds true

²⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table S2402: Occupations by Sex for the Full-Time, Year-Round Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and Over. <https://data.census.gov>

²⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table B20017: Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months (in 2020 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) by Sex by Work Experience in the Past 12 Months for the Population 16 Years and Over with Earnings in the Past 12 Months. <https://data.census.gov>

³⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, 2010, 2015, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table B20017: Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months (in 2010, 2015, or 2020 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) by Sex by Work Experience in the Past 12 Months for the Population 16 Years and Over with Earnings in the Past 12 Months. <https://data.census.gov>

for all women and in many specific occupations. In 2016-2020, Sonoma County women who worked full time earned approximately 88% of what men earned.³¹—Sonoma County’s gender-based earnings gap is about the same as for the state (see Table 2) and much less than across the nation, where full-time working women earn 81% of what men earn.

Table 3. Median Earnings of Sonoma County Women as a Percentage of Men: Full-Time Workers, 2016-2020

	All women	African American women	Asian American women	Latinas	White women
Median earnings	\$53,817	\$59,677	\$61,083	\$37,366	\$61,962
Relative to all men	88%	97%	100%	61%	100%
Relative to white men	70%	78%	80%	49%	81%

Note: The median earnings of all men from 2016-2020 was \$61,389; median earnings of white men was \$76,780.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

As is typical throughout the state and the nation, white men not of Hispanic origin in Sonoma County who are working full time are the highest group of earners, with 2016-2020 median earnings of \$76,780.³² Latinas are the lowest group of earners with median earnings of \$37,366,³³ earning less than half (49%) of what white men in Sonoma County earn.

³¹ U.S. Census Bureau. 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Tables B20017, B20017B, D, H, I: Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months (in 2020 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) by Sex by Work Experience in the Past 12 Months for the Population 16 Years and Over with Earnings in the Past 12 Months. <https://data.census.gov>

³² U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table B20017H: Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months (in 2020 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) by Sex by Work Experience in the Past 12 Months for the Populations 16 Years and Over with Earnings in the Past 12 Months. (Population: White alone, not of Hispanic Origin). <https://data.census.gov>

³³ U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table B20017I: Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months (in 2020 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) by Sex by Work Experience in the Past 12 Months for the Populations 16 Years and Over with Earnings in the Past 12 Months. (Population: Hispanic, of any race.). <https://data.census.gov>

Table 4. Earnings by Occupational Cluster of Sonoma County Full-Time, Year-Round Workers, 2016-2020³⁴

	Percent of women in occupational cluster	Median earnings of women	Median earnings of men	Percent of women's earnings to men
Management, business, science, and arts	47%	\$74,000	\$91,000	81%
Service	47%	\$31,000	\$41,000	76%
Sales and office	57%	\$48,000	\$54,000	89%
Natural resources, construction and maintenance	4%	\$39,000	\$51,000	76%
Production, transportation and material moving	23%	\$36,000	\$46,000	78%
Total	42%	\$54,000	\$62,000	87%

Note: Percent of women in occupational clusters relative to men is also shown in Table 1; median earnings are rounded.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

The gendered earnings gap persists across broad occupational clusters. The narrowest gaps are seen in the occupational cluster with highest earnings for women (management, business, science, and arts) at 81%, and in occupations with the greatest presence of women (sales and office), at 89%.

Poverty

This report defines poverty based on the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).³⁵ The FPL is a threshold applied nationwide and is based on the size of a family and the number of children. In 2021, the FPL was set at \$13,788 for individuals and at \$27,479 for a family of four with two children under the age of 18 years. When the annual income (not including in-kind assistance programs such as food stamps or housing vouchers) of an individual or family falls below the FPL, they are said to be living in poverty. When their income falls to 50% of the FPL, they are said to be living in extreme poverty.³⁶

Of the 251,000 women and girls in Sonoma County whose poverty status was determined in 2016-2020, 10% were living on income below the Federal Poverty Level, compared to 14% of women and girls across the state. These figures were lower than 2011-2015 when 12% of Sonoma County females and 17% of females across the state lived in poverty.³⁷ In 2016-2020, 6% of women and girls in Sonoma County

³⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table B24022: Sex by Occupation and Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months (in 2020 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) for the Full-Time, Year-Round Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and Over. <https://data.census.gov>

³⁵ There are several measures of poverty, and each sets a threshold of income based on specific cost of living criteria. If an individual's or family's annual income falls below the threshold, they are said to live in poverty. One example of an alternate poverty measure is the California Poverty Measure (CPM) which sets a poverty threshold based on costs required to meet basic needs by accounting for local housing costs. The CPM includes resources from social safety net programs as part of the individual or family income in determining financial need.

³⁶ U.S. Census Bureau. Historical Poverty Thresholds. (2022) <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/historical-poverty-thresholds.html>

³⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 and 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table S1701: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months. <https://data.census.gov>

lived in extreme poverty.³⁸ Poverty was identified as one of the leading challenges by Voices survey respondents: while nearly one in five respondents listed poverty as a leading challenge, over one in three respondents who made less than \$25,000 annually listed it as a challenge they face (Figure 10).

Among all family households, 5% live on earnings below the federal poverty level, but when children under the age of 18 years are in the household, the poverty rate rises to 9%.³⁹

Table 5. The Poverty Rate of Sonoma County Families

	All families	Married couple	Female Householder, no spouse present
Total	5%	3%	14%
With related children under 18 years of age	9%	5%	19%

Note: This table also appears in the Snapshot section.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Married-couple households have the lowest rate of poverty among the various types of families: the poverty rate of households headed by single women is about four times greater than that of married-couple households, 14% and 3%, respectively. However, the poverty rate of these single-women households varies greatly by the race and ethnicity of the householder.

Table 6. The Poverty Rate of Sonoma County Family Households by Race/Ethnicity of Householder

	All Households	Single Women Households
All	5%	14%
African American	7%	8%
Asian American	4%	7%
Latinx	11%	23%
White, not Hispanic origin	3%	11%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

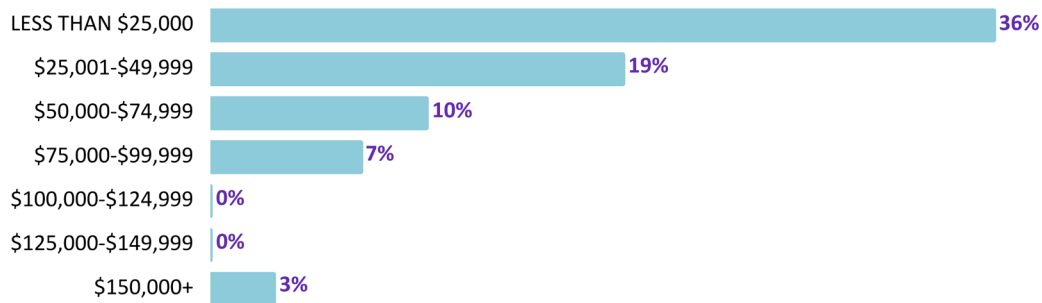
Regardless of the size of the family or the race/ethnicity of the householder, family households headed by single women with no spouse present experience significantly higher rates of poverty than other family households or individuals.

Poverty among Voices survey respondents. Approximately 10% of all respondents to the Voices survey listed poverty as one of their top current challenges (See Figure 9). Perhaps unsurprisingly, listing poverty as a challenge was strongly associated with income in the Voices survey: the lower the income, the greater the likelihood that a respondent would identify poverty as a challenge they were facing.

³⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table S1703: Selected Characteristics of People at Specified Levels of Poverty in the Past 12 Months. <https://data.census.gov>

³⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table S1702: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months of Families. <https://data.census.gov>

FIGURE 10 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS LISTING POVERTY AS AN IMPORTANT CHALLENGE BY INCOME⁴⁰



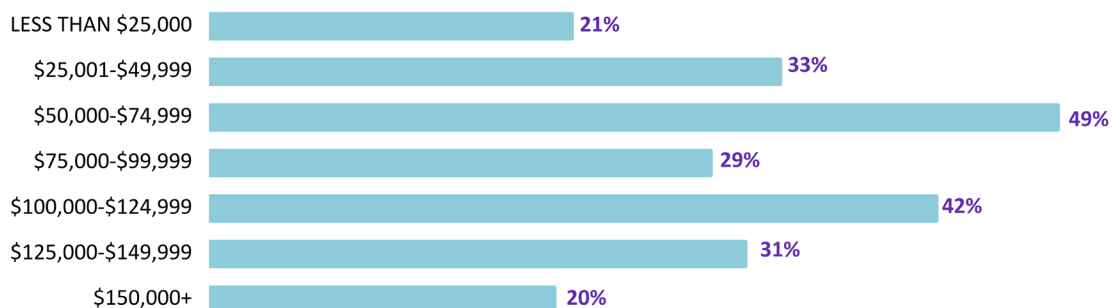
Respondents identifying as African American or American Indian/Alaska Native were most likely to include poverty as a top challenge (25%), followed by Asian American/Pacific Islander (15%). Spanish-language survey respondents considered poverty a much larger challenge than did Latinx respondents on the English-language survey (21% vs. 8.96%, respectively).

Hunger and food insecurity among Voices survey respondents. About 7% of respondents chose hunger/food insecurity among the leading challenges they faced. Spanish-language survey respondents indicated a much higher level of food insecurity (14.29%) than combined survey averages (6.81%) and the English-language survey average (6.38%). However, racial/ethnic minorities – particularly American Indian/Alaska Natives (20%), African Americans (16.67%), and Hispanic/Latinx respondents (10.45%) – were more likely to list hunger/food insecurity as a top challenge they faced in the English-language survey. Respondents making below \$50,000 were at least twice as likely to report it as a challenge. About 26% of respondents making less than \$25,000 and approximately 16% of those making between \$25,001 and \$49,999 reported it among the most important challenges they faced.

Retirement insecurities among Voices survey respondents. Among Voices survey respondents, retirement insecurities were a significant concern, ranking second after affordable housing (See Figure 9). Around 37% of all respondents identified retirement insecurities as one of their top five challenges. Of those who considered it a challenge, the retirement insecurity did not show any strong correlations with income. This challenge appears to be an important concern to various income groups, although there might be a slight decrease in concern as income increases.

⁴⁰ Note: Numbers do not align completely because respondents did not answer every question. For example, while 50 individuals indicated poverty as one of the top-five challenges they faced, not all of those same 50 answered the question on income.

FIGURE 11 RETIREMENT INSECURITIES OF VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY INCOME⁴¹



Among respondents, those identifying as Latinx (37.31%), followed by those identifying as white (32.38%), were much more likely to list retirement insecurities as challenges they faced compared to other respondents in the survey.

Housing and Households

The housing characteristics cited in Table 7 below indicate there has not been a significant increase in housing units in Sonoma County over the past decade, and the vacancy rate decreased slightly from 9% in 2011-2015 to 8% in 2016-2020. Over this time period from 2011-2020, owner-occupied units have increased by two percentage points, and renter-occupied units have decreased by two percentage points.⁴²

Housing Characteristics

Table 7. Trends in Sonoma County Housing Characteristics

	2011-2015	2016-2020
Number of housing units	206,399	206,498
Number of occupied units	187,782	188,958
Percent of owner occupied	59%	61%
Percent of renter occupied	41%	39%
Median value of owner-occupied unit	\$436,400	\$640,000
Percent of owners with mortgage payments 35% of more of income	33%	30%
Median monthly rent	\$1320	\$1743
Percent of renters whose rent is 35% or more of income	47%	45%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2015 and 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Of these occupied housing units, 120,232 are inhabited by families and 68,726 are inhabited by one or more persons not in a familial group. Most family households are headed by partnered parents, but 15% of family households are headed by women with no spouse present, and 8% are headed by men with no spouse present. There are just over 47,000 family households with children under the age of 18 years.⁴³

⁴¹ Note, while 477 respondents answered this question, only 451 provided information about their economic category.

⁴² U.S. Census Bureau. 2015 and 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table DP04: Selected Housing Characteristics. <http://data.census.gov>

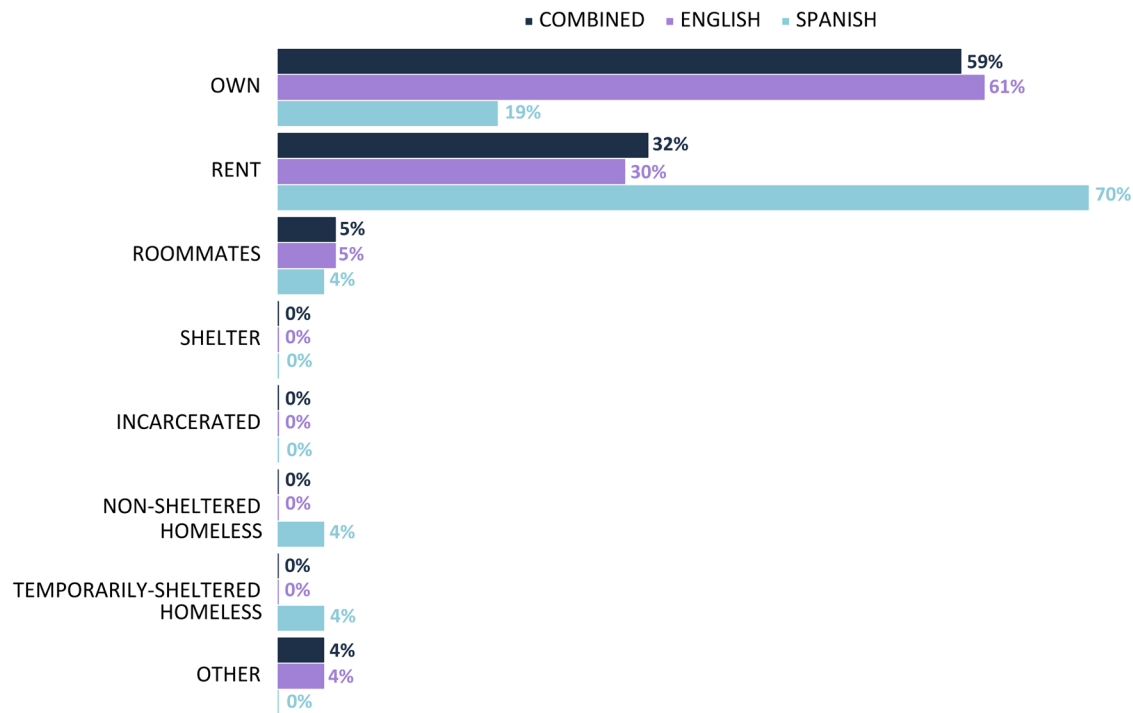
⁴³ U.S. Census Bureau. 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table S1101: Households and Families. <http://data.census.gov>

An encouraging trend seen in Table 7 is a decreasing housing cost burden as the proportion of both homeowners with a mortgage and renters who spend 35% or more of their earnings on housing costs has declined. Individuals and families with a high housing cost burden are vulnerable with respect to housing and unexpected circumstances. Nearly half (47%) of Sonoma County renters and one-third of homeowners with a mortgage are vulnerable, paying 35% or more of their income in housing costs. The impact on housing due to COVID-19 was felt immediately by one in five of all respondents to the Voices survey. (Figure 22) And in 2021, access to quality, affordable housing was the most important challenge faced by one in five Voices survey respondents. (Figure 9)

Housing Status of Voices Survey Respondents

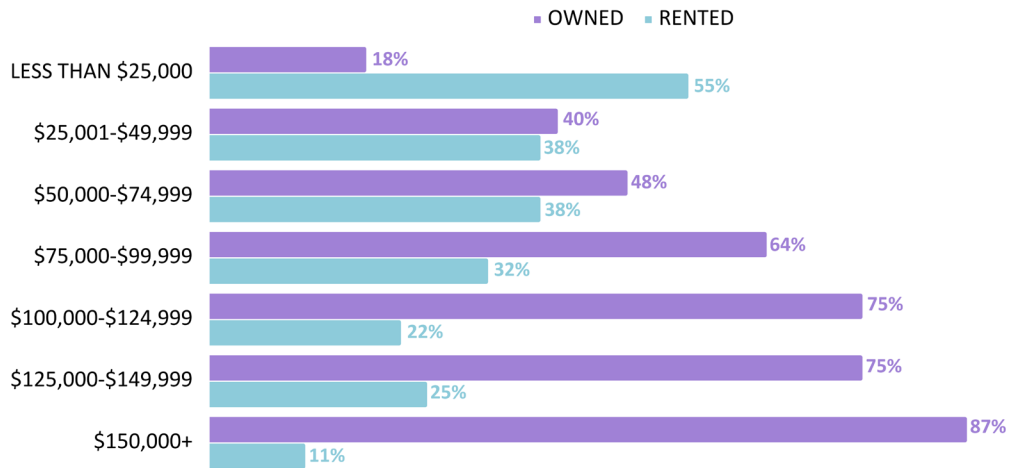
The majority of Voices survey respondents owned their home or apartment, while a significant portion rented. Spanish-language survey respondents are much more likely to rent than to own their home or apartment, and are much more likely to report being unhoused in some form.

FIGURE 12 HOUSING STATUS OF VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS BEFORE COVID-19



Unsurprisingly, income level profoundly influenced housing status. Voices survey respondents making less than \$25,000 are statistically significantly less likely to own their home or apartment than all other respondents, and respondents making less than \$75,000 are statistically significantly less likely to own their own homes than respondents with higher incomes.

FIGURE 13 HOUSING STATUS OF VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY INCOME BEFORE COVID-19



Access to affordable housing. Access to quality, affordable housing proved to be the leading concern among all respondents, with 19% of all respondents reporting it as one of their most important challenges (See Figure 9). Over 40% of respondents making less than \$75,000 listed this issue among their top five concerns, and over 22% listed it as their leading challenge. Fifty-two percent of respondents making less than \$25,000 listed access to quality, affordable housing among their most pressing challenges. Forty-four percent of respondents making between \$125,000 and \$149,999 listed access to quality, affordable housing among their leading challenges, a rate slightly higher than those making between \$25,000 and \$74,999. When we break these data about access to affordable housing down by race/ethnicity, all groups indicate that this topic is a leading challenge for them, with Asian American/Pacific Islander and Hispanic/Latinx respondents rating it most highly among all respondents (46.15% and 44.78%, respectively).

Households headed by single women (no spouse present)

Over the 2016-2020 period, 31% of Sonoma County households were headed by women with no spouse or partner present (40,753 as head of non-family households, and 18,140 as a single woman heading a family household). Of these nearly 59,000 households, 54% are inhabited by a woman living alone; over half (61%) of women living alone are 65 years or older.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Tables S1101: Households and Families and B11010: Nonfamily Households by Sex of Householder by Living Alone by Age of Householder. <https://data.census.gov>

Table 8. Households in Sonoma County

Type of Household	Number of households	Total
Nonfamily Households⁴⁵	68,726	
Own their own home	50%	
Total women-headed households	40,753	
Women living alone	31,573	
Family households⁴⁶		Number with children under 18 years old
Total	120,232	47,182
Own their own home	61%	
Female householder, no spouse present	18,140	8,763
Own their own home	50%	
Male householder, no spouse present	10,157	5,155
Own their own home	44%	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Just over 18,000 Sonoma County family households are headed by women with no spouse present; half are headed by women caring for their own or related children under the age of 18 years. Although there are fewer households headed by men with no spouse present, just over half (51%) of males who head homes without a spouse present are raising children under the age of 18 years.

In 2016-2020, half of the family households headed by single women are owner occupied, up from 42% ownership in 2011-2015. Only 44% of family households headed by men with no spouse present are owner occupied.⁴⁷

Single-mother households. If we limit the single-women households in Sonoma County to those who are caring for their own children, the figures in Table 8 change slightly. From 2016-2020 there were on average just under 8,000 households in Sonoma County headed by single mothers caring for one or two of their own children under the age of 18 years, a number that has decreased since 2011-2015.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ U.S. Census Bureau. 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table B11010: Nonfamily Households by Sex of Householder by Living Alone by Age of Householder. <http://data.census.gov>

⁴⁶ U.S. Census Bureau. 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table S1101: Households and Families. <http://data.census.gov>

⁴⁷ U.S. Census Bureau. 2015 and 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table S1101: Households and Families. <http://data.census.gov>

⁴⁸ U.S. Census Bureau. U.S. Census Bureau. 2015 and 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table S1702: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months of Families. <http://data.census.gov>

Table 9. Sonoma County Households Headed by Single Mothers with Their Own Children Under 18 Years of Age and Poverty Rates

	2011-2015	2016-2020
Number of households	10,541	8,763
with 1-2 children % in poverty	9,318 23%	7,564 21%
with 3-4 children % in poverty	1,211 49%	1,171 32%

Note: For comparison, the poverty rate of married-couple families is 3%; 7% of those families who have 1-2 children of their own live in poverty.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2015 and 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Over the 2016-2020 period, more than one in five (21%) of these Sonoma County households with 1-2 children headed by single mothers lived in poverty. These numbers were slightly worse in 2011-2015, when 23% of single mother households with one or two minor children lived in poverty. Note that the rate of poverty increases dramatically when there are more children; in 2016-2020, one-third (32%) of single-mother households with three or four children lived in poverty. This is a significant reduction in poverty from 2011-2015 when just about half of all single-mother households with three or four children lived in poverty. This reduction in poverty of single-mother households, however, may have been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Respondents to the Voices survey who identified as single parents indicated that the pandemic directly caused a change in their housing status at three times the rate of two-parent households. (Page 48)

Among the population of single mothers in the county who care for their own children under the age of 18, 86% are in the labor force⁴⁹ and the unemployment rate is just over 3%.⁵⁰

Household Composition of Voices Survey Respondents

The Commission asked respondents to indicate how many people they were currently living with, as well as who they were currently living with to understand the household composition of people living in Sonoma County. The majority of Voices survey respondents (about 82%) indicated they had between two to five people living in their residence. Spanish-language respondents are more likely to have three to five people dwelling with them and are much more likely to live with more than six people in the same dwelling. The majority of Voices survey respondents live with their partners and family members, but Spanish-language respondents were more likely to have extended family or non-family members also share dwellings.

⁴⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table S2302: Employment Characteristics of Family Households. <https://data.census.gov>

⁵⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table S2301: Employment Status. <https://data.census.gov>

FIGURE 14 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS AND THE NUMBER OF CURRENT OCCUPANTS IN THEIR HOMES

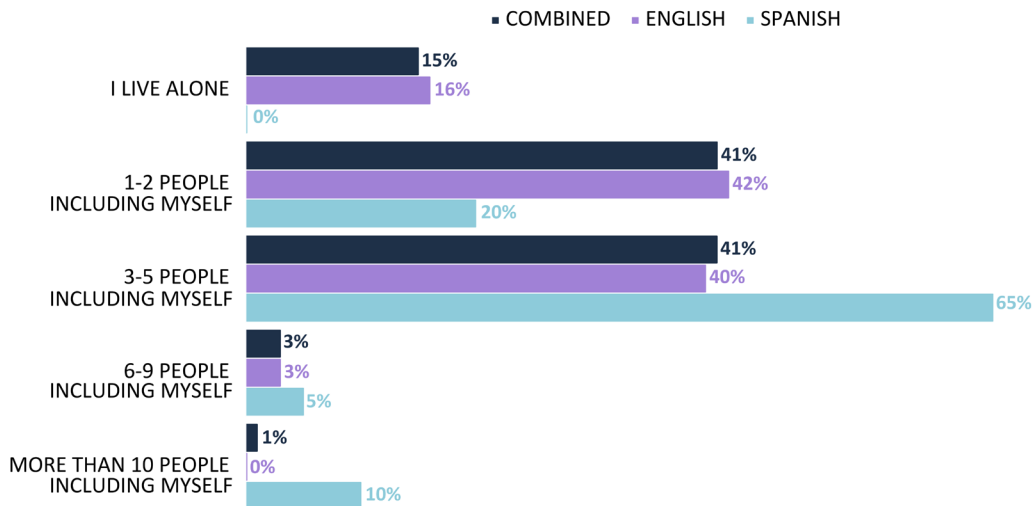
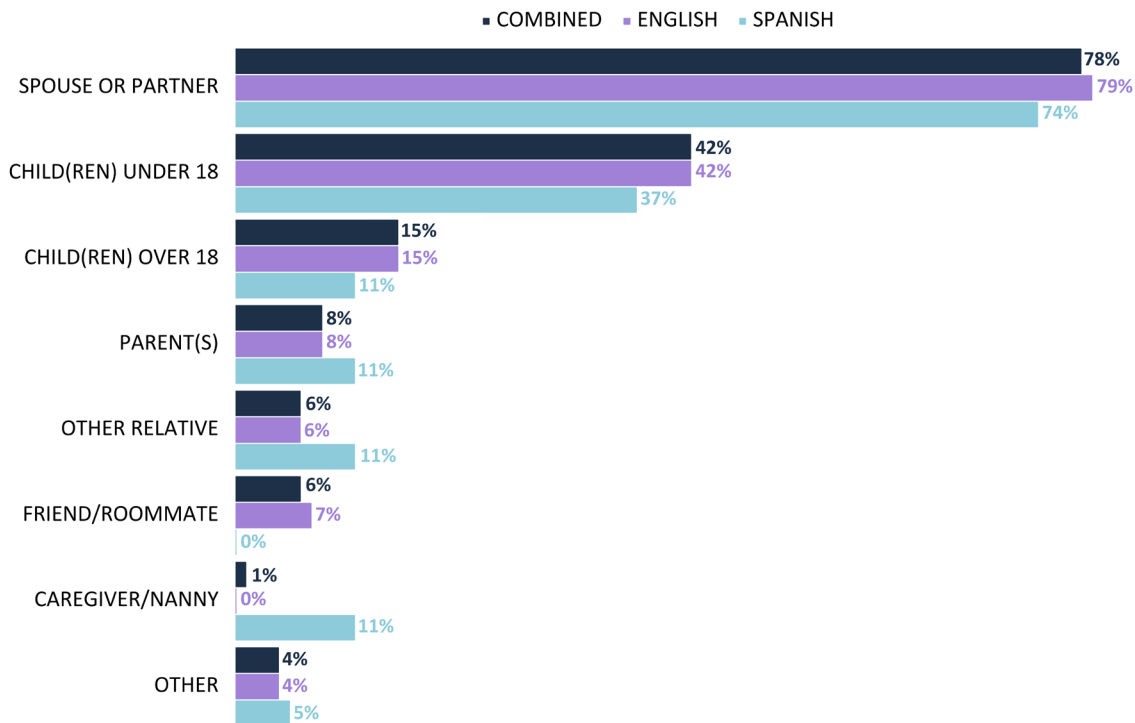


FIGURE 15 HOUSEHOLD COMPANIONS OF VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS



In the 2021 Voices of Sonoma County Women survey, respondents making less than \$75,000 were statistically significantly more likely to live alone. Respondents making more than \$100,000 were statistically significantly more likely to share their dwelling with three to five people.

Homelessness

Homelessness in the county is measured each year by a Point-in-Time Homeless Count that is usually carried out in late January. The count proceeded as usual in 2020, but the 2021 count was cancelled due to COVID-19; Sonoma County's 2022 count occurred on February 25, 2022.

The 2022 count recorded 2,893 homeless persons in Sonoma County, up 5% from the 2020 count, but still less than the 2,951 homeless individuals counted in 2019.⁵¹ From 2020 to 2022, the number of unsheltered⁵² individuals in Sonoma County increased by 23%, while the number of sheltered individuals decreased by 23%.

In 2022 there were 48 families with children among the homeless in Sonoma County, and just over 500 unaccompanied young people under 25 years of age (this includes 31 children under the age of 18).

More than one in three (35%) of the 2022 total homeless population in Sonoma County identified as women or girls; this figure increased by two percentage points from 2020 when one in three (33%) identified as female. Among the chronically homeless (for example, those who have been homeless for a year or more, or who have experienced multiple episodes of homelessness), 28% identified as female.

The LGBTQ+ community has been historically overrepresented among the homeless. In 2022, 77% of Sonoma's homeless population identified as heterosexual, compared with 13% identifying other sexual orientations. This can be compared to roughly 89% of the general population who identify as heterosexual.⁵³ Nearly one in four of homeless individuals in 2022 identified with the LGBTQ+ community, with 7% identifying as gay/lesbian and 12% bisexual; 1% identified as queer. One percent identified as transgender and 1% as gender queer or other gender nonbinary.

Another group of individuals overrepresented among the homeless population are those who have a disability. Among the county's general population, 12% reported suffering a disability,⁵⁴ while 42% of the homeless population reported a disabling condition.

The causes of homelessness are varied and generally due to a number of factors. In Sonoma County's 2022 count of those who are chronically homeless, the primary reason given for becoming homeless was job loss (23%). While 22% had experienced domestic violence, 5% mentioned domestic violence as the primary reason leading to homelessness. In the 2020 homeless survey, 16% cited job loss as a factor in becoming homeless, but 30% cited alcohol or drug use as the primary factor. While 39% of Sonoma County's 2020 homeless population cited a history of domestic violence, it was not mentioned as a primary factor leading to chronic homelessness.⁵⁵

⁵¹ County of Sonoma 2022 Point-in-Time Count Results. (September 2022). <https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/Main%20County%20Site/Development%20Services/CDC/Homeless%20Services/Homeless%20Data/County%20of%20Sonoma%202022%20Point-in-Time%20Count%20Results.pdf>

⁵² A homeless person may be "unsheltered" and living in a place not designed or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (e.g., a tent, car, abandoned building or train/bus station). A "sheltered" homeless person is residing in an emergency shelter or transitional housing.

⁵³ California Health Interview Surveys (CHIS), 2018-2020 pooled data. Statistics for transgender identification are unreliable. UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, the Fielding School of Public Health. <https://ask.chis.ucla.edu>

⁵⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table DP02: Selected Social Characteristics. <https://data.census.gov>

⁵⁵ 2020 Sonoma County Homeless Census: Comprehensive Report. (2020). https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/Ektron%20Documents/assets/Sonoma/Sample%20Dept/Divisions/Housing%20Authority/Services/A%20Service/_Documents/2020_Sonoma_County_Homeless_Census_Comprehensive_Report.pdf

Health

By several measures, the health of residents in Sonoma County is better than among those in the state as a whole. For example, the life expectancy at birth for county residents is 82.2 years, compared to 81.0 years for Californians as a whole. Latinx have the highest life expectancy in the county at 85.5 years, and African American women and men have the lowest expectancy at 71.0 years. Moreover, Sonoma County women tend to outlive men by four years, with a life expectancy at birth of 84.2 years, compared to men at 80.2 years.⁵⁶

In 2020, more than half of Sonoma County women (57%) rated their overall health as excellent or very good, a percentage that is unchanged from 2015. In 2020 and 2015, 64% of Sonoma County men rated their overall health as either excellent or very good.⁵⁷

Access to Healthcare

Health Insurance. In general, the percentage of Sonoma County residents who are covered by health insurance is higher now than in the past, and also higher than that of the state as a whole.⁵⁸

Table 10. Percentage of Sonoma County Residents Covered by Health Insurance

	Sonoma County women	Sonoma County men	California women	California men
2011-2015	90%	87%	87%	84%
2016-2020	95%	93%	94%	92%

Note: The percentages are rounded. The figures for 2021 have not changed from the 2016-2020 period.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2015 and 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

When asked in the 2018-2020 California Health Interview surveys to identify reasons why they did not carry health insurance, one-third of uninsured Sonoma County women who responded said they had experienced a change in work status and over half (54%) identified the cost of insurance.⁵⁹

Utilization of healthcare. In general, women are more likely to delay getting medical care than men. In 2021, 28% of Sonoma County women (and 25% of men) delayed seeking medical care, compared to 17% of women (and 7% of men) who delayed getting medical care in 2019. In the 2020 California Health Interview Survey, 34% of women selected COVID-19 as the main reason for not getting needed care. Among the other choices given on the survey, 24% blamed the cost or other insurance-related issues, and about 11% cited barriers inherent in the healthcare system; another 31% cited personal reasons.⁶⁰

Healthcare access as an important challenge. Access to quality, affordable healthcare was an important challenge among Voices survey respondents (See Figure 9). Voices survey respondents across all categories were equally likely to rate access to quality, affordable healthcare as an important challenge they

⁵⁶ A Portrait of Sonoma County: 2021 Update. Measure of America. Social Science Research Council. <https://measureofamerica.org/sonoma>

⁵⁷ 2020 California Health Interview Survey (CHIS). Subject area: Health Status. UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, the Fielding School of Public Health. <http://ask.chis.ucla.edu>

⁵⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 and 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table S2701: Selected Characteristics of Health Insurance Coverage in the United States. <https://data.census.gov>

⁵⁹ California Health Interview Survey (CHIS). Subject area: Health Insurance. These figures represent an average over the years 2018-2020 but still represent a small sample group and are not statistically stable. UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, the Fielding School of Public Health. <http://ask.chis.ucla.edu>

⁶⁰ 2019, 2020, 2021 California Health Interview Surveys (CHIS). Subject area: Access and Utilization/Delay of Care. <http://ask.chis.ucla.edu>

are facing, with those making less than \$100,000 all registering it at rates higher than the mean. Approximately 10% of respondents across five different income groups recorded access to healthcare as their top challenge. Racial/ethnic identity did not seem to be strongly correlated with considering access to healthcare as a challenge they were facing, though respondents identifying as American Indian/Alaska Native were more likely than other groups to list this among the top challenges they faced.

FIGURE 16 ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE AS AN IMPORTANT CHALLENGE BY RACE/ETHNICITY⁶¹



In general, a greater proportion of women in Sonoma County report having been diagnosed with asthma, diabetes, and heart disease than men; moreover, the proportion of women reporting these diagnoses has increased over the decade.⁶²

Table 11. Percentage of California Adults Who Report a Diagnosed Chronic Condition

	Sonoma County 2013-2015		Sonoma County 2019-2021		California 2019-2021	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Asthma	19%	16%	25%	16%	18%	15%
Diabetes	9%	9%	8%	6%*	10%	12%
Heart Disease	6%	6%	8%	10%	6%	8%

Note: The asterisk indicates a statistically unstable result, even when data from the years indicated are pooled to increase statistical stability. Survey participants (18 years and over) were asked if they had ever been diagnosed with the condition. Source: California Health Interview Survey

Source: California Health Interview Survey

While the comparison with the incidence of chronic conditions across the state may not be useful, it should be noted that 25% (one in four) Sonoma County women from 2019-2021 reported having been diagnosed with asthma at some point, an increase of six percentage points from the 2013-2015 California Health Interview Survey. While the exact cause of asthma is not known, the increase in asthma (and other lung diseases such as COPD) is likely impacted by the many recent wildfires in Sonoma County and surrounding northern California counties. Research has shown that air pollution triggers asthma symptoms.⁶³

⁶¹ Numbers do not add up because the number of respondents who answered question 3 is not the same as the number of respondents who answered question 18, and only 39% of respondents to question 3 (168 or 432) identified Access to Quality, Affordable Healthcare. Additionally, in some cases, respondents chose more than one race/ethnicity.

⁶² California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) for the years listed. (Annual data are pooled to increase statistical stability.) Subject area: Health Conditions (not cancer). UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, the Fielding School of Public Health. <http://ask.chis.ucla.edu>

⁶³ Asthma Prevalence and Health Care Resource Utilization Estimates, United States, 2001-2017.(2018). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. https://www.cdc.gov/asthma/Asthma_Prevalence_in_US.pptx

Mental and Emotional Well-being

Across the nation and the state, a greater percentage of women than men report mental or emotional issues; Sonoma County follows this pattern. The California Health Interview Survey explores indicators of mental and emotional well-being through several questions, including:

- Have you connected with a mental health professional online in the past 12 months?
- Have you taken prescription medication for emotional mental health issues in the past two weeks?

From answers to these questions, statisticians measure how likely an individual is to have had a serious psychological episode in the past year. Consolidating data from 2019-2021, 21% of women and 9% of men residing in Sonoma County were likely to have had a serious psychological episode⁶⁴ in the past year. In 2016-2018, 17% of women reported a likely psychological episode, while the proportion of men is unchanged.⁶⁵

Stress/Anxiety. Stress, anxiety (e.g., fear/worry or certain phobias), and occasional depression (feeling hopeless) seem to be inherent to busy lives. When these feelings occur frequently or interfere with daily life, individuals may need professional help in improving their emotional well-being. In 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic was declared, stress levels rose across the state and reports of depression and anxiety soared.⁶⁶ In 2019, 15% of Californians (19% of women and 11% of men) reported having been diagnosed with depression;⁶⁷ by the middle of 2020, more than half of California women reported experiencing mild to severe depression, and 70% reported mild to severe symptoms of anxiety.⁶⁸

Fire-related stress. Since the passage of California's Mental Health Services Act in 2004, Sonoma County has developed and improved its comprehensive services to those who have a serious mental illness or who need assistance as a result of a traumatizing event. In the aftermath of a series of fires in 2017, Sonoma County residents indicated an increase in mental health issues. They reported that the fires triggered mental distress ranging from anxiety attacks to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).⁶⁹ In the wake of the 2019 Kincadee fire, 40% of Sonoma County households reported experiencing trauma resulting from the fire.⁷⁰ And in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic was declared, further disrupting the lives of many and adding to the stress that Sonoma County residents were already experiencing. An assessment by the Sonoma County Behavioral Health Division in 2020 reported on the impact of the fires of 2017

⁶⁴ A "serious psychological episode" is defined as an episode during which there is impaired social and/or professional functioning as a result of mental health issues.

⁶⁵ California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) for the years listed. Subject area: Mental and Emotional Health. UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, the Fielding School of Public Health. <https://ask.chis.ucla.edu>

⁶⁶ U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). Household Pulse Survey. Weeks 21-39. Also see the 2022 edition of the Report of the Status of Women and Girls in California for data summary). <https://census.gov/programs-surveys/household-pulse-survey/data.html>

⁶⁷ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2019). Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS). Online data tool. <http://Nccd.cdc.gov/BRFSSPrevalence>

⁶⁸ U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). Household Pulse Survey. Weeks 1-21; for fall 2022, Week 49 (data collected from September 14-26, 2022). See Health Table 2: Symptoms of Depression Experienced in the Last 7 Days, by Select Characteristics: California. Note: Participants were asked about the frequency of feeling down, depressed or hopeless over the past week. Those who responded a few days a week were categorized as "mild," those who responded more than half or nearly every day were categorized as having "moderate" to "severe" symptoms of depression. <http://census.gov/programs-surveys/household-pulse-survey/data.html>

⁶⁹ Dominguez, D. and Yeh, C. (2020) *Social justice disaster relief, counseling, and advocacy: the case of the Northern California wildfires*. *Counseling Psychology Quarterly*: 33(3), 287-311, DOI: 10.1080/09515070.2018.1542593. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09515070.2018.1542593>

⁷⁰ Sonoma County Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) FY 2016-2019 Capacity Assessment. (2020). Sonoma County Department of Health Services, Behavioral Health Division (prepared by Resource Development Associates). https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/Main%20County%20Site/General/Sonoma/Sample%20Dept/Sample%20Dept/Divisions%20and%20Sections/Behaviorial%20Health/Projects/Notifications%20and%20Certificatio/_Documents/SC-MHSA-capacity-assessment-2016-2019-January-2020.pdf

and 2019 on mental health of residents. Over one-half (59%) of households reported that at least one member had experienced anxiety and/or fear, and one in four (24%) reported at least one member who experienced depression or hopelessness as a result of the fires.⁷¹ And then the pandemic was declared.

“Fire season adds to anxiety. Bad air days, stuck inside, and power outages.” – Voices of Sonoma County Women Survey Respondent *614

Mental health as an important challenge facing Voices survey respondents. Among Voices survey respondents, mental health proved to be a consistently challenging issue, ranking as one of the top six issues among all respondents. Approximately 30% of respondents across all income groups listed it among their leading challenges. Respondents making between \$50,000 and \$99,999 were least likely among all groups to report mental health as a leading challenge (25% and 29%, respectively). While no group stood out in reporting mental health as an important challenge, 39% of respondents making \$150,000 or more listed it among their top challenges, and 11% ranked it the top challenge they faced. No other group rated it as highly.

When we parse answers by race/ethnicity, these data indicate that Asian American/Pacific Islanders, Hispanic/Latinx, and African American respondents reported that mental health was among their most important challenges.

FIGURE 17 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS LISTING MENTAL HEALTH AS AN IMPORTANT CHALLENGE BY RACE/ETHNICITY



Unpaid Family Care Responsibilities

Family Care Responsibilities

Across the nation, domestic work, including childcare and other unpaid family care, has traditionally fallen largely on women in opposite-sex couples. A study of historical trends concludes that prior to the pandemic, mothers were primarily responsible for childcare relative to their male partners.⁷² In 2011, mothers across the nation spent an average of 14 hours/week with their children compared to 7 hours/week for fathers. Research on both lesbian and gay couples indicates that they are likely to share responsibility more equitably for unpaid family and home care.⁷³

⁷¹ Sonoma County Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) FY 2016-2019 Capacity Assessment. (January 2020). Sonoma County Department of Health Services, Behavioral Health Division (prepared by Resource Development Associates). <https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/Main%20County%20Site/General/Sonoma/Sample%20Dept/Sample%20Dept/Divisions%20and%20Sections/Behaviorial%20Health/Projects/Notifications%20and%20Certificatio/Documents/SC-MHSA-capacity-assessment-2016-2019-January-2020.pdf>

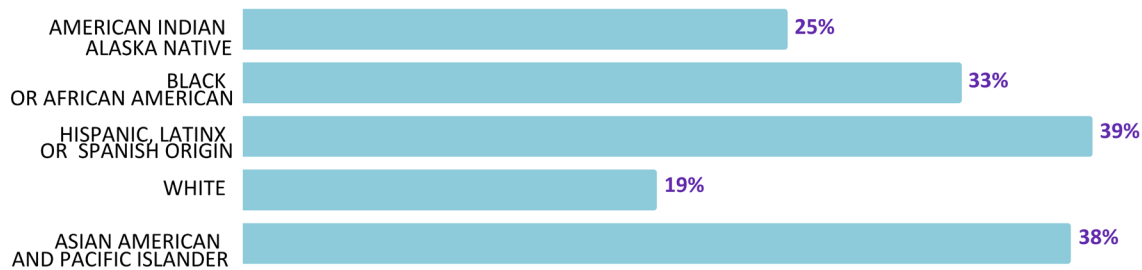
⁷² The cited studies do not report data on families with same-sex parents.

⁷³ See, for example: Tornello, S.; Sonnenberg, G.; and Patterson, C. (2015) *Division of Labor Among Gay Fathers: Associations with Parent, Couple and Child Adjustment*. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*: Vol. 2, Number 4, 365-375.

Access to childcare. Voices survey respondents across the economic spectrum reported that access to quality, affordable childcare was one of their most important challenges. Among that group, however, respondents making between \$75,000 and \$99,999 were two to three times more likely to rate access to quality, affordable childcare as their most important concern (approximately 16%), while respondents making between \$125,000 to \$149,999 were slightly more likely to list it among their most important challenges overall (approximately 27%).

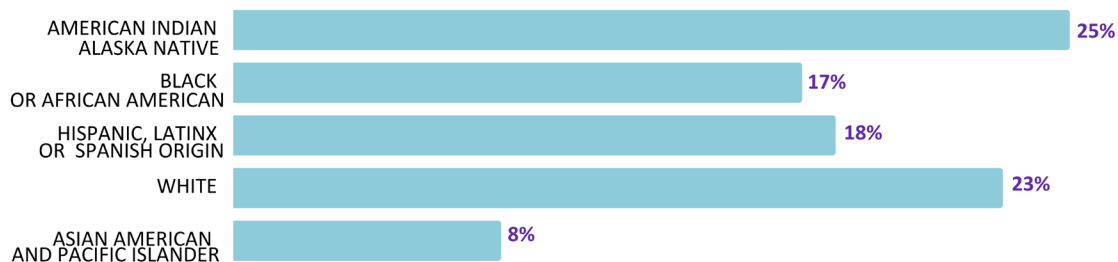
For minorities and respondents of color, particularly Hispanic/Latinx and Asian American and Pacific Islanders, access to quality, affordable childcare was a much more important challenge overall than it was for white respondents.

FIGURE 18 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS LISTING ACCESS TO CHILDCARE AS AN IMPORTANT CHALLENGE BY RACE/ETHNICITY



Caring for aging parents. Voices survey respondents making over \$25,000 were equally likely to list caring for aging parents within their top five concerns. While no group of respondents stood out in their general concern for this issue, respondents making between \$125,000 and \$149,999 who listed this as a top concern were more likely to list this as their most important challenge, when compared to other respondents who rated this issue highly. Respondents identifying as American Indian/Alaska Native and white were much more likely to identify caring for aging parents as an important challenge in their life than respondents from other racial/ethnic backgrounds.

FIGURE 19 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS LISTING CARING FOR AGING PARENTS AS AN IMPORTANT CHALLENGE BY RACE/ETHNICITY



Paid Family and Medical Leave (FML). For working parents, taking leave from paid work is often the best option to cover family care emergencies. While not all working parents have access to paid family leave, 9% of Sonoma County parents who responded to childcare responsibilities in the 2021 California Health Interview Survey indicated they had taken a paid family leave of two weeks or more in the past five years.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ 2021 California Health Interview Survey (CHIS). Subject area: COVID-19. Since the sample population is small, the results may be statistically unstable. UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, the Fielding School of Public Health. <https://ask.chis.ucla.edu>

Impact of COVID-19

Impact of COVID-19 on Employment

Unemployment. Nowhere is the impact of COVID-19 more evident than in the monthly unemployment rate. Historically, Sonoma County has had a lower unemployment rate than the state as a whole. The annual unadjusted unemployment rate for Sonoma County women and men had been decreasing from 2015-2019; however, in 2020 the annual unemployment rate increased to nearly three and a half times that in 2019 before decreasing to 5.5% in 2021.⁷⁵ The good news is that since April 2022, the overall, unadjusted, monthly unemployment rate in Sonoma County has been less than 3%, close to pre-pandemic levels.

Table 12. The Annual Unemployment Rate, Not Seasonally Adjusted

	Sonoma County	California
2010	11.1%	12.5%
2015	4.5%	6.3%
2016	4.0%	5.5%
2017	3.4%	4.8%
2018	2.8%	4.3%
2019	2.7%	4.1%
2020	8.1%	10.2%
2021	5.5%	7.3%
September 2022	2.6%	3.7%

Note: These data are not disaggregated by gender.

Source: California Employment Development Department

The specific impact of COVID-19 on the employment of women is suggested by comparing U.S. Census data from 2021 to that of 2019. Because of the large margin of error encountered in reporting single-year data points relevant to Sonoma County’s population, a range of numbers for labor force participation is included, which gives a 90% confidence level of including the correct value.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ State of California. Employment Development Department, Labor Market Information Division. Unemployment Rate and Labor Force Data Search Tool. www.Labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov

⁷⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Estimates for years listed. Table S2301: Employment Status. <https://data.census.gov>

Table 13. The Impact of COVID-19 on Sonoma County Women Labor Force Participation and Annual Unemployment Rate

	Labor force participation (women 20-64 years of age)	Range for 90% confidence level	Unemployment rate of women in labor force
2019 All *women with children	76% *78%	74-78% *74-82%	2% *1%
2021	77% *77%	75-80% *73-82%	7% *7%
2016-2020 5-year average	76% *76%	75-77% *75-77%	4% *3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey Estimates

In the table above, the proportion of women in the labor force has remained about the same in 2021 as pre-pandemic in 2019. Additionally, the labor force participation is about the same for mothers with children under the age of 18 years as for all women. It is too early to report the long-term impact of COVID-19 on the participation of women in the labor force. However, the 2021 annual unemployment rate of women two years into the pandemic is more than three times that of 2019 and equal to the unemployment rate average over 2010-2015.

Working from home. During the pandemic in 2020, 18% of Sonoma County women and 27% of men remained on the job as essential workers. However, 34% of women and 30% of men were able to work from home.⁷⁷ The impact of the pandemic on remote work can be seen by comparing census data from 2019 to that of 2021.⁷⁸

Table 14. Sonoma County Residents Who Work from Home

	Women and Men	Women	Men
2019	8%	9%	7%
2021	21%	25%	17%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

While working from home appears to have peaked during 2020, evidence suggests that the number of employees working from home will continue to increase from pre-pandemic times as employers continue to develop new work models. In many cases, employers are now offering more flexible hybrid workplace models where employees can work remotely part time, and be in the office part time.

Research shows that a majority of workers want opportunities for remote time. In a recent poll, 75% of U.S. workers viewed the ideal work environment as either working entirely from home (37%) or from

⁷⁷ 2020 California Health Interview Survey (CHIS). Subject area: COVID-19. UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, the Fielding School of Public Health. <https://ask.chis.ucla.edu>

⁷⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 and 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S0801: Commuting Characteristics by Sex. <https://data.census.gov>

home at least some of the time (36%).⁷⁹ In a similar poll of over 25,000 workers across the nation, 87% said they would choose to work remotely if given the option.⁸⁰

The biggest advantage to remote work cited by both employers and employees is the flexibility that remote work opportunities provide.⁸¹ Employers appreciate the flexibility to be able to hire the best employees regardless of where they live. Additionally, employers can hire a more diverse workforce. By allowing employees with child or other family care responsibilities to work from home, some of the burden of family care costs can be mitigated. And the workforce can now more easily include persons with disabilities or older individuals with mobility issues.

Employees appreciate the fact that remote work provides more flexibility in choosing where they live, as well as in time management. For some employees, this flexibility offers the possibility of better accommodating family and home care needs while meeting work responsibilities. But while remote work can provide greater work/life balance, there are some challenges that arise. Roughly 30% of those working exclusively from home listed the following as some common impediments to the ability to work effectively:⁸²

- The inability to share ideas and full self in-person at work
- Access to reliable, high-speed Internet
- Lack of access to career development in learning new skills as job expectations change
- Mental health issues

Some mental health issues may arise from working alone. A May 2023 survey of parents who work from home found that 33% suffered from loneliness and felt isolated from their co-workers. Another 22% of parents working from home found it difficult to set boundaries between work and personal/family responsibilities.⁸³ And a 2020 study of parents working from home showed some negative impacts of remote work on women's career advancement in the early stages of the pandemic, especially when there were children in the home. For this group of working parents, twice as many men as women received a raise and a positive formal review; nearly four times as many men as women received a promotion.⁸⁴

Given the potential benefits and challenges of remote and hybrid work models, it will be important to monitor workforce diversity, as well as the impact on women's careers and opportunities for advancement. These factors will be some important indicators of the success of remote and hybrid work models in providing equity for all workers.

⁷⁹ Harris Poll (May 23, 2023). America This Week: From the Harris Poll. https://theharrispoll.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Harris-Poll_America-This-Week_May-2023-FNL-1.pdf

⁸⁰ "Americans are embracing flexible work—and they want more of it." (June 2022). Results of the 2022 American Opportunity Survey involving 25,000 U.S. adults interviewed online. McKinsey and Company. [https://urldefense.com/v3/https://www.mckinsey.com/*media/mckinsey/industries/real*20estate/our*20insights/americans*20are*20embracing*20flexible*20work*20and*20they*20want*20more*20of*20it/americans-are-embracing-flexible-work-and-they-want-more-of-it-f.pdf;fiUIJSUIJSUIJSUIJQ!!GMmLMY7c!3rJ6fVIP50BOKRh-zoBw-hJ6EqtDcBWWxkv9yPH8UcjaxGLLIJn8i5gRaRq8_nReU7iuB3Xscas4lZl5GA15Q\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/https://www.mckinsey.com/*media/mckinsey/industries/real*20estate/our*20insights/americans*20are*20embracing*20flexible*20work*20and*20they*20want*20more*20of*20it/americans-are-embracing-flexible-work-and-they-want-more-of-it-f.pdf;fiUIJSUIJSUIJSUIJQ!!GMmLMY7c!3rJ6fVIP50BOKRh-zoBw-hJ6EqtDcBWWxkv9yPH8UcjaxGLLIJn8i5gRaRq8_nReU7iuB3Xscas4lZl5GA15Q$)

⁸¹ Harris Poll (May 2023). America This Week: Wave 168. <https://theharrispoll.com/briefs/America-this-week-wave-168/>

⁸² "Americans are embracing flexible work—and they want more of it." (June 2022). Results of the 2022 American Opportunity Survey involving 25,000 U.S. adults interviewed online. McKinsey and Company. [https://urldefense.com/v3/https://www.mckinsey.com/*media/mckinsey/industries/real*20estate/our*20insights/americans*20are*20embracing*20flexible*20work*20and*20they*20want*20more*20of*20it/americans-are-embracing-flexible-work-and-they-want-more-of-it-f.pdf;fiUIJSUIJSUIJSUIJQ!!GMmLMY7c!3rJ6fVIP50BOKRh-zoBw-hJ6EqtDcBWWxkv9yPH8UcjaxGLLIJn8i5gRaRq8_nReU7iuB3Xscas4lZl5GA15Q\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/https://www.mckinsey.com/*media/mckinsey/industries/real*20estate/our*20insights/americans*20are*20embracing*20flexible*20work*20and*20they*20want*20more*20of*20it/americans-are-embracing-flexible-work-and-they-want-more-of-it-f.pdf;fiUIJSUIJSUIJSUIJQ!!GMmLMY7c!3rJ6fVIP50BOKRh-zoBw-hJ6EqtDcBWWxkv9yPH8UcjaxGLLIJn8i5gRaRq8_nReU7iuB3Xscas4lZl5GA15Q$)

⁸³ Harris Poll (May 2023). America This Week: Wave 168. <https://theharrispoll.com/briefs/America-this-week-wave-168/>

⁸⁴ Rogers, B. (2020, August 26). Not in the same boat: Career progression in the pandemic. Qualtrics. www.Qualtrics.co/blog/inequitable-effects-of-pandemic-on-careers

Job growth by industry. Disaggregating the workforce by industry in Sonoma County indicates that industries that employ the most people include those that are showing significant growth from 2021 to 2022.⁸⁵ Leisure and hospitality, which was hit particularly hard by the pandemic, is the fastest recovering industry in 2022.

Table 15. Sonoma County Industries and Employed Labor Force

Industry	Number employed July 2022	Increase in jobs over July 2021	Percent of workforce that is female ⁸⁶
Trade, transportation and utilities	35,500	2%	25%
Education and health services	34,800	3%	74%
Leisure and hospitality	26,600	13%	52%
Professional and business services	24,800	4%	44%
Manufacturing	23,400	3%	35%

Note: Figures are not adjusted for seasonality. Farm jobs show a 9% year-over-year growth but employ only 4,900 people. The percentage of workforce that is female is pooled over a 5-year period (2016-2020) and represents an annual average as measured by the American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Source: California Employment Development Department

Of these major employers in the county, women compose a majority share of the leisure and hospitality workforce; a rapid recovery in this area is a positive indication to increasing employment of Sonoma County women.

The Impact of COVID-19 on Economic Security

The impact of COVID-19 on economic factors is suggested by a comparison of U.S. Census data in 2019 with that in 2021. As seen in the table below, despite increases in median earnings,⁸⁷ the pandemic has pushed more women into poverty.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ State of California. Employment Development Department, Labor Market Information Division. Employment change calculator interactive tool selected for Sonoma County statistics as of July 2022. Accessed March 23, 2023. www.Labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/data/interactive-labor-market-data-tools.html

⁸⁶ U.S. Census Bureau. 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table S2403: Industry by Sex for the Civilian Employed Population. <https://data.census.gov>

⁸⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Estimates for time periods listed. Table B20017: Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months (in Inflation-Adjusted Dollars for year) by Sex by Work Experience in the Past 12 Months for the Population 16 Years and Over with Earnings in the Past 12 Months. <https://data.census.gov>

⁸⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Estimates for time periods listed. Table S1701: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months; Table S1702: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months of Families. <https://data.census.gov>

Table 16. Economic Measures of Sonoma County Women, 2019 and 2021

	Poverty		Median Earnings
	Women and girls	Single women family households	Women workers (full and part time) 16 years and over
2019 Total *with children under 18 years	8%	12% *17%	\$32,500
2021 *with children under 18 years	9%	16% *23%	\$40,700

Note: Single-women family households are those family households headed by a female with no spouse present. Children are related to the householder, but not necessarily their own children. Earnings are rounded.

Source: U.S Census Bureau. American Community Survey Estimates

In 2020, when Sonoma County residents were asked about the impact of COVID-19 on their job status, 18% of women and 27% of men respondents said that they were essential workers and remained on the job throughout the pandemic. However, over half of women (53%) and 39% of men experienced a change in their work status (job loss or reduction in hours worked) that impacted their economic well-being.⁸⁹

Table 17. The Impact of COVID-19 on Economic Status Reported by California Residents, 2020

Percent of respondents who said “yes”	Sonoma County women	Sonoma County men	California women	California men
Lost job	11%	11%	13%	13%
Reduced income due to reduction in hours worked	42%	28%	23%	25%
Worked from home	34%	30%	32%	27%

Source: 2020 California Health Interview Survey

Although Sonoma County women and men reported job loss as a result of the pandemic in equal proportion, a greater percentage of women (42%) than men (28%) experienced reduced income due to a cut in the number of hours worked. This is in contrast to workers across the state, where 23% of women and 25% of men experienced income loss due to reduction in hours worked. A slightly larger proportion of women residing in Sonoma County (34%) worked from home during the pandemic compared to men (30%).

While over half of women in Sonoma county who responded to the 2020 *California Health Interview Survey* reported experiencing a change in their work status due to the pandemic, only 28% of respondents to the *Voices* survey indicated that COVID-19 had directly caused a change in their employment status. (Figure 29)

⁸⁹ 2020 California Health Interview Survey (CHIS). Subject area: COVID-19. UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, the Fielding School of Public Health. <https://ask.chis.ucla.edu>

COVID-19 and Homelessness

It's not clear how COVID-19 has impacted Sonoma County's homeless population in terms of illness and deaths, but 9% of homeless individuals in the 2022 Homeless Count reported that COVID-19 was related in some way to the cause of their housing status. Over half of the homeless population reported having received a COVID-19 vaccine (57%).⁹⁰

Impact of COVID-19 on ability to provide basic necessities

Although over half of respondents to the 2020 California Health Interview Survey reported either losing a job or a reduction in hours worked (Table 17), many residents were still able to provide for housing and other basic necessities. In 2020, when Sonoma County residents were asked whether COVID-19 had caused increased difficulty in providing for basic necessities, 20% of women and a negligible proportion of men answered yes. When asked the same question about paying for housing, 12% of women and 5% of men answered yes.⁹¹

Since 2021, the proportion of Sonoma County adults attributing financial difficulties due to COVID-19 has dropped significantly. For basic necessities, 8% women and 7% men report difficulties due to the pandemic. Difficulties in making mortgage/rent payments due to the pandemic was reported by 9% each of women and men.⁹²

Among Voices survey respondents, the percentage reporting difficulty in paying for housing and other bills was much higher. While 16% lost housing as a result of the pandemic (Figure 24), over half of parents experienced stress over being able to pay bills (Figure 27). Nearly half (45%) of respondents indicated that a one-time payment to help pay expenses would be very helpful.

Chronic Health Conditions and COVID-19

Asthma and diabetes are two chronic conditions associated with increased probability of a severe case of COVID-19, if exposed to the virus. Since a greater proportion of Sonoma County women than men have been diagnosed with these chronic diseases, they are especially vulnerable to serious illness if unvaccinated. By the end of November 2022, 79% of Sonoma County residents had been fully vaccinated; another 6% were partially vaccinated. Over half (52%) of the vaccine doses in Sonoma County had been distributed to women.⁹³

Mental and Emotional Well-being and COVID-19

Sonoma County residents, already dealing with the aftermath of multiple catastrophic fires in 2017 and 2019, were faced with additional challenges when the pandemic was declared. By early February 2020, the first case of COVID-19 was reported in the county; by August 2022, roughly one in five people in the county (over 100,000 people) had contracted the virus and there had been over 500 deaths from the disease.⁹⁴ Throughout 2020 and 2021, lives were further disrupted as residents dealt with additional anx-

⁹⁰ County of Sonoma 2022 Point-in-Time Count Results. (September 2022). <https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/Main%20County%20Site/Development%20Services/CDC/Homeless%20Services/Homeless%20Data/County%20of%20Sonoma%202022%20Point-in-Time%20Count%20Results.pdf>

⁹¹ 2020 California Health Interview Survey (CHIS). Subject area: COVID-19. Since the sample population is small, the results may be statistically unstable. UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, the Fielding School of Public Health. <https://ask.chis.ucla.edu>

⁹² 2021 California Health Interview Survey (CHIS). Subject area: COVID-19. Since the sample population is small, the results may be statistically unstable. UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, the Fielding School of Public Health. <https://ask.chis.ucla.edu>

⁹³ Corona Virus Tracker (November 30, 2022). Coronavirus Numbers: Tracking Sonoma County. <https://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/news/coronavirus-numbers/>

⁹⁴ Corona Virus Tracker (November 30, 2022) Coronavirus Numbers: Tracking Sonoma County. <https://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/news/coronavirus-numbers/>

ity over contracting the virus and/or the stress of additional family responsibilities; parents, especially, were faced with finding childcare as schools were closed. When children were at home, disproportionate time burdens were placed on women.⁹⁵ An additional burden that fell disproportionately to mothers was the responsibility for child learning as classrooms went virtual on unfamiliar platforms. And during this time, normal family and professional support systems became less accessible and healthcare facilities overburdened.⁹⁶

However, when Sonoma County women and men were asked in the California Health Interview Survey whether they had experienced mental health challenges specifically as a result of COVID-19, only 1% of Sonoma County women answered in the affirmative; in 2021 that figure doubled to 2%. The small sample size makes these numbers statistically unreliable, but virtually no men reported experiencing mental health challenges as a result of the pandemic.⁹⁷ These results do not align with anecdotal evidence or the Voices survey regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of Sonoma County residents and especially its women (see Page 52-53).

Impact of COVID-19 on Family Care Responsibilities

During the pandemic, both mothers and fathers across the nation—working or not—reported an increase in time spent caring for children. However, in the majority of families headed by couples of opposite genders, mothers continued to bear the primary responsibility for childcare and, when schools were closed, the primary responsibility for child learning.⁹⁸

Table 18. Parent with Primary Responsibility for Childcare During the Pandemic Among U.S. Opposite-Sex Couples

During the pandemic:	Primary responsibility for childcare	
	Mother	Father
All partnered parents of children under 18 years	66%	24%
Employed parents, both working from home	72%	33%
Employed parents, neither working from home	56%	23%

Source: *Gender and Society Journal*

In all families with partnered parents of the opposite gender, a much greater proportion of mothers than fathers report being mainly responsible for childcare. Additionally, a greater percentage of mothers than fathers reported spending more time on their children’s home learning. A similar pattern exists whether one or both parents work. When both parents work from home, 84% of mothers and 50% of fathers reported spending increased time on home learning during the pandemic compared to pre-pandemic.

⁹⁵ Dunatchik, A.; Gerson K.; Class, J.; Jacobs, J.; and Stritzel H. (2021). Gender, Parenting, and the Rise of Remote Work During the Pandemic: Implications for Domestic Inequality in the United States. *GENDER and SOCIETY*, Vol. 35 No. 2, April 2021 (194-205) DOI:1-:1177/08912432211001301. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/08912432211001301>

⁹⁶ 2019, 2020, 2021 California Health Interview Surveys (CHIS). Subject area: Access and Utilization/Delay of Care. <https://ask.chis.ucla.edu>

⁹⁷ 2020, 2021 California Health Interview Survey (CHIS). Subject area: COVID-19. Since the sample population is small, the results may be statistically unstable. UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, the Fielding School of Public Health. <https://ask.chis.ucla.edu>

⁹⁸ Dunatchik, A., Gerson, K., Glass, J., Jacobs, J., and Stritzel, H. (2021). Gender, Parenting, and the Rise of Remote Work During the Pandemic: Implications for Domestic Inequality in the United States. *GENDER and SOCIETY*, Vol. 35 No. 2, April 2021 (194-205) DOI:10.1177/08912432211001301. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/08912432211001301>

Note that the gender gap in primary responsibility for childcare persists, whether parents work from home or not. When both parents work outside the home, the gender gap is 33 percentage points. Where both employed parents work from home—and are theoretically available to assist in childcare—the gender gap is 39 percentage points. These results suggest that working from home might actually increase the mother’s childcare burden relative to the father.

Without the help of a partner, single parents faced special difficulties finding time for additional domestic needs during the pandemic.⁹⁹ Twenty-six percent of single mothers nationwide reported that they had to decrease paid working hours to help with additional childcare and home learning responsibilities. More than one in three single mothers said they would take paid family leave if it were available.

In 2020 and 2021, when Sonoma County residents were asked in the California Health Interview Survey about the difficulty of finding childcare, 24% reported not being able to find childcare for a week or more in the past year. However, when asked specifically about the impact of COVID-19 on finding childcare, just 5% of parents said that it had been more difficult to find childcare as a result of the pandemic.¹⁰⁰ Respondents to the 2021 Voices survey told a different story: 46% reported that their children’s school was either reduced or cancelled during the pandemic. These parents were six times more likely to consider access to childcare as one of their top five day-to-day challenges during the pandemic than those who either did not have children, or those with disrupted school schedules. (Page 49)

The Impact of COVID-19 on Voices Survey Respondents

The COVID-19 pandemic affected Voices survey respondents in a number of ways. For almost every respondent, the pandemic generated concern for the well-being of family members and loved ones (91%). At the time of the survey, almost 80% of respondents knew someone who had contracted COVID-19 and recovered, while 25% reported knowing a friend who had died from COVID-19, and 9% reported having a family member who had died. The COVID-19 pandemic also had a significant impact on mental health, as 73% of respondents reported difficulties with sleeping, 63% noticed increased tension in family relationships, 61% felt overwhelmed, 51% experienced financial stress, and 50% reported experiencing anxiety that manifests in physical ways.

⁹⁹ Dunatchik, A., Gerson, K., Glass, J., Jacobs, J., and Stritzel, H. (2021). Gender, Parenting, and the Rise of Remote Work During the Pandemic: Implications for Domestic Inequality in the United States. See Appendix 4 for additional results on single parents. *GENDER and SOCIETY*, Vol. 35 No. 2, April 2021 (194-205) DOI:10.1177/08912432211001301.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/08912432211001301>

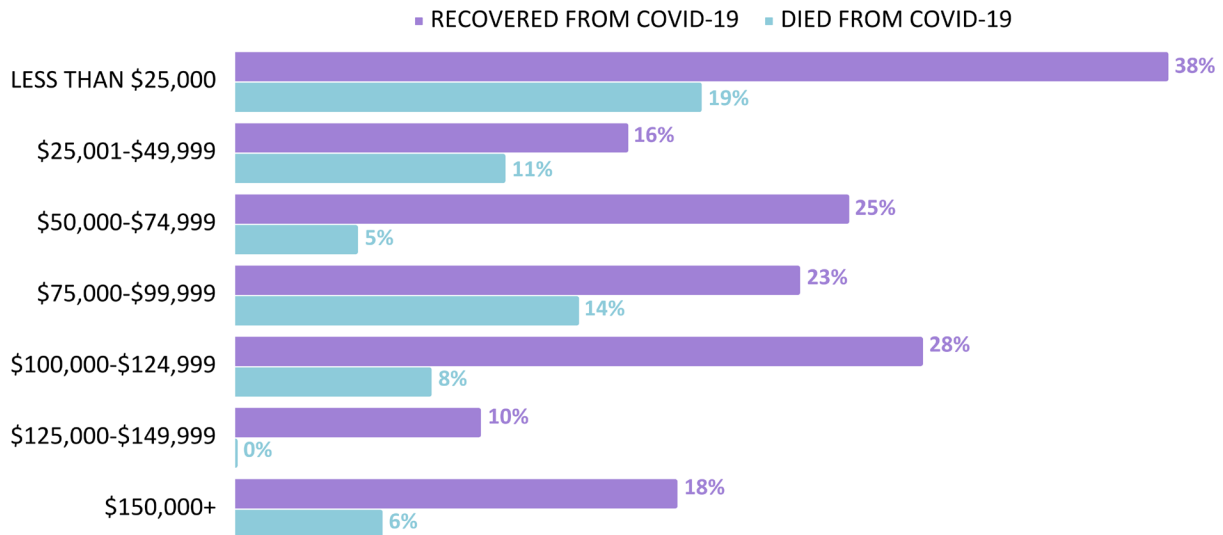
¹⁰⁰ 2020, 2021 California Health Interview Survey (CHIS). Subject area: COVID-19. Since the sample population is small, the results may be statistically unstable. UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, the Fielding School of Public Health. <https://ask.chis.ucla.edu>

FIGURE 20 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS AND THEIR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES DURING COVID-19

VOICES SURVEY RESPONSE	PERCENTAGE
I personally contracted the COVID-19 coronavirus	8%
A family/household member contracted the COVID-19 coronavirus and recovered	22%
Death of a family/household member due to the COVID-19 coronavirus	8%
A friend contracted the COVID-19 coronavirus and recovered	78%
Death of a friend due to the COVID-19 coronavirus	24%
Children’s school was cancelled or reduced	50%
Psychological/mental/emotional health was affected (e.g., stress, anxiety)	89%
Unable to perform usual personal care/health routines	41%
Experiencing concern about the well-being of my partner, children, or parents and/or other relatives	91%
Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much	73%
Experiencing stress about your or your family’s ability to pay your bills	48%
Thoughts that you have more to do than you can possibly handle	61%
Increased tension with family members	62%
Anxiety so severe that you have physical reactions (e.g., heart racing)	50%
Financial stress and pressure	50%
Gender-based violence	4%
*14 respondents chose Other	

Contracting COVID-19. Approximately 8% of Voices survey respondents reported personally contracting COVID. Respondents making between \$75,000 and \$99,999 were more than twice as likely (17.05%) to report personally contracting the disease. Voices survey respondents making less than \$25,000 were much more likely to report a family/household member contracting COVID. Voices survey respondents making less than \$25,000 were also much more likely to report a family/household member dying from COVID-19 than respondents from different income brackets.

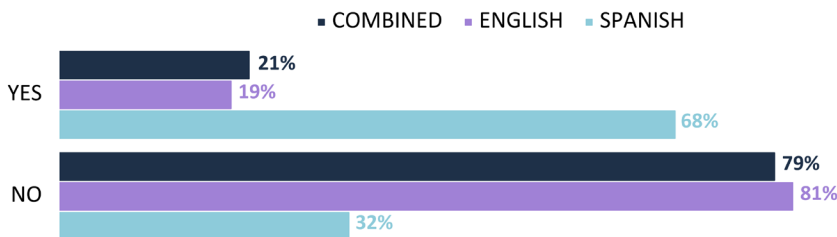
FIGURE 21 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS WITH A FAMILY MEMBER WHO CONTRACTED COVID-19 AND OUTCOME BY INCOME



COVID-19 and Housing Status among Voices Survey Respondents

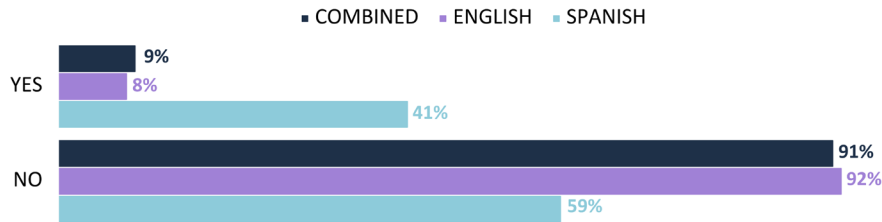
Several housing-related issues stand out in the Voices survey, particularly with respect to COVID-19. The survey includes several questions aimed at understanding the impact of the pandemic on respondent’s housing status in Sonoma County. Among all Voices survey respondents, 21% reported a change in their living conditions since the pandemic was declared in March 2020. Among respondents to the Spanish survey, however, that number jumped to 68%.

FIGURE 22 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS WHOSE LIVING SITUATION CHANGED AFTER MARCH 2020



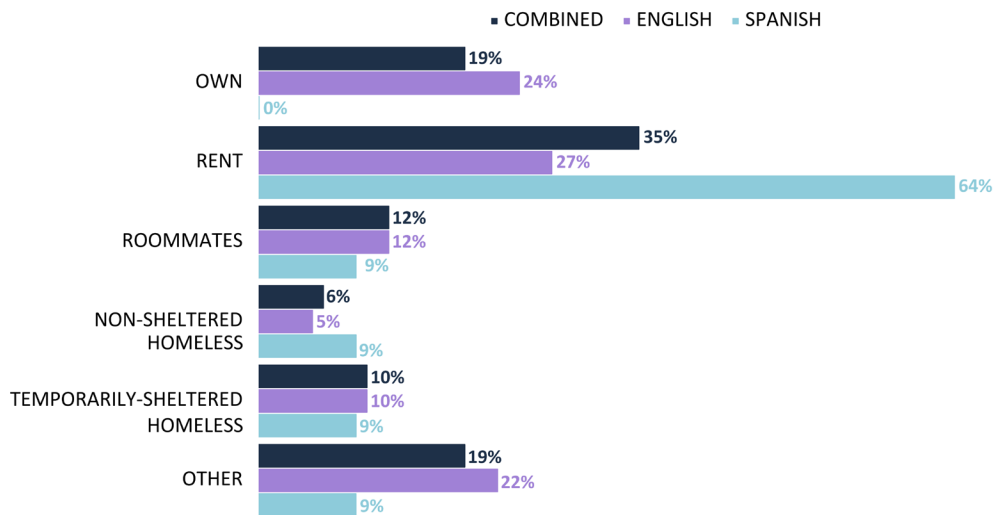
The Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women also asked respondents whether their housing status had changed as a direct result of the pandemic. Ninety-two percent of English survey respondents reported that their housing status had not changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, while 41% of Spanish-speaking respondents indicated the COVID-19 pandemic did impact their housing status. Among the Spanish-speaking respondents whose housing status changed because of COVID-19, the vast majority of them moved to a new or different rental property (approximately 64%), but at least 18% reported becoming homeless.

FIGURE 23 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS WHOSE LIVING SITUATION CHANGED BECAUSE OF COVID-19



Within the combined pool of Voices survey respondents, a higher percentage were able to retain home ownership (19.23%), but almost 16% still reported being unhoused.

FIGURE 24 RELOCATION STATUS OF VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS AFTER COVID-19 INDUCED CHANGE IN HOUSING

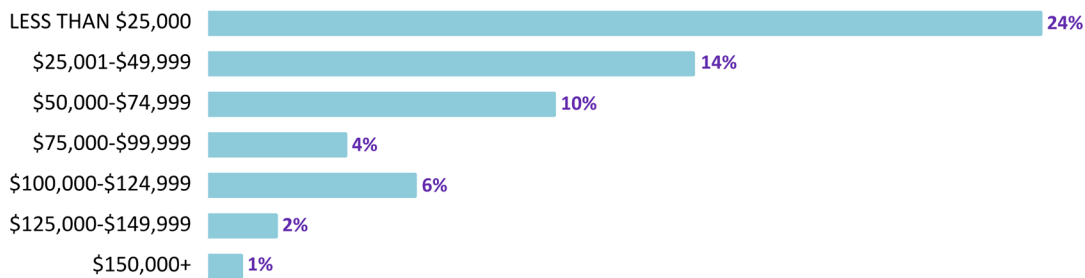


Parental Status. Voices survey respondents indicating they were single parents or guardians reported that the COVID-19 pandemic directly caused a change in their housing status at rates three times as high as two-parent homes (11.54% to 3.87% respectively). Indeed, they reported this at rates similar to those identifying as non-parents (13.77%).

Race/Ethnicity. When examined more broadly, Voices survey respondents from certain racial/ethnic groups – namely African Americans (about 17%), Asian American/Pacific Islanders (about 15%), and American Indian/Alaska Natives (15%) – were almost twice as likely as white respondents to indicate that COVID-19 had directly impacted their housing status.

Socioeconomic status. Socioeconomic status was strongly associated with COVID-19-related changes in housing status. Voices survey respondents making less than \$50,000, and particularly those making less than \$25,000, were statistically significantly more likely to report a COVID-19-related change in housing status.

FIGURE 25 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS WHOSE LIVING SITUATION CHANGED BECAUSE OF COVID-19 BY INCOME



COVID-19 and Caretaking among Voices Survey Respondents

The Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women asked Voices survey respondents a variety of questions about the impact of COVID-19 on their caretaking responsibilities, both of children and older adults. We found that respondents with caretaking responsibilities during the COVID-19 pandemic faced several challenges.

COVID-19 and caring for children. Voices survey participants who mentioned that their children’s school was either reduced or cancelled were six times more likely to consider access to childcare as one of their top challenges. Additionally, respondents with an income of over \$100,000 were more likely than those with a lower income to report that their children’s school was reduced or cancelled due to the pandemic.

FIGURE 26 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS INDICATING THAT THEIR CHILDREN’S SCHOOL WAS CANCELLED OR REDUCED BECAUSE OF COVID-19 BY INCOME



“I took a leave of absence from my job for nine months to care for my children during remote learning. I came back and my job was different, and I was unofficially demoted. I’m one of the women that experienced a career setback because of taking care of family.” – Voices of Sonoma County Women Survey Respondent *941

“...the stress of working day-to-day and being exposed [to COVID-19] by coworkers or the public is hard [and] stressful. I worry all the time about bringing it home to [my] family. If my child has one cough or a runny nose, I cannot take him back to school for 72 hours after symptoms are gone...which means time off of work for me, as I have no one else to watch him.” – Voices of Sonoma County Women Survey Respondent *391

“Distance learning and working from home was a big challenge. With three [kids] in distance learning and a toddler I would sometimes find myself working all day/night and weekends instead of just my regular eight hours Monday to Friday. Time management was huge since I had to juggle distance Learning, taking care of my four kids, work and house chores. It was very stressful, but I did it. I was a stay-at-home mom taking care of three [kids] four years before the pandemic and that was less stressful to handle.” – Voices of Sonoma County Women Survey Respondent *225

COVID-19 and caring for aging parents. Voices survey respondents who had caretaking responsibilities often reported serving “double duty.” Of those who reported caring for aging parents as one of the most important challenges they faced, respondents were twice as likely to indicate that their children’s school was cancelled or reduced during COVID-19.

COVID-19 and single parents. Single parents faced unique challenges during the pandemic. Single parents did not report personally contracting COVID-19 at higher rates than co-parents or non-parents, but they did report higher rates of having a household member contract COVID-19. While respondents across the parenting spectrum affirmed that the pandemic affected their mental health, single parents reported that the pandemic impacted their mental health at rates slightly higher than other groups. They likewise were between 6 and 8% more likely to indicate that the pandemic had rendered them unable to perform their usual personal care and/or healthcare routines. Single parents were almost 10% more likely than co-parents to report that COVID-19 caused them to have trouble sleeping or sleeping too much, at least 5% more likely to report having thoughts that you have more to do than you can possibly handle, and about 5% more likely to report experiencing anxiety so severe that you have physical reactions. Some of the most pronounced influences of COVID-19 on single parents was the stress it caused as they tried to pay bills and the greater financial stress and pressure it generated. This is unsurprising, owing to the greater financial insecurity single parents experience.

FIGURE 27 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS EXPERIENCING STRESS ABOUT ABILITY TO PAY BILLS BY PARENTAL STATUS¹⁰¹



¹⁰¹ Note: Response numbers do not align because while there are 371 respondents who responded to the three “parental questions” (some provided an “other” category, 106 of those skipped this question).

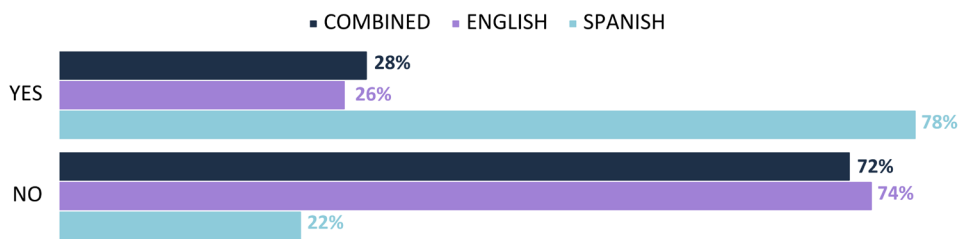
FIGURE 28 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS EXPERIENCING FINANCIAL STRESS BY PARENTAL STATUS



COVID-19 and Employment Among Voices Survey Respondents

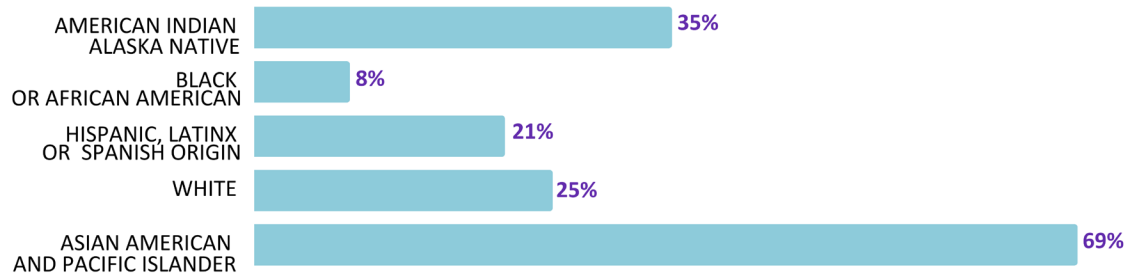
A dichotomous pattern emerges when we turn to the relationship between COVID-19 and employment. For approximately 75% of the respondents to the English-language survey, the pandemic did not impact their employment status. However, the story was reversed for respondents to the Spanish-language survey: more than 78% of respondents indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic had directly impacted their employment status. As the Commission did not collect data about the industry that respondents worked in, it is difficult to understand why we see these discrepancies between the two sets of survey data. However, it is clear that the discrepancies exist, and as such, more information should be gathered to determine whether any employment-based interventions for the Spanish speaking members of our community are needed.

FIGURE 29 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS INDICATING COVID-19-INDUCED EMPLOYMENT STATUS CHANGES



For Voices survey respondents who took the English survey, the degree of COVID-19-induced employment status change varied by race/ethnicity. For instance, Asian American/Pacific Islanders reported the highest rates of COVID-19-induced employment status changes, followed by American Indian/Alaska Natives, whereas African American and Latinx respondents were least likely to report COVID-19-induced employment status changes.

FIGURE 30 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS INDICATING COVID-19-INDUCED EMPLOYMENT STATUS CHANGES BY RACE/ETHNICITY



COVID-19, Mental Health, and Well-Being Among Voices Survey Respondents

To measure the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on respondent’s mental health and well-being, the Voices survey asked participants to indicate their levels of stress, before and after the pandemic began in March 2020. Sixty-four percent of all Voices survey respondents indicated that before the pandemic, they were “neither stressed nor calm” (43%), “calm” (20%) or “very calm” (1%). This pre-pandemic feeling of serenity proved even higher among Spanish survey respondents, 77% of whom reported feeling “neither stressed nor calm,” “calm,” or “very calm.”

FIGURE 31 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS’ PRE-COVID-19 LEVELS OF STRESS

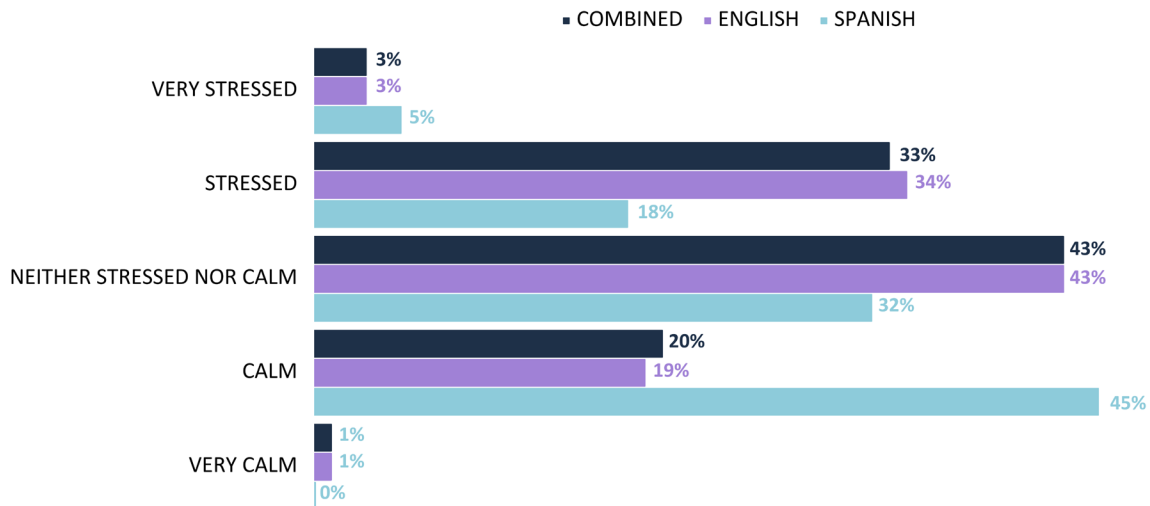
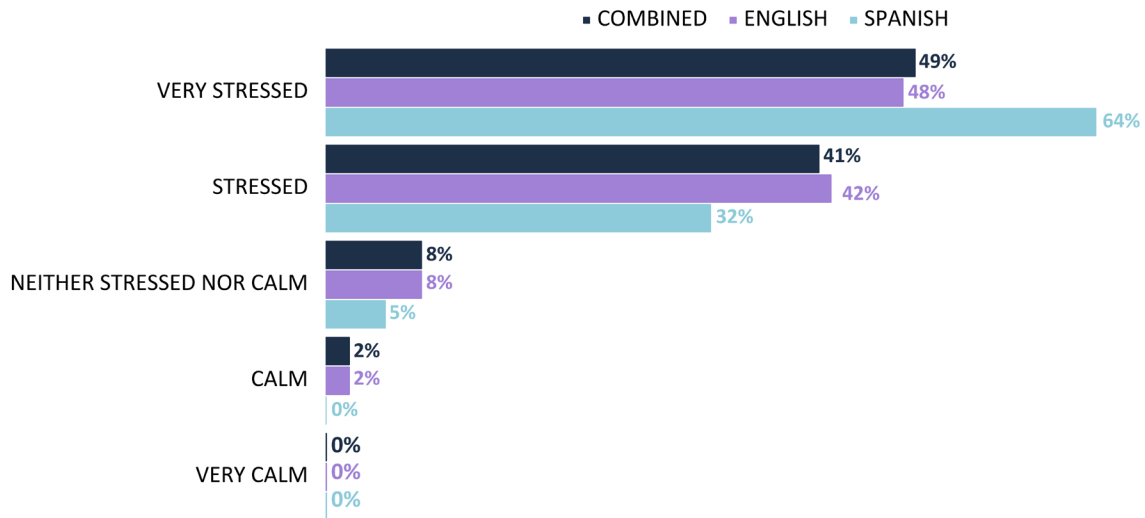


Figure 31: Voices Survey Respondents’ Pre-COVID-19 Levels of Stress

The Voices survey data demonstrate that the COVID-19 pandemic had varying impacts on respondents and their sense of calm. The pandemic left over 90% of respondents feeling either “stressed” (41%) or “very stressed” (49%). In the Spanish survey, COVID-19-induced stress was even more pronounced: the number of respondents reporting that COVID-19 left them “stressed” or “very stressed” was over 95%.

FIGURE 32 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS' POST-COVID-19 LEVELS OF STRESS



“The pandemic has caused depression, which is difficult to crawl out of now that things are opening up. The fear-driven guidelines have left me unable to enjoy typical things and the act of leaving the home feels like a grueling ordeal. My children are also changed; now dealing with anxiety and the inability to relate to their peers after a year of limited social contact. The mental health and behavioral ramifications will be seen for years because of this.” – Voices of Sonoma County Women Survey Respondent *496

“Kids have no breathing room to be [kids] and I can’t manage their increased stress post-fires and ongoing pandemic.” – Voices of Sonoma County Women Survey Respondent *084

“Fire season on top of [the] pandemic was actually the kicker for me, mental health wise. Too much disturbance in the world in general going on within the parenthesis of COVID.” – Voices of Sonoma County Women Survey Respondent *207

Race/Ethnicity and COVID-19-Related Stress: Across all racial/ethnic groups, reports of post-COVID-19 stress (“stressed” or “very stressed”) were quite high among all Voices survey respondents, with African American respondents reporting the lowest levels of post-COVID associated stress.

FIGURE 33 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS' INDICATING POST-COVID-19 STRESS BY RACE/ETHNICITY



“Racism and white supremacy weren’t mentioned in this survey, but I would add that was a major stress-inducing factor that intersected with much of the pandemic.” – Voices of Sonoma County Women Survey Respondent *718

“Racism/white supremacy in our county [are challenges] - this is not a friendly or safe place for BIPOC. The low numbers [of BIPOC people living in the county] are telling.” – Voices of Sonoma County Women Survey Respondent *365

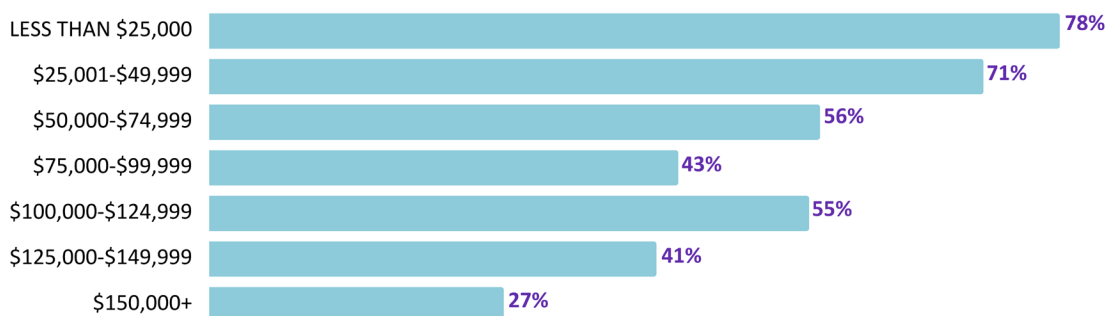
While Voices survey respondents from higher income brackets were slightly more likely to indicate that the pandemic impacted their mental and emotional health, Figure 34 shows that Voices survey respondents from all income brackets were susceptible to experiencing negative effects on their mental and emotional well-being as a result of the pandemic.

FIGURE 34 INFLUENCE OF COVID-19 ON THE MENTAL HEALTH OF VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY INCOME



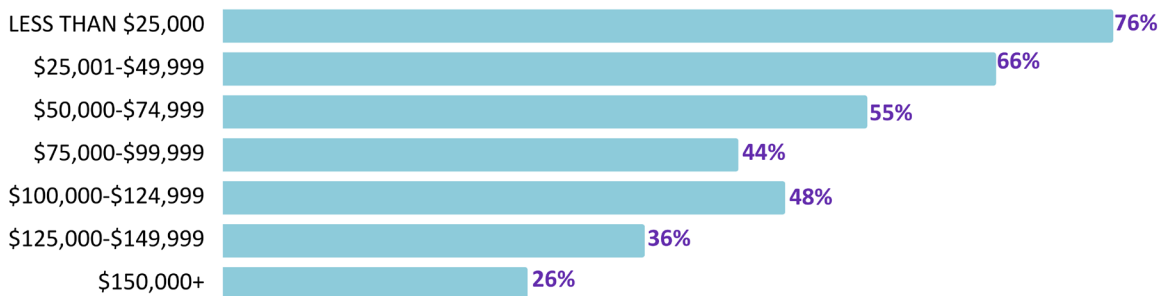
Financial stress. The Voices survey asked respondents to indicate whether they had experienced any of the circumstances outlined in Figure 20 since the pandemic began in March 2020. Our results demonstrate that the relationship between the pandemic’s effect on participants’ mental and emotional well-being and their socioeconomic status shown above becomes more complex when examining the various types of stress encountered by respondents. For instance, respondents making less than \$25,000 per year were more likely to indicate that they experienced *financial* stress and pressure because of the pandemic than respondents of a higher socioeconomic status.

FIGURE 35 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS’ EXPERIENCE OF COVID-19-RELATED FINANCIAL STRESS BY INCOME



Stress about the ability to pay your bills. Higher rates of stress were also found among Voices survey respondents of lower socioeconomic status when respondents were asked whether they had experienced stress about their ability to pay their bills since March 2020. Here, respondents making more than \$125,000 per year were less likely to indicate that they had experienced stress about their ability to pay their bills as a result of the pandemic, and respondents making less than \$25,000 were far more likely to indicate that they had experienced stress for this reason.

FIGURE 36 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS’ EXPERIENCE OF COVID-19-INDUCED STRESS ABOUT ABILITY TO PAY BILLS BY INCOME



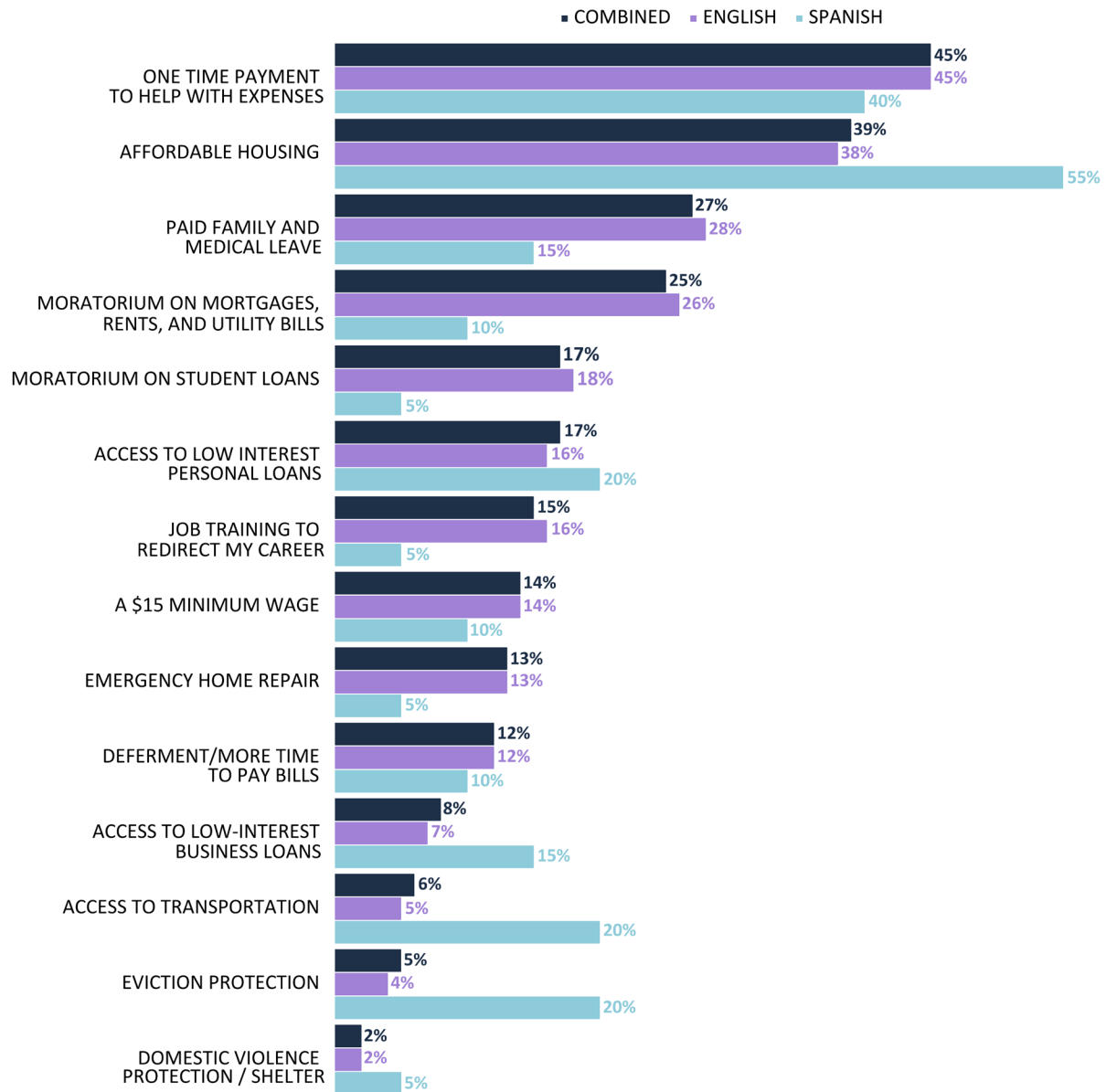
“[S]timulus checks helped, but [I’m] so far behind in bills due to loss of income, [I] don’t know how I will catch up, credit is now damaged as a result.” – Voices of Sonoma County Women Survey Respondent *074

“I can’t afford to buy a home and can barely afford to rent. I don’t qualify for low-income housing. I’m a single mother, great job, but barely [earn] enough to cover expenses.” – Voices of Sonoma County Women Survey Respondent *302

Areas of Most-Needed Assistance Among Voices Survey Respondents

Respondents to the Voices survey were asked to indicate the areas of assistance that would help them the most from a list of options. The most common areas of assistance identified among respondents to both the English- and Spanish-language surveys include a one-time payment to help with expenses (45%), affordable housing (39%), paid leave (27%), and a moratorium on mortgages, rents, and utility bills (25%). However, there are substantive differences between English and Spanish survey respondents and their areas of need. English-language respondents were much more likely to prioritize Paid Family and Medical Leave (28% vs. 15% for Spanish-language respondents), as well as a moratorium on mortgages, rents and utility bills (26% vs. 10% for Spanish-language respondents). These discrepancies may reflect the relative access that Spanish-language respondents have to these programs or to the utility of these programs for their financial health and stability when compared to English-language respondents.

FIGURE 37 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS' AREAS OF MOST-NEEDED ASSISTANCE¹⁰²



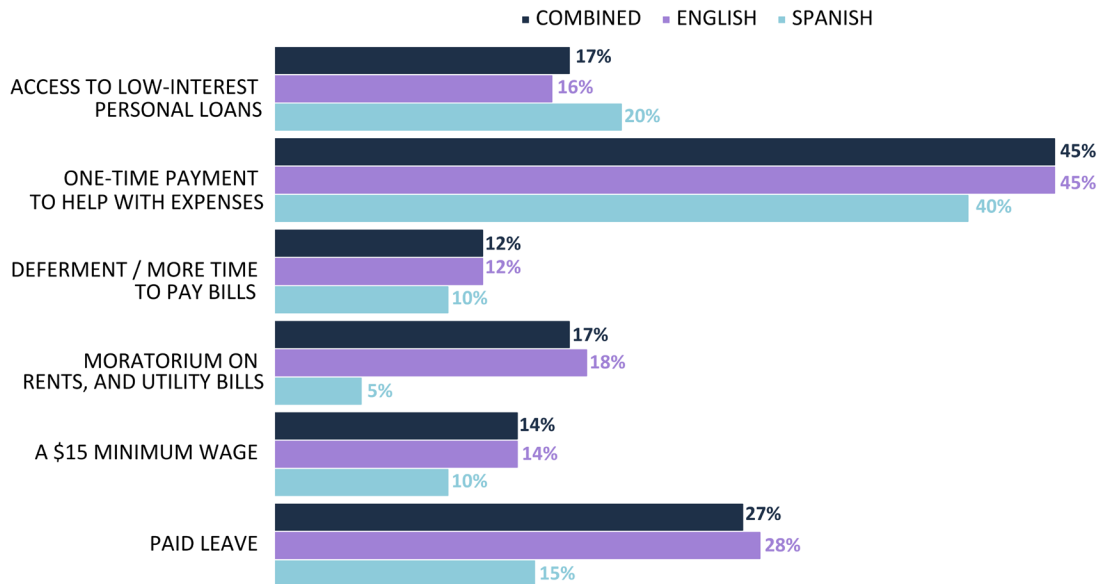
Financial Assistance

Several of the response options about areas of most-needed assistance measure the impact of the pandemic on respondents' financial security. These areas of assistance include access to low-interest personal loans, a one-time payment to help with expenses, deferment/more time to pay bills, a moratorium on student loans, a \$15 minimum wage, and Paid Family and Medical Leave. For both English- and Spanish-language respondents, access to a one-time payment to help with expenses was the most frequently

¹⁰² In both surveys, respondents were asked, if they or their family needed assistance, which of a list of fourteen options would help them the most. Respondents were directed to choose up to 3. We have listed all fourteen here in combined form as well as by survey language.

identified area of financial need (45% and 40%, respectively).¹⁰³

FIGURE 38 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS' AREAS OF MOST-NEEDED FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE



One-time payment to help with expenses. While respondents' race/ethnicity, parental status, and particularly income influence how people ranked the areas of most-needed financial assistance, approximately 45% of all Voices survey respondents indicated that a one-time payment to help with expenses was their leading means of desired assistance. Twelve percent of co-parents identified this option as their first need, while this number climbed to 19% for single parents.

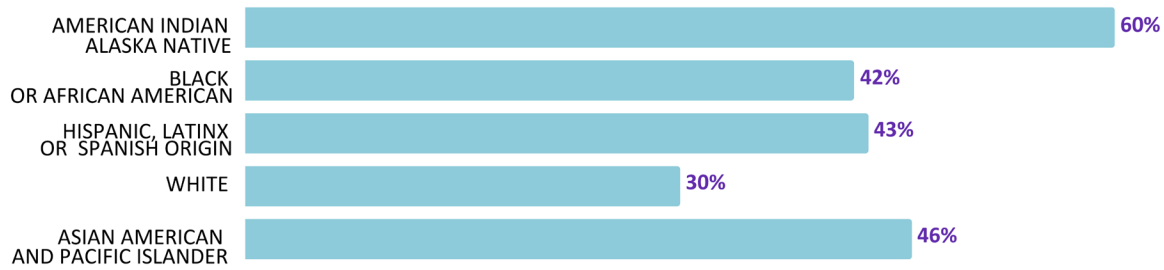
FIGURE 39 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS' IDENTIFICATION OF ONE-TIME PAYMENT AS MOST-NEEDED FORM OF ASSISTANCE BY PARENTAL STATUS



A one-time payment to help with expenses was also a highly desired option for assistance among racial/ethnic minorities, with only white respondents falling below 40%.

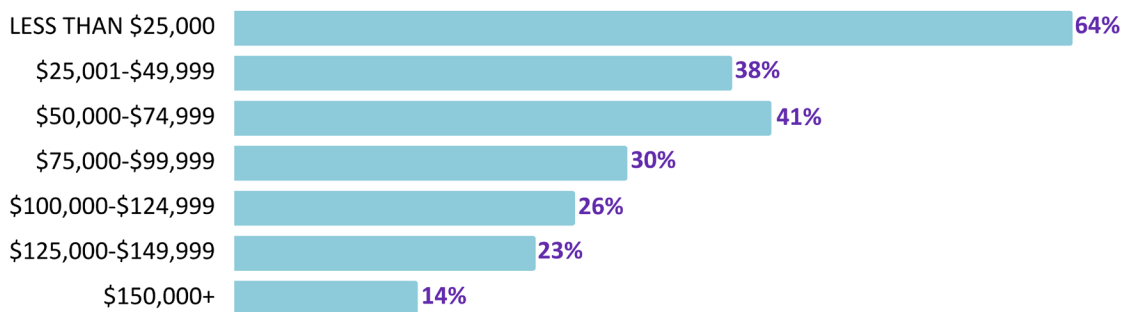
¹⁰³ In both versions of the Voices survey, forms of assistance were listed without comment. For ease of interpretation, we have segmented responses by general topic or theme. Six questions dealt with issues of financial need and assistance, which we have analyzed below.

FIGURE 40 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS' IDENTIFICATION OF ONE-TIME PAYMENT AS MOST-NEEDED FORM OF ASSISTANCE BY RACE/ETHNICITY¹⁰⁴



Annual income is also strongly associated with identifying a one-time payment to help with expenses as the area of assistance that would help them the most. Here, respondents making less than \$75,000 per year were the most likely to identify this type of assistance as their first option for support.

FIGURE 41 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS' IDENTIFICATION OF ONE-TIME PAYMENT AS MOST-NEEDED FORM OF ASSISTANCE BY INCOME¹⁰⁵

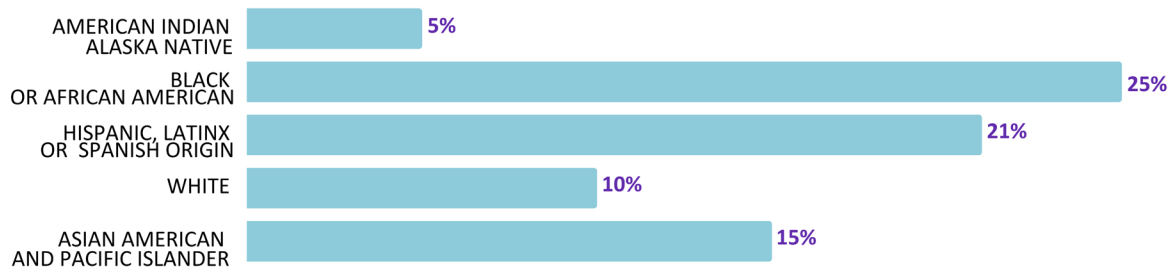


Student loan moratorium. Another response option to the question about most-needed assistance related to financial security identifies a student loan moratorium as a means of assistance. African American and Latinx respondents were most likely to indicate that a student loan moratorium would be among the most helpful forms of assistance to them or their families, while American Indian/Alaska Natives were the least likely to identify this among their top needs .

¹⁰⁴ The numbers for this are unstable because only 316 respondents answered this series of question and not every respondent ranked every option. We have provided percentages relative to the larger cohort who gave their racial status.

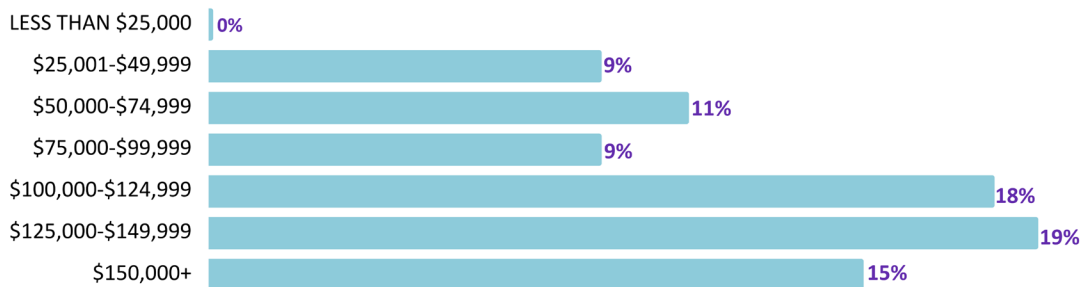
¹⁰⁵ The numbers for this are unstable because only 316 respondents answered this series of question. We have provided percentages relative to the larger cohort who gave their socioeconomic status.

FIGURE 42 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS' IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENT LOAN MORATORIUM AS MOST-NEEDED FORM OF ASSISTANCE BY RACE/ETHNICITY



Voices survey respondents making over \$100,000 were much more likely than respondents making less money per year to identify a moratorium on student loan repayment as a priority method of assistance. However, these findings may reflect the disproportionate number of advanced degrees among Voices survey respondents (and therefore, potentially higher rates of student loans being taken out by this population), rather than larger social demographics.

FIGURE 43 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS' IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENT LOAN MORATORIUM AS MOST-NEEDED FORM OF ASSISTANCE BY INCOME¹⁰⁶



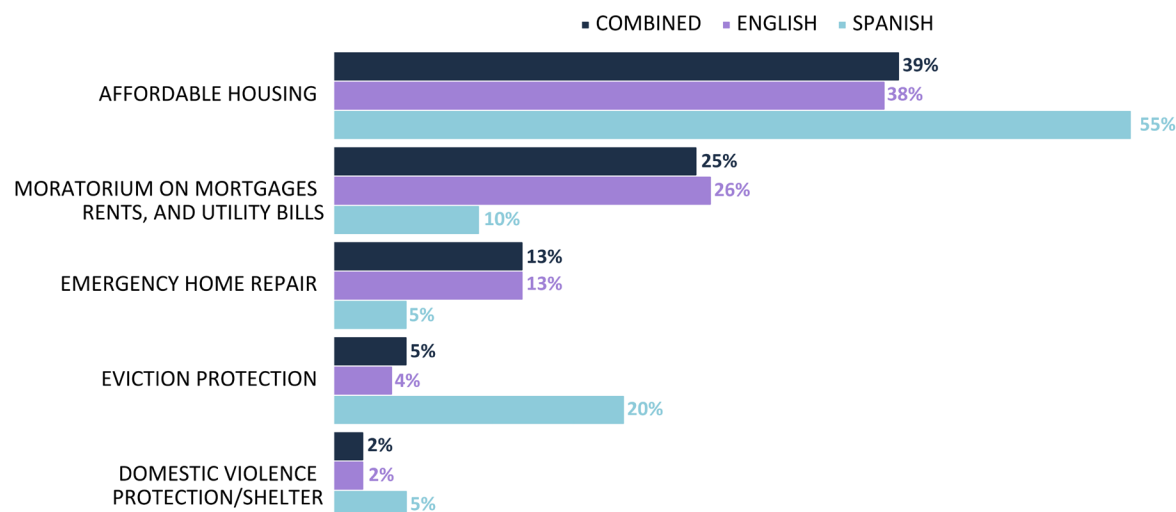
Housing Assistance

Several response options about the most-needed forms of assistance touched on housing-related issues. These include affordable housing; eviction protection; domestic violence protection/shelter; a moratorium on mortgages, rents, and utility bills; and emergency home repair. Within these response options, affordable housing was the most-needed area of assistance (approximately 39%). For Spanish-language respondents, this was an even more pronounced need (55%). English-language respondents were more likely to report needing a moratorium on rent than Spanish-language respondents (about 26% vs. 10%, respectively). However, Spanish-language respondents were more likely than English-language respondents to report needing eviction protection (20% vs. 4%, respectively).¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ The numbers for this are unstable because only 316 respondents answered this series of questions. We have provided percentages relative to the larger cohort.

¹⁰⁷ In both versions of the Voices survey, forms of assistance were listed without comment. For ease of interpretation, we have segmented responses by general topic or theme. Five questions dealt with issues of housing need and assistance, which we have analyzed below.

FIGURE 44 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS' IDENTIFICATION OF VARIOUS HOUSING-RELATED NEEDS



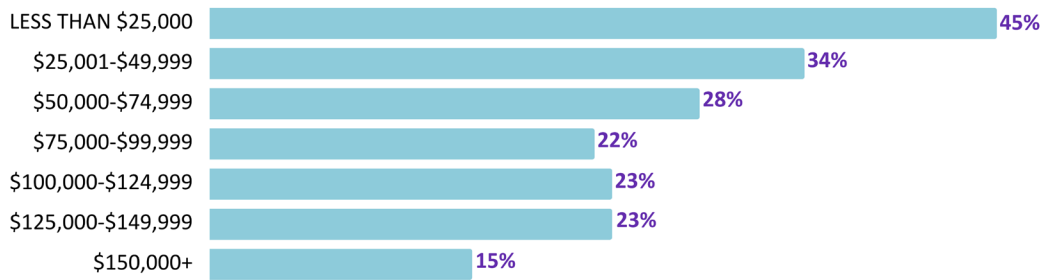
Affordable housing. Affordable housing was the most frequently identified form of housing-related assistance in the survey data among all Voices survey respondents. This trend persists when analyzing affordable housing as the most-needed form of assistance by race/ethnicity, particularly among individuals identifying as American Indian/Alaska Natives and Latinx.

FIGURE 45 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS' IDENTIFICATION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING AS MOST-NEEDED FORM OF ASSISTANCE BY RACE/ETHNICITY



Single parents also identified affordable housing as an area of need: almost 60% of respondents identifying as single parents indicated affordable housing would most help their families. Affordable housing was likewise the most immediate need for those with lower income, and the likelihood of choosing this option increased as the respondent's annual income decreased.

FIGURE 46 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS' IDENTIFICATION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING AS MOST-NEEDED FORM OF ASSISTANCE BY INCOME¹⁰⁸



Moratorium on mortgages, rents, and utility bills. When we analyze the likelihood that respondents will report a moratorium on mortgages, rents, and utility bills as their most desired assistance method, respondents making between \$50,000 - \$74,999 were most likely to identify this among their top needs.

FIGURE 47 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS' IDENTIFICATION OF MORATORIUM ON MORTGAGE, RENTS, AND UTILITY BILLS AS THEIR MOST-NEEDED FORM OF ASSISTANCE BY INCOME¹⁰⁹

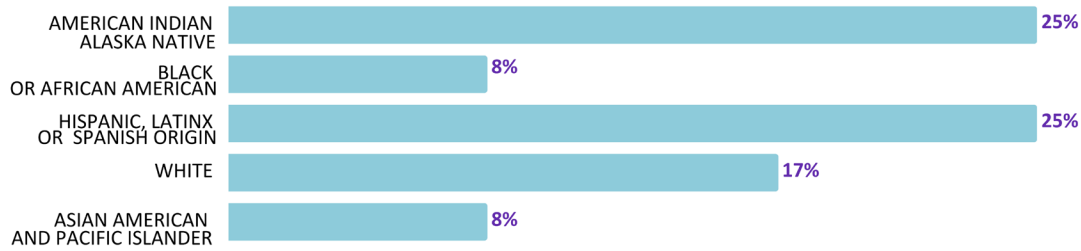


When we analyze data on mortgage, rents, and utility bill moratorium as a most-needed form of assistance by race/ethnic identity, we find that respondents who identify as Latinx or American Indian/Alaska Native are disproportionately more likely to prioritize this option as their most-needed method of assistance.

¹⁰⁸ The numbers for this are unstable because only 316 respondents answered this series of questions. We have provided percentages relative to the larger cohort.

¹⁰⁹ The numbers for this are unstable because only 316 respondents answered this series of question. We have provided percentages relative to the larger cohort.

FIGURE 48 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS' IDENTIFICATION OF MORTGAGES, RENTS, AND UTILITY BILLS MORATORIUM AS THEIR MOST-NEEDED FORM OF ASSISTANCE BY RACE/ETHNICITY

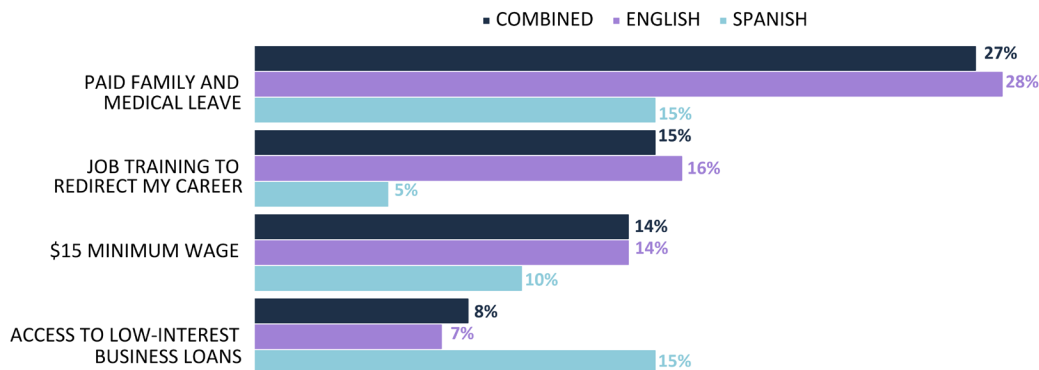


Emergency home repair. Another area related to housing needs expressed by Voices survey respondents is Emergency Home Repair. In this case, we find that African American respondents are almost twice as likely to prioritize this as a need (25%), followed by Asian American/Pacific Islanders (15.58%). This suggests that for many respondents, housing quality may be an issue of tremendous concern, rather than whether one is likely to remain housed.

Employment Assistance

Lastly, there are a series of response options associated with employment assistance and job security that Voices survey respondents identified as important areas of needed assistance. The options include job training, a \$15 minimum wage, and Paid Family and Medical Leave. Paid Family and Medical Leave is the most frequently identified type of needed employment assistance for English-language (28%), while Spanish-language respondents were equally likely to identify Paid Family and Medical Leave and access to low-interest business loans as their top need (15% each).¹¹⁰

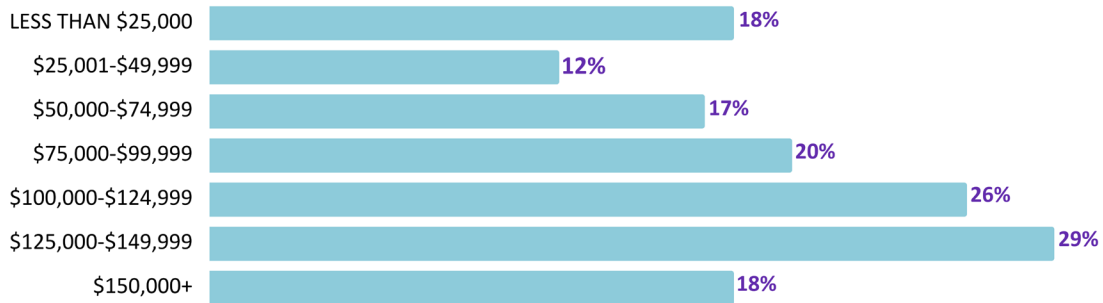
FIGURE 49 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS' AREAS OF MOST-NEEDED EMPLOYMENT-RELATED ASSISTANCE



Paid Family and Medical Leave. Among all Voices survey respondents, Paid Family and Medical Leave (FML) was the most frequently identified form of employment-related assistance in the survey data. Interestingly, identification of FML as the mode of assistance that would most help the respondent's family is higher among respondents making between \$75,000 and \$150,000. This relationship may be a reflection of age and/or family structure, as respondents in this income bracket are generally more likely to be either raising children or caring for aging parents. In such situations, FML would be particularly beneficial.

¹¹⁰ In both versions of the Voices survey, forms of assistance were listed without comment. For ease of interpretation, we have segmented responses by general topic or theme. Four questions dealt with issues of employment need and assistance, which we have analyzed below.

FIGURE 50 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS' IDENTIFICATION OF PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE AS THEIR MOST-NEEDED FORM OF ASSISTANCE BY INCOME¹¹¹



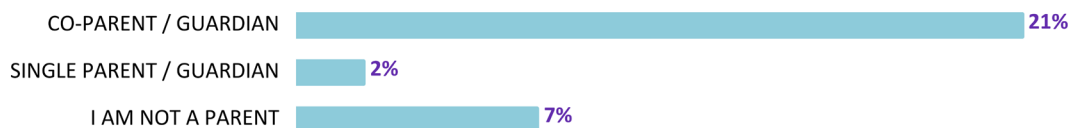
When we analyze data on Paid Family and Medical Leave as the most-needed form of assistance by race/ethnicity, we find that respondents who identify as Latinx or African American are disproportionately more likely to prioritize this option as their most-needed method of assistance.

FIGURE 51 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS' IDENTIFICATION OF PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE AS THEIR MOST-NEEDED FORM OF ASSISTANCE BY RACE/ETHNICITY



Lastly, Voices survey respondents who identified as co-parents were the most likely to identify Paid Family and Medical Leave as the mode of assistance that would most help the respondent's family. Single parents were the least likely to choose paid leave as the mode of assistance that would most help the respondent's family.

FIGURE 52 VOICES SURVEY RESPONDENTS' IDENTIFICATION OF PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE AS THEIR MOST-NEEDED FORM OF ASSISTANCE BY PARENTAL STATUS¹¹²



¹¹¹ The numbers for this are unstable because only 316 respondents answered this series of questions. We have provided percentages relative to the larger cohort.

¹¹² Note: Response numbers do not align because while there are 371 respondents who responded to the three "parental questions," some responded as "other" to this question and 106 of those skipped this question.

Editors' Note

Reporting Sonoma County Data

This data-driven Report on the Status of Women and Girls: Sonoma County, 2023 brings together information drawn from many published data sources. The most frequently cited source is the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey Program (ACS). The ACS is conducted annually across the U.S., sampling households, and results are then scaled up to derive estimates representative of the entire population. The U.S. Census Bureau provides a margin of error that gives a range of values that has a 95% probability of including the true value. The smaller the population sampled, the larger the margin of error, and the reported value is less statistically reliable.

The population of Sonoma County is small enough that the margin of error in reported values can be quite high. This statistical uncertainty can be decreased by pooling several years of data and reporting a single value as the average of that time period. Many figures in this report are pooled over consecutive years for that reason. The ACS typically offers a 5-year estimate; for example, the report may refer to the 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, which include data from 2016-2020. In this report, comparisons of Census data points to track trends are generally made by using non-overlapping 5-year estimates. For example, the report might observe a trend by comparing 2010 ACS 5-year estimates (data from 2006-2010) to 2015 ACS 5-year estimates (data from 2011-2015) and 2020 ACS 5-year estimates (data from 2016-2020).

For the sake of simplicity, this report does not include margins of error in the numbers presented, although these margins of error can be found in the references cited. To account for the uncertainty in the numbers, numbers are generally rounded. Caution is urged in making comparisons where numbers are close in value and the difference may not be statistically significant.

This report combines the ACS with data from the 2021 Voices of Sonoma County Women survey, which was developed and administered by the Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women. The survey included 13 semi-structured questions aimed at ascertaining how COVID-19 affected the lives of respondents, 13 semi-structured demographic questions, and two engagement questions. Semi-structured means that respondents were given a list of preset options but were also allowed to write in their own answers if the options provided were unsatisfactory. Engagement questions gather additional background information but are not a part of the actual survey instrument. The Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women developed an English- and a Spanish-language survey. Respondents represent a convenience sample, with the majority of those who responded (N=475) indicating they learned of the survey from social media (63.08%). Others learned via an organization with which they were affiliated (13.71%), or from a friend (12.45%). The main mechanisms by which the convenience sample learned of the survey help explain the extent to which the survey is representative. Additionally, we have added cumulative response numbers for the Voices survey data throughout the text. On several occasions we have reported data and percentages even if the question received low response rates. Given the survey's sample limitations, one should interpret the Voices survey findings with caution and, where possible, compare these findings to relevant county-level data.

It is also important to note regarding the racial/ethnic analysis of the Voices data that fifty-four respondents selected more than one race (approximately 11% of survey responses). These survey questions elicited substantial variability among the respondents regarding racial classifications. We therefore did not disaggregate mixed-race identity within the statistical analysis and instead prioritized primary identity. For future data collection, we recommend that the mixed-race category be amended to solicit more direct responses to decrease variability and increase data reliability and uniformity.

While the U.S. Census Bureau models its respondent input to present a view of women demographically

representative of women across Sonoma County, the Voices survey provides direct input from a more limited group of engaged women. It should be kept in mind throughout the Report that the demographics of respondents to the Voices survey —and therefore their perspectives—may differ from the county-wide data reported by the Census Bureau. The demographic characteristics of each set of respondents as discussed in the Snapshot Section of this Report are summarized in the following table.

A Comparison of the Sonoma County Women U.S. Census Population Profile and the 2021 Voices of Sonoma County Women Respondents

	U.S. Census, 2016-2020	2021 Voices of Sonoma County Women (Combined Responses)
Racial/Ethnic Identity		
African American or Black	2%	3%
Asian American	5%	0.5%
Latina	26%	14%
White (not Hispanic origin)	64%	82%
Median age	44 years	55 years (estimate)
Marital status		
Never married	29%	18%
Married	44%	55%
Married but separated	5%	3%
Widowed	8%	3%
Divorced	15%	10%
Gender identity ¹¹³		
Woman	100% women	96% women
Transgender	<2% trans	0.4% trans woman
Other gender identity		4% other
Sexual orientation		
Heterosexual	91%	79%
Homosexual	2%	5%
Bisexual	5%	6%
Other sexual orientation	2%	10%
Income for full-time working women (median values)	\$53,817	
Household income ¹¹⁴	\$94,295 (2021)	\$75,000-\$100,000 range
Educational attainment		
Less than high school	10%	0.4%
High school diploma	17%	2%
Some college, no degree	25%	15%
Associate’s degree	11%	12%
Bachelor’s degree	23%	31%
Graduate or professional degree	14%	40%

¹¹³ 2016-2020 California Health Interview Survey. (2016-2020 pooled data) Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation of women. <http://ask.chis.ucla.edu>

¹¹⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S1901: Income in the Past 12 Months (in 2021 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars). <http://data.census.gov>

Some Common Terms Used in the Report

Gender, in surveys usually self-identified by respondents. The Report is generally written in binary terms, as the large proportion of the Sonoma County population that identifies in binary terms as either female or male; it is estimated that less than 2% of Sonoma residents identify as nonbinary. Both people who identify as cisgender (identifying with gender assigned at birth) and transgender (identifying with gender different from that assigned at birth) can identify as nonbinary. Nonbinary genders may also be referenced by other terms including genderqueer, gender-nonconforming, demigender and agender/genderless. Across the U.S., it is estimated that about 11% of the LGBTQ population identifies as nonbinary.¹¹⁵ Demographic data on trans and nonbinary populations are noted in the county-wide data and especially in the Voices of Sonoma County Survey data.

Women, girls, females. Females is the general term, but it is not generally favored in diversity studies. The report refers to women (females 18 years and over unless otherwise specified) and girls (as generally females under the age of 18 years).

Men, boys, males. The age distinctions used for females generally apply here.

Racial/Ethnic distinctions, in surveys usually self-identified by respondents. Census data allows a single choice among several races or a multi-racial identification; a racial group is exclusively of that race on the basis of self-identification.

Latinx refers to a group of mixed genders, Latina to Latinx women, and Latino to Latinx men. The

Census Bureau also refers to Latinx as persons of any race, but of Hispanic origin.

African American as used in this Report also includes persons who identify as “Black.”

Asian American refers to a person who identifies as Asian and who is residing in the United States.

White is not capitalized and includes anyone who identifies as such, excluding persons who have identified a Latin or Hispanic heritage.

Households. American Community Surveys of the U.S. Census Bureau are generally completed by a householder for the household. A household is a housing unit such as a home, apartment, or rooms in a building intended as separate living quarters. The head of household (i.e., the householder) is self-identified and is generally an owner of the unit or listed as a renter.

A nonfamily household is comprised of a group of people unrelated to the householder.

A family household is comprised of a group of people related to the householder by birth, marriage or adoption.

Types of families.

Married-couple families include same- or opposite-sex husband, wife or spouse, as well as people who are either formally married or in common-law marriages.

A woman-headed or male-headed household (with no spouse present) represent examples of two “other households,” which are referred to in the Report.

Children. A child is a person under the age of 18 years and who is generally unmarried. Households with children are family households.

Related children include children who are related to a householder by birth, marriage, or adoption.

Own children is a subset of related children and includes only those who are either a child by birth, a stepchild or an adopted child of the householder.

For further questions on definitions related to U.S. Census data, please refer to technical documentation of the American Community Survey. For the 2021 ACS, please visit: https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/tech_docs/code_lists/2021_ACS_Code_Lists.pdf

¹¹⁵ Wilson, B. and Meyer, I. (2021) Nonbinary Adults in the United States. Los Angeles: The Williams Institute. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/nonbinary-lgbtq-adults-us/>

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women

Katie M. Gordon | D2 Commissioner, Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women

For a project of this magnitude and scope, there are numerous individuals deserving of our gratitude. First and foremost, we extend our heartfelt appreciation to the California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls for their generous support for this project. We are equally thankful to the County of Sonoma for their commitment to equity in language access. Your support will enable us to translate this work into Spanish, allowing more members of our community to benefit from and engage with its contents. We also thank Katie Gordon, Jan Blalock, Meira Bowcut, Ofra Isler, Julie Shulman, and Victoria Willard for their dedicated contributions to this project. Lastly, we extend our gratitude to Krishauna Hines-Gaither, Stephen Inrig, Eleanor Siebert, Emerald Archer, and the entire team at the Center for the Advancement of Women. Your unwavering support has played an invaluable role in helping to transform our vision into a reality. We couldn't have achieved this without each and every one of you, and we look forward to the positive impact that this project will have on our community.

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The Mount Saint Mary's editorial team would like to acknowledge Commissioner Katie M. Gordon for her thorough review of this Report.

Mount Saint Mary's University Los Angeles is the only women's university in Los Angeles and one of the most diverse in the nation. The University is known for its innovative health and science programs, and its commitment to community service. Mount Saint Mary's provides year-round, flexible and online programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The Center for the Advancement of Women is nationally recognized for its research on gender equity. **MSMU.EDU**

The Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women was established on December 23, 1975, by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors. The purpose of the Commission is to promote equal rights and opportunities that enhance the quality of life for all women and girls and to address issues of discrimination and prejudice that negatively affect women in Sonoma County.