California COMMUNITY Foundation

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Unleashing the Power of Participation

SELA COLLABORATIVE

Latino Decisions
Everything Latino Politics

The *Living and Working in SELA* Survey: A Highlights Report

In late 2019, the California Community Foundation, the Pat Brown Institute for Public Affairs at Cal State LA, the SELA Collaborative, and Latino Decisions developed a pathbreaking survey to unearth the voices of Southeast Los Angeles (SELA). The *Living and Working in SELA* survey was conducted under the direction of Dr. Matt Barreto by Latino Decisions, a premier national polling firm that specializes in the Latinx community.

The survey reached 1,017 SELA residents through a mixed mode of cellphone, landline, and Internet interviews. Surveys were conducted in English or Spanish, according to respondent preference, between December 5, 2019 and December 27, 2019. The margin of error is+3.1 percentage points.

The survey was completed before the catastrophic coronavirus pandemic hit the United States. This is a portrait of SELA just before the sky fell in. While much will change in the coming weeks and months, this survey provides a baseline from which to examine SELA and the perilous conditions that it currently faces.

SELA is a historically underserved region and home to one of the highest concentrations of Latinxs and undocumented residents in the state of California. Because of the longstanding and persistent social, economic, and health inequities that have shaped daily life in SELA, it is likely that the region will disproportionately suffer from the pandemic.

As we continue to further explore this extraordinary source of data based on the voices of SELA, we will also be putting into the field a second survey that specifically looks at how SELA residents are coping with COVID-19 and its devastating effects. Ultimately, we hope that these surveys as well as the conversations that they generate will help boost the community going forward.

In this brief report, we present 12 highlights of the survey and questions about the impact of COVID-19. We believe that this allows us to better understand the challenges that SELA faces and the assets it could leverage as the region contends with the pandemic and its socio-economic aftershocks.

The SELA Survey Area

For the purposes of this survey, SELA includes Bell, Bell Gardens, Cudahy, Florence-Firestone, Huntington Park, Lynwood, Maywood, South Gate, Vernon, and Walnut Park as well as the adjacent communities of Commerce, Compton, East Compton, East Los Angeles, Rancho Dominguez, and Paramount.

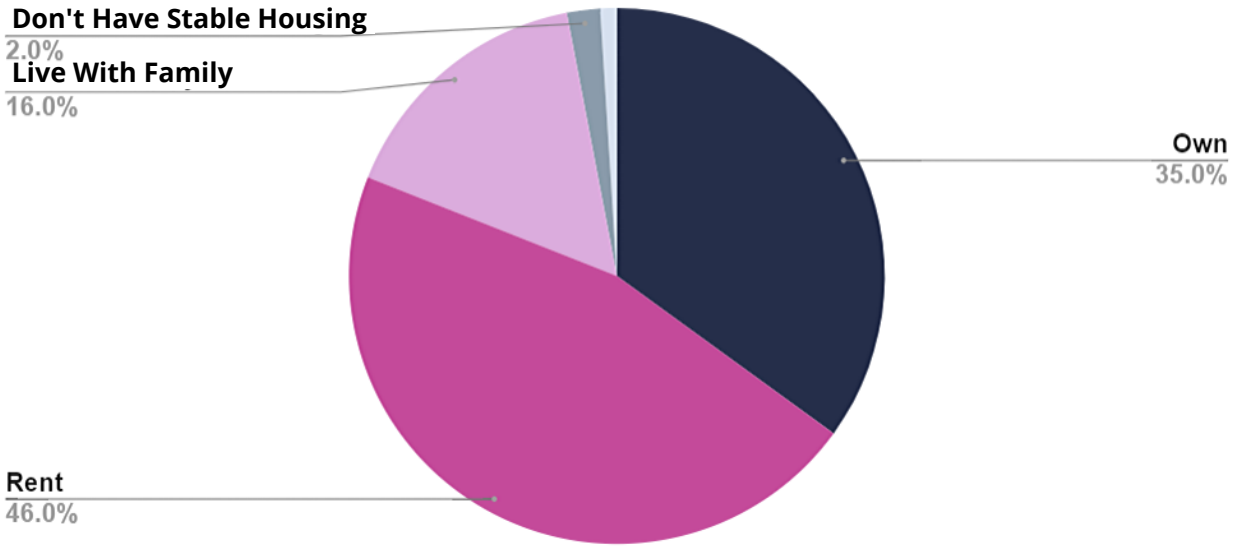
Report by Pat Brown Institute for Public Affairs at Cal State LA

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Annie Thach, Student

SELA RESIDENTS TEND TO RENT AND LIVE IN HOUSEHOLDS WITH MULTIPLE ADULTS.

Living arrangements in SELA reflect a working-class community. A plurality (46%) were renters while only 35% were homeowners, which was 13 percentage points lower than the Metropolitan Los Angeles average.[1] Among respondents, 35% reported living in households with two adults and 47% lived with three or more adults. In households with two or more adults, the clear majority (61%) had at least two people working. **In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, how many SELA residents are struggling to pay rent or mortgage?**

The majority of SELA residents do not own their home or apartment

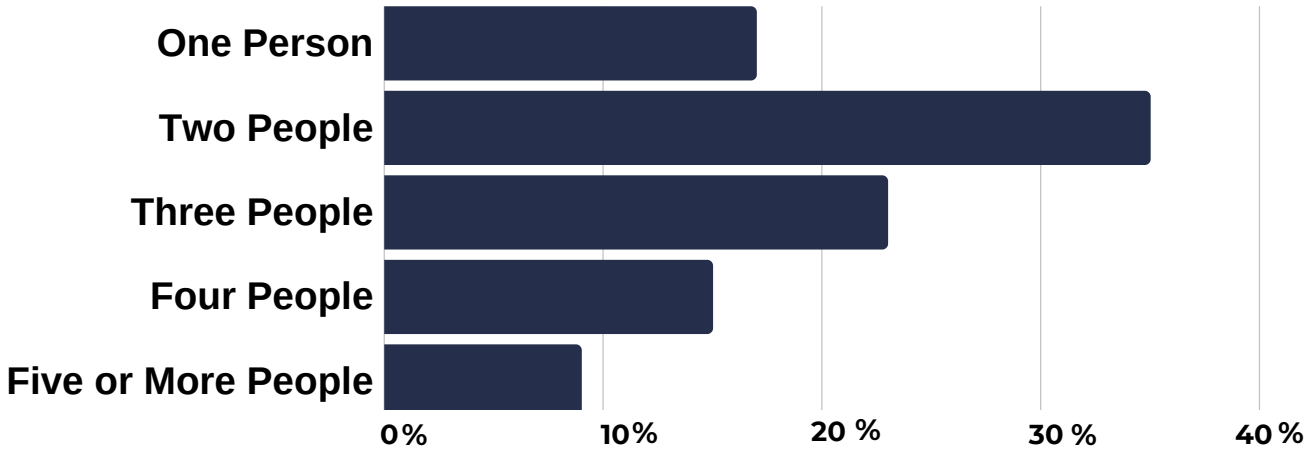


[1] https://www.census.gov/housing/hvs/data/rates.html

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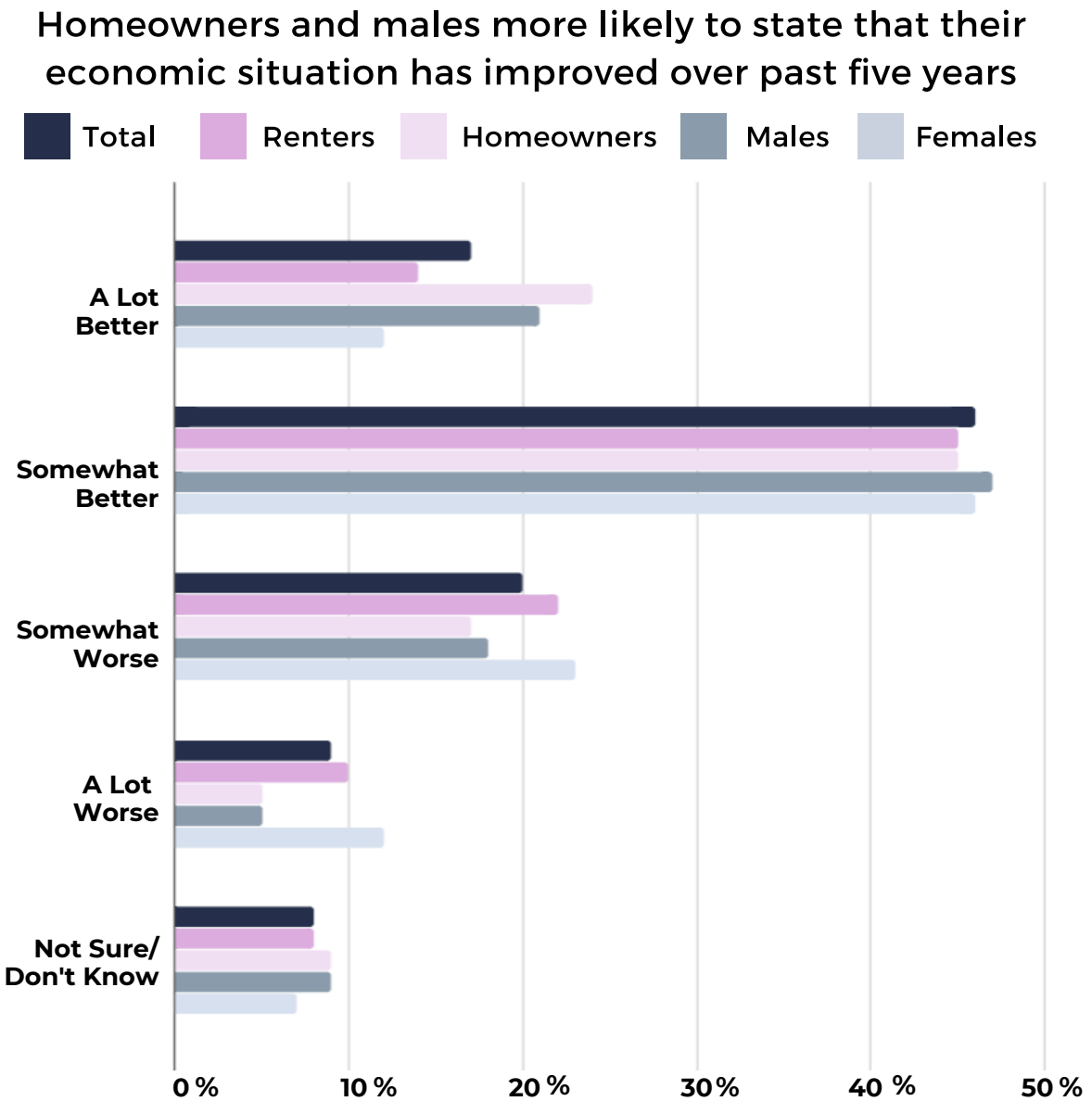
SELA RESIDENTS TEND TO RENT AND LIVE IN HOUSEHOLDS WITH MULTIPLE ADULTS.

About half live in a household with three or more people



WHILE SELA IS AN ECONOMICALLY-STRESSED COMMUNITY, CERTAIN INDICATORS POINTED UPWARD BEFORE THE PANDEMIC.

The average annual household income of our respondents ranged from $40,000 to $50,000, markedly lower than the County average of $64,251.[2] Even so, the majority of respondents (63%) stated that their personal economic situation had improved over the past five years. Whereas 69% of homeowners claimed that their economic situation had become better, only 59% of renters agreed. There was a similar gap between males and females, with males more likely to see improvements. **What economic impacts have residents experienced because of the coronavirus outbreak?**

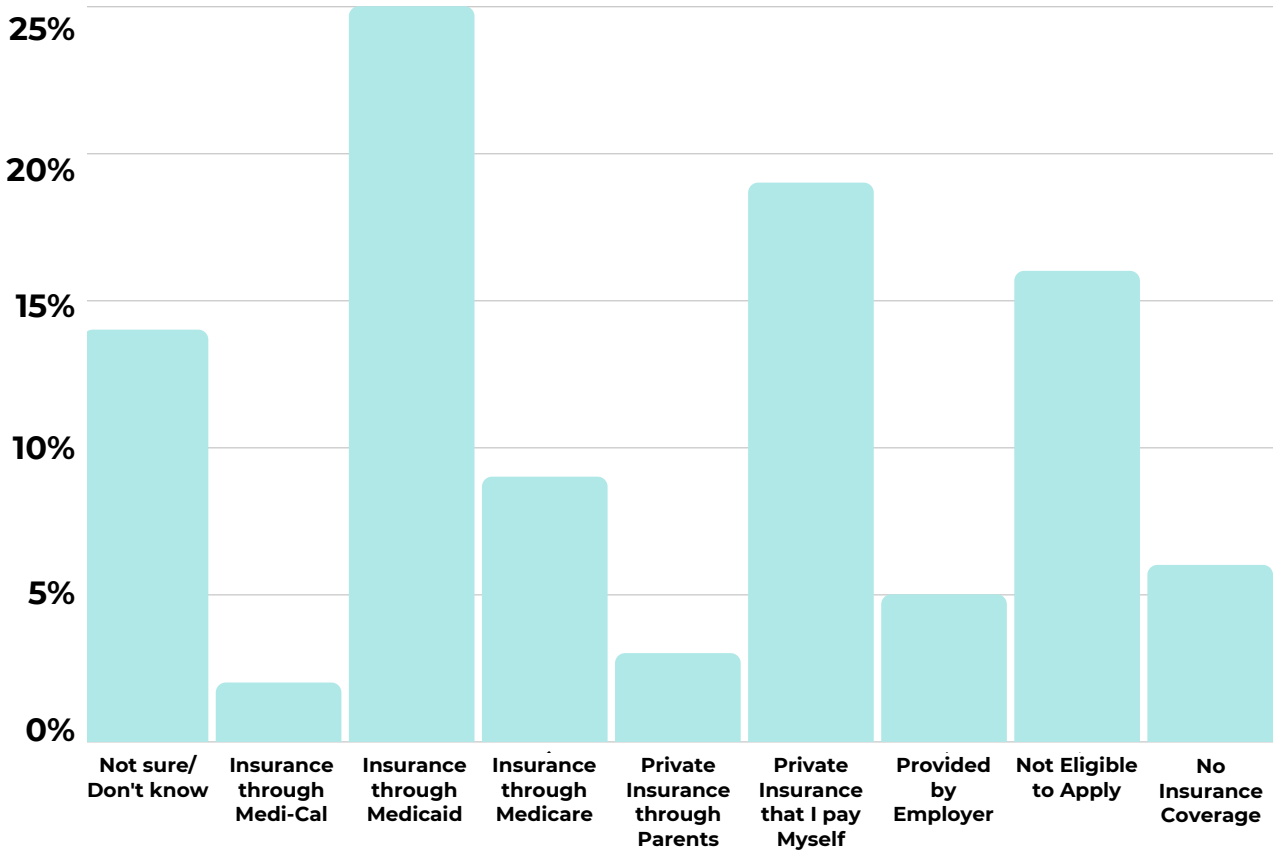


[2] https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/losangelescountycalifornia

RESPONDENTS ARE MORE LIKELY TO RECEIVE HEALTHCARE THROUGH GOVERNMENT THAN THROUGH EMPLOYER.

A plurality of the respondents received their healthcare through government-sponsored programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, and Medi-Cal. While 60% were employed, only 25% received insurance through their employer. By comparison, 47% of Californians were covered through their employer.[3] Among respondents with a college degree, 45% received insurance through an employer. SELA's uninsured rate of 16% was high compared to California's uninsured rate of 7%.[4] **During this pandemic, how have residents who have lost their employer-based coverage addressed their healthcare needs?**

Respondents receive healthcare coverage through various programs



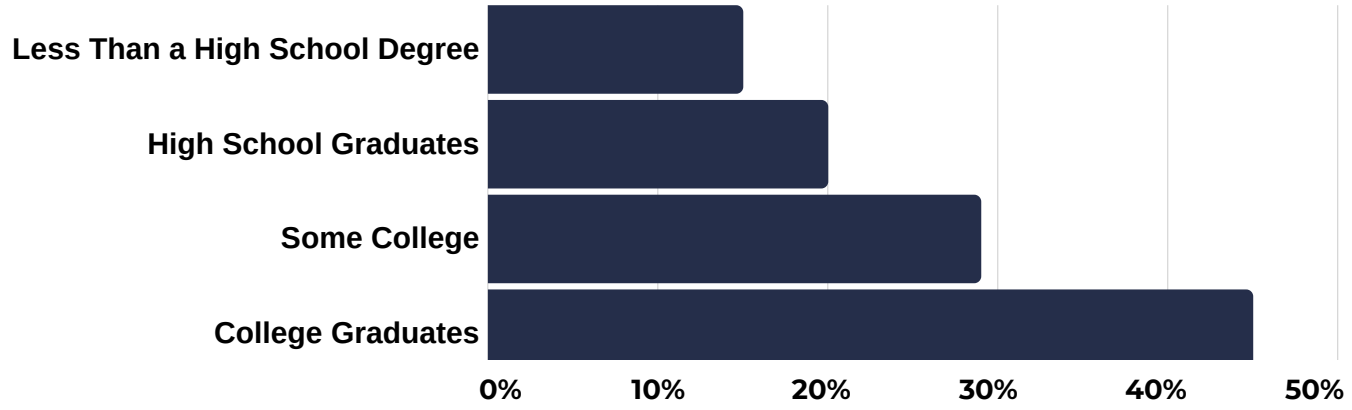
[3] https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/total-population

[4] Ibid

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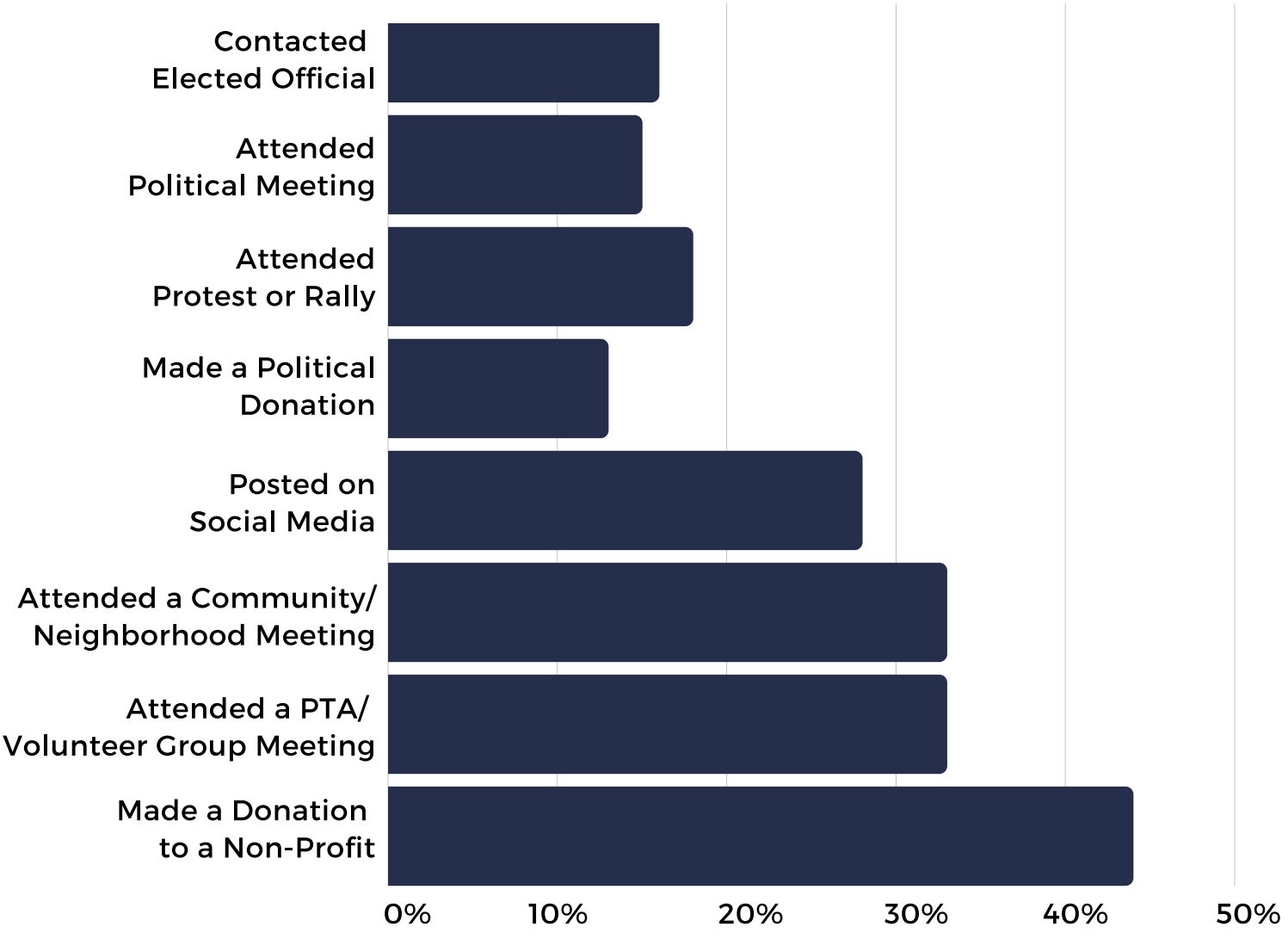
Higher levels of education correlate with employer-based insurance



RESPONDENTS ARE CIVICALLY ENGAGED.

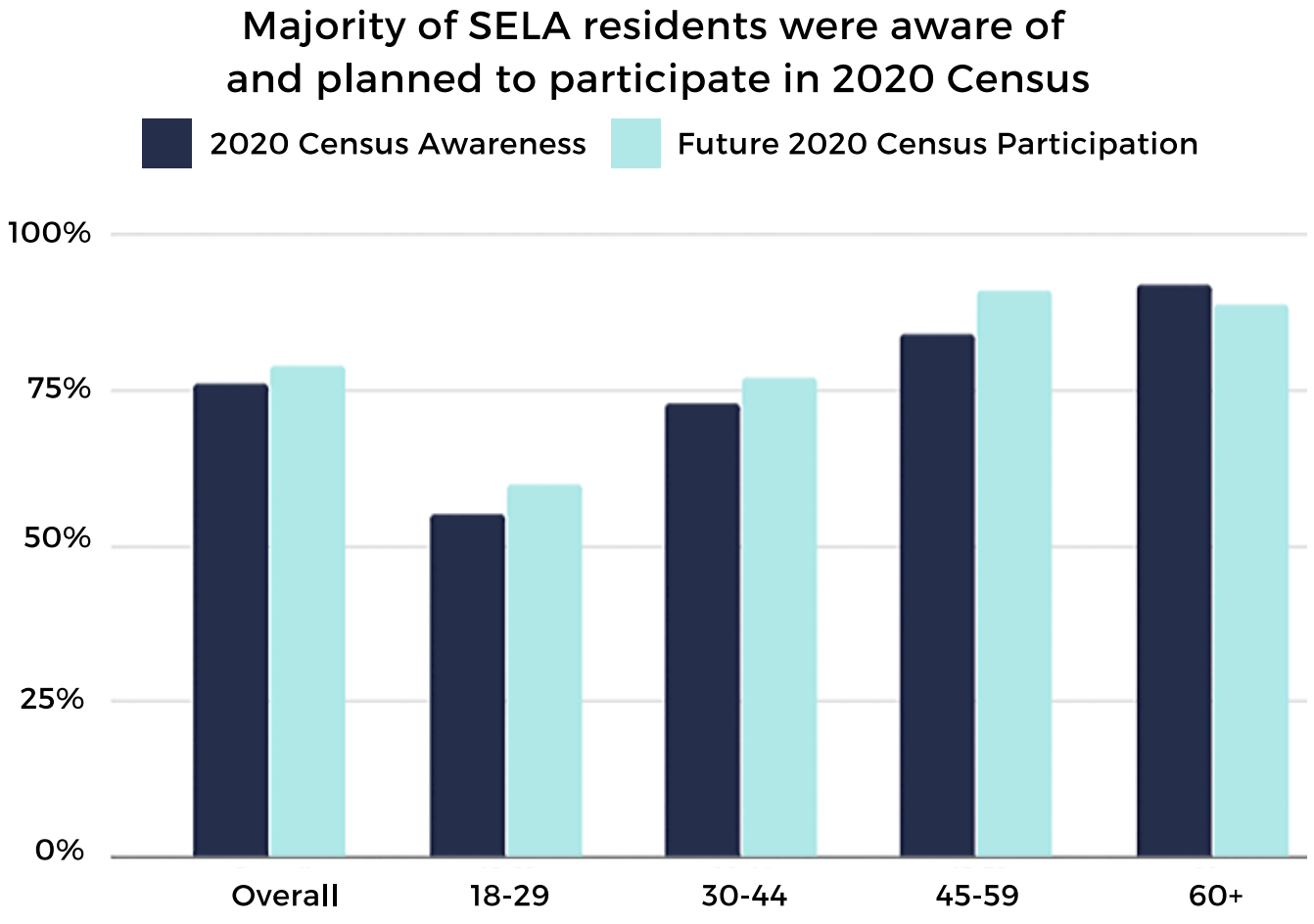
Over the last five years, survey respondents had been engaged in a number of civic activities. They were particularly involved in local neighborhood life; for example, 33% of interviewees had attended a meeting at their child's school. They were also philanthropic, as 44% had donated to a nonprofit or charitable organization. In addition to offline engagement, a large percentage of respondents (28%) posted messages about social or political issues on social media. Younger respondents were considerably more likely than older residents to utilize social media. **As a result of the pandemic, how have civic and philanthropic activities been impacted?**

SELA residents are involved in civic activities



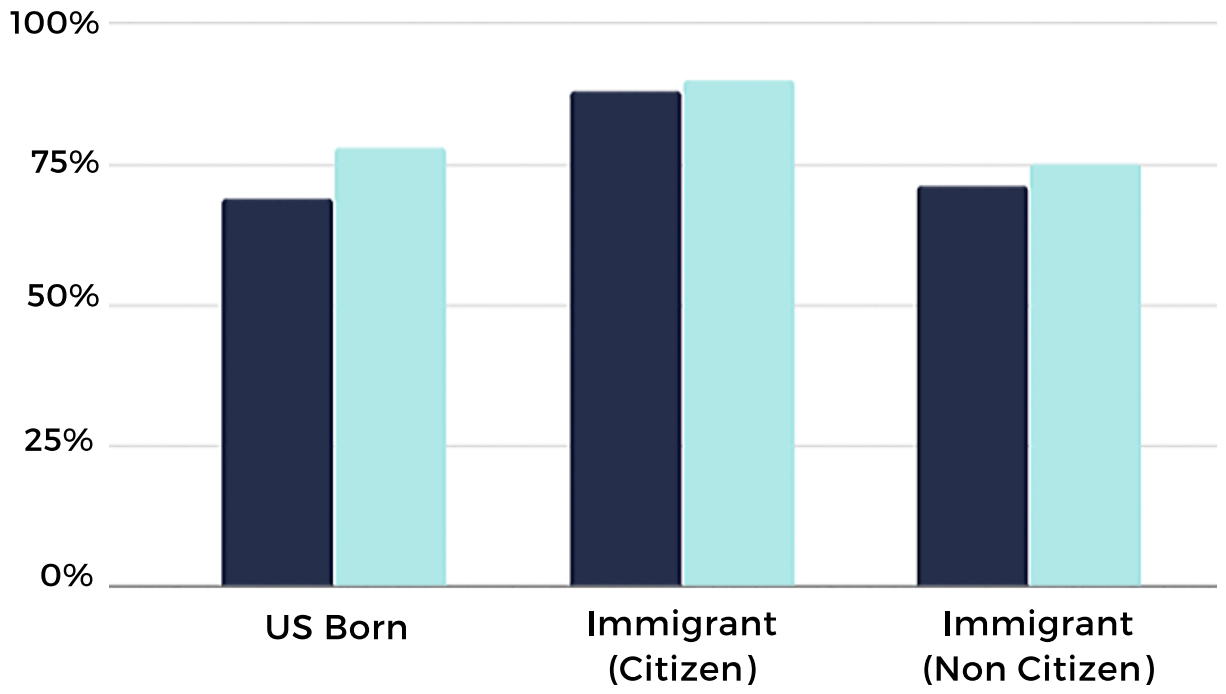
RESPONDENTS WERE AWARE OF AND PLANNED TO PARTICIPATE IN CENSUS 2020.

In this survey taken in December 2019, the vast majority of respondents said they were ready for the census. 76% said they were aware of the census, and 79% reported that they intended to complete the form. Older adults (45-59, 60+) were more likely than younger adults (18-29, 30-44) to claim awareness of and indicate their participation in this year's census. Compared to immigrants without citizenship status, immigrants with citizenship were 17 percentage points more likely to be aware and 15 percentage points more likely to indicate participation. Among SELA respondents born in the US, only 69% indicated awareness and 78% noted that they planned to participate. Among those who said they intended to take the census, about 38% preferred to complete the form online and 22% in-person. The share of those who preferred to respond to the census in person is noteworthy, since the global pandemic has largely removed this option. **Do residents who initially wanted to participate in the census in-person plan to complete the form in an alternative way?**

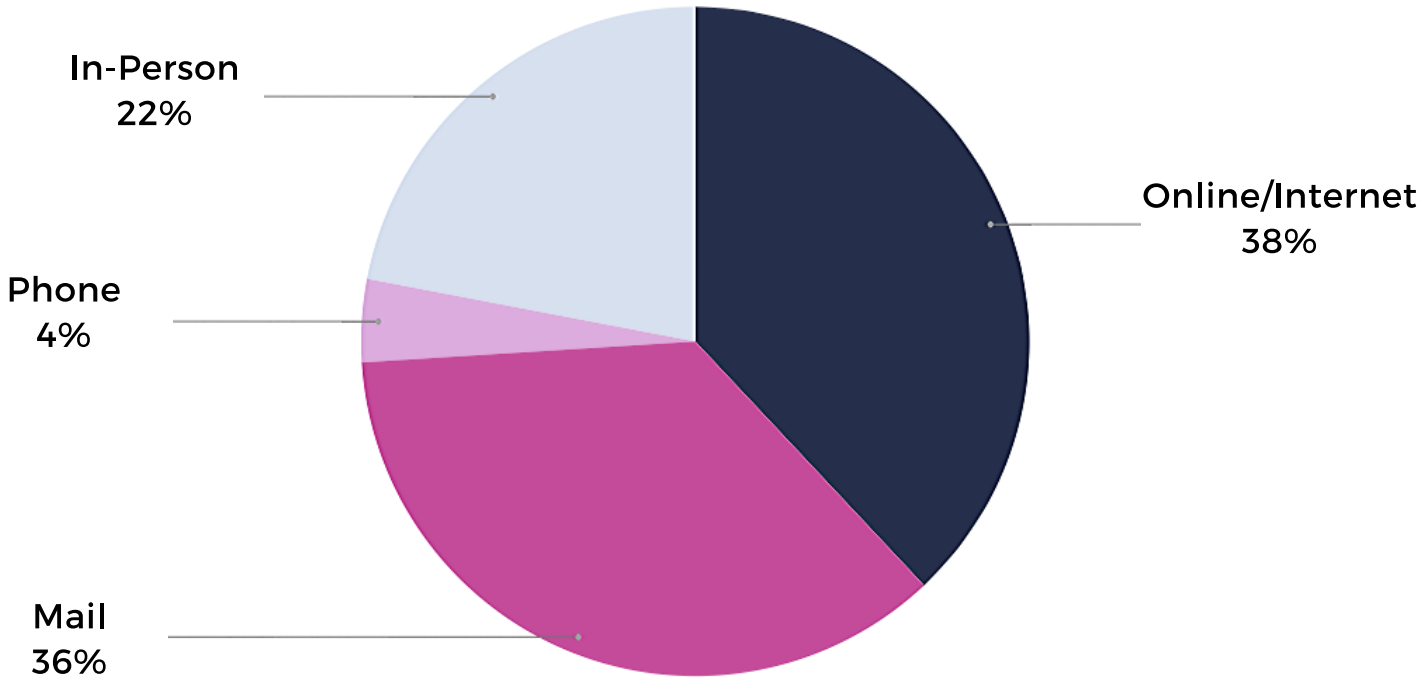


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Census attitudes shaped by citizenship status

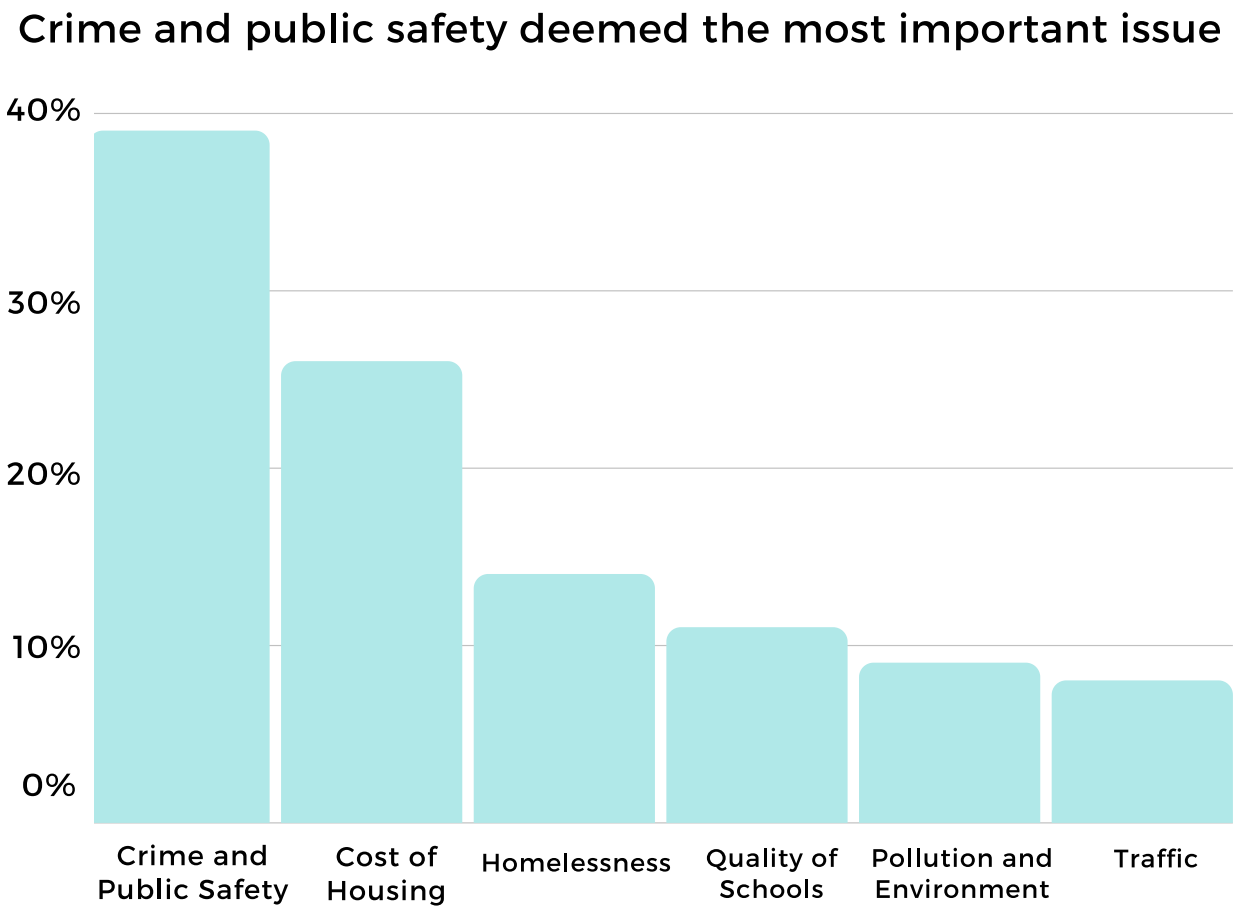


SELA residents preferred to take the census online or by mail



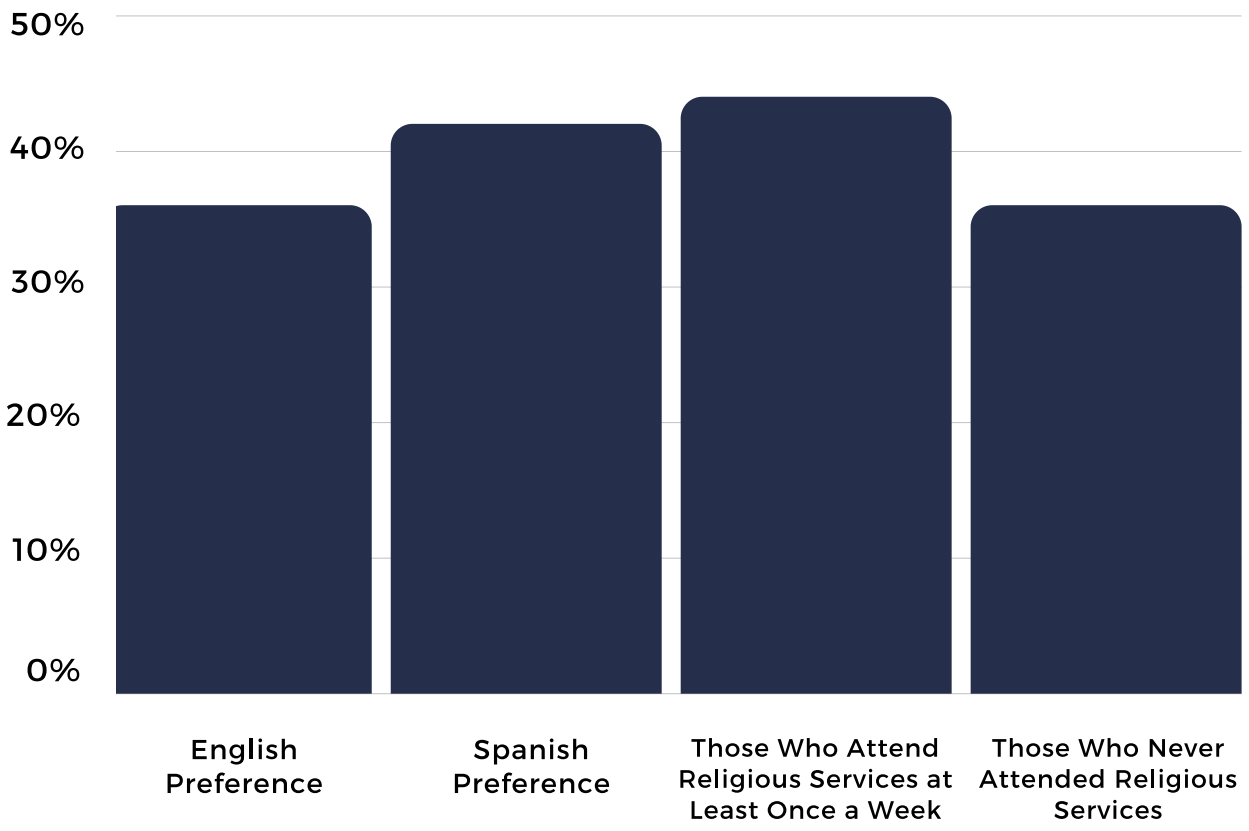
PUBLIC SAFETY WAS THE TOP CONCERN.

Of all issues in the community before the pandemic, survey respondents considered crime and public safety to be the top one facing the community, followed by the cost of housing and homelessness. The response differed noticeably across demographic groups. 44% of those who attended religious services at least once a week expressed concern about crime/public safety while only 36% of those who never attended shared this concern. Additionally, Spanish language interviewees were six percentage points more likely than those who completed the survey in English to identify crime and public safety as their primary community concern. **With public health so dominant during the crisis, which other issues are currently considered critical?**



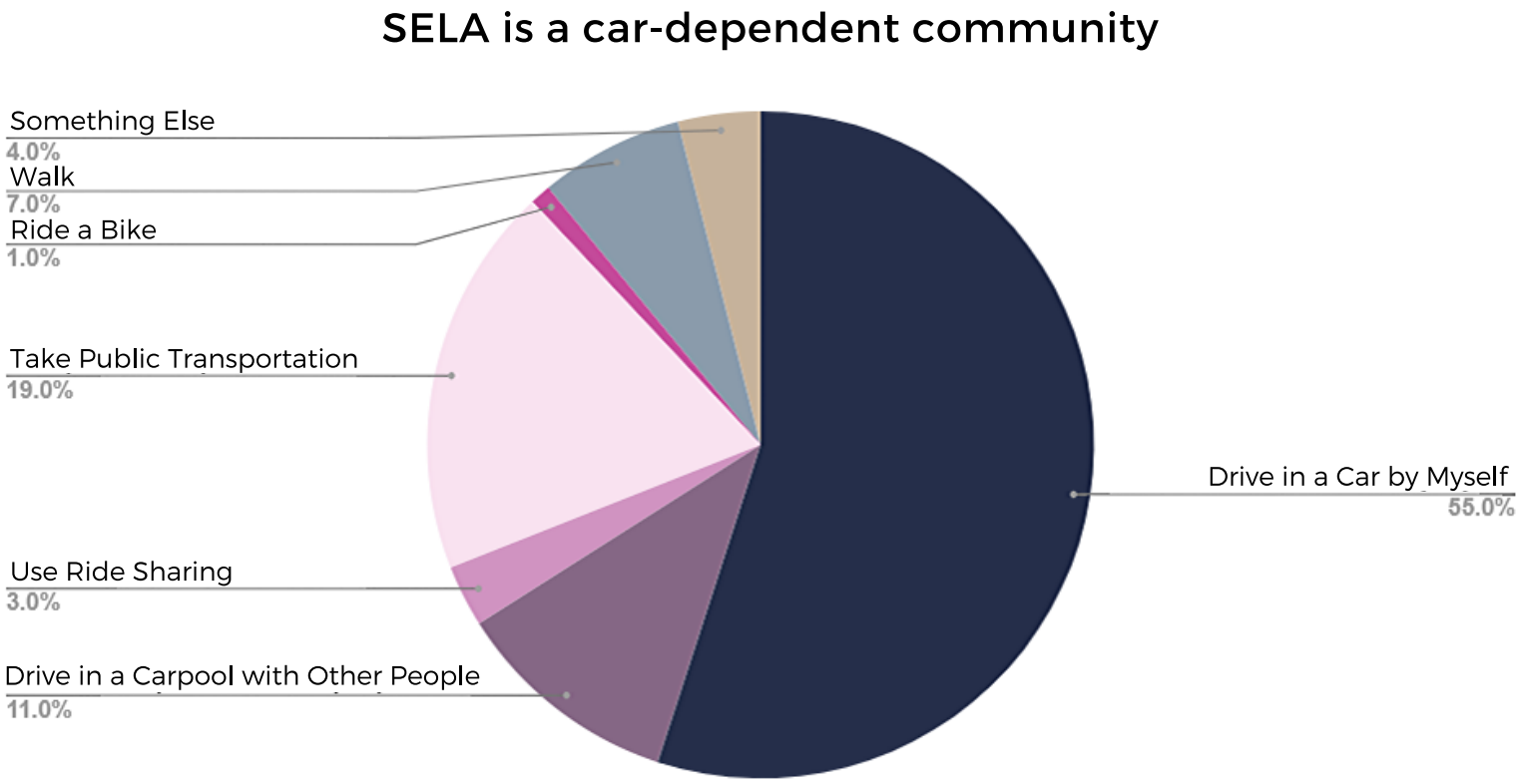
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Concern about crime and public safety particularly high among those who frequently attend religious services and took survey in Spanish



COMMUTING IS A SOURCE OF FRUSTRATION.

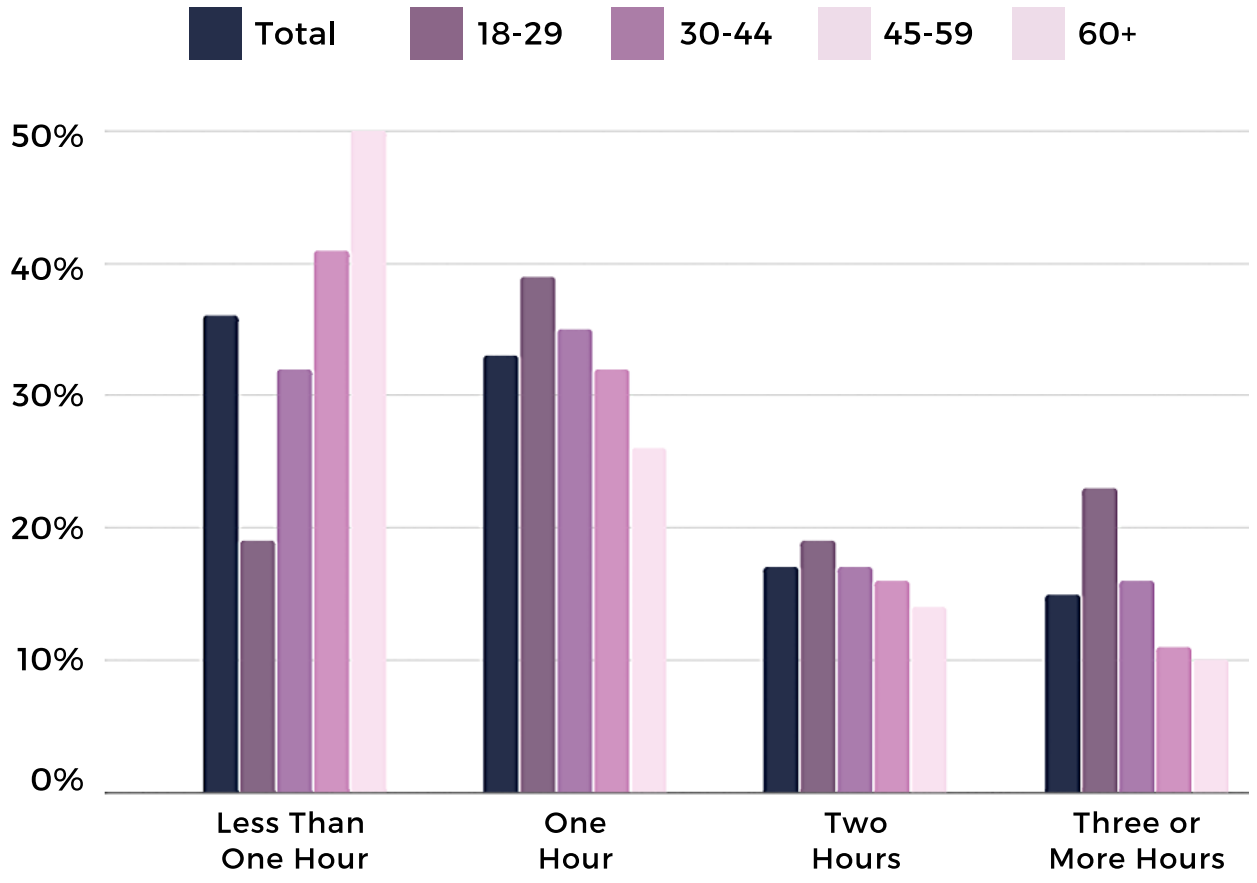
The majority of those respondents who were employed relied on a car for their daily commutes and spent a considerable amount of time getting to and from their jobs. Only 36% of respondents had commutes under an hour. Younger respondents had particularly long commutes, with 81% of 18-to-29-year-olds commuting over an hour each day. 43% of respondents considered commuting long distances something that made work life more difficult. **During this pandemic, how many are still commuting to their jobs and have their commuting patterns changed?**



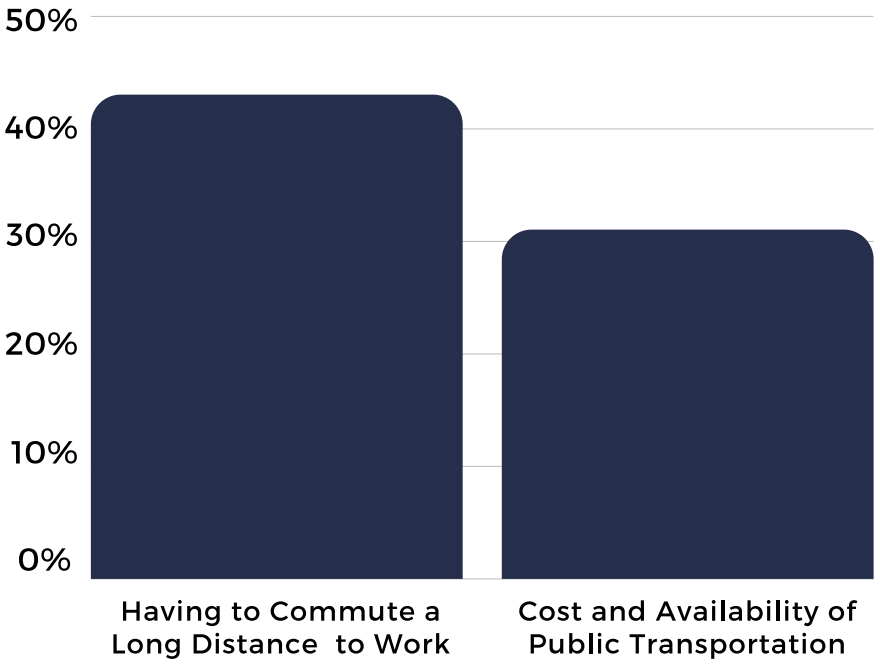
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COMMUTING IS A SOURCE OF FRUSTRATION.

Survey respondents face long commutes

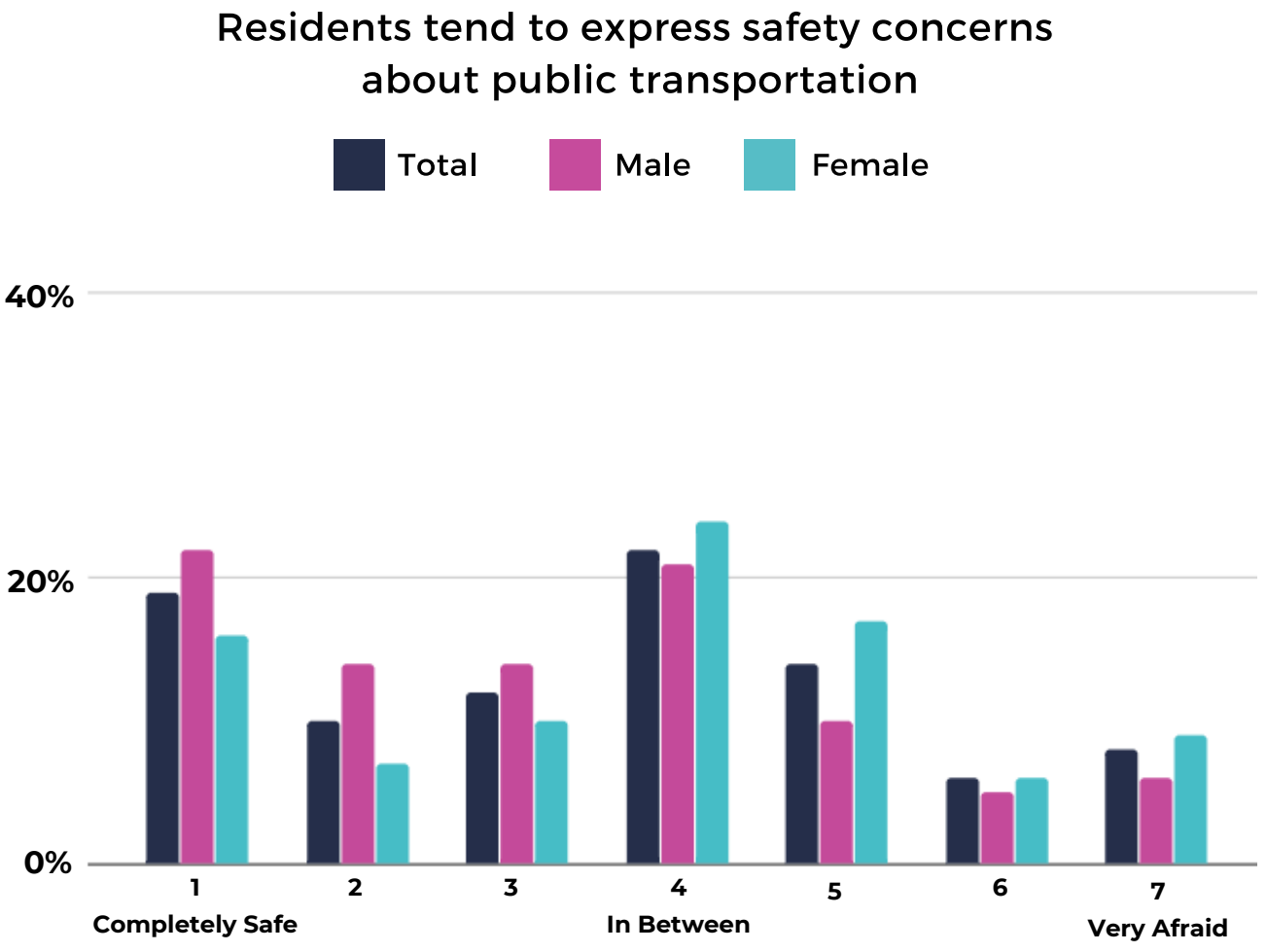


Commuting makes work life more challenging



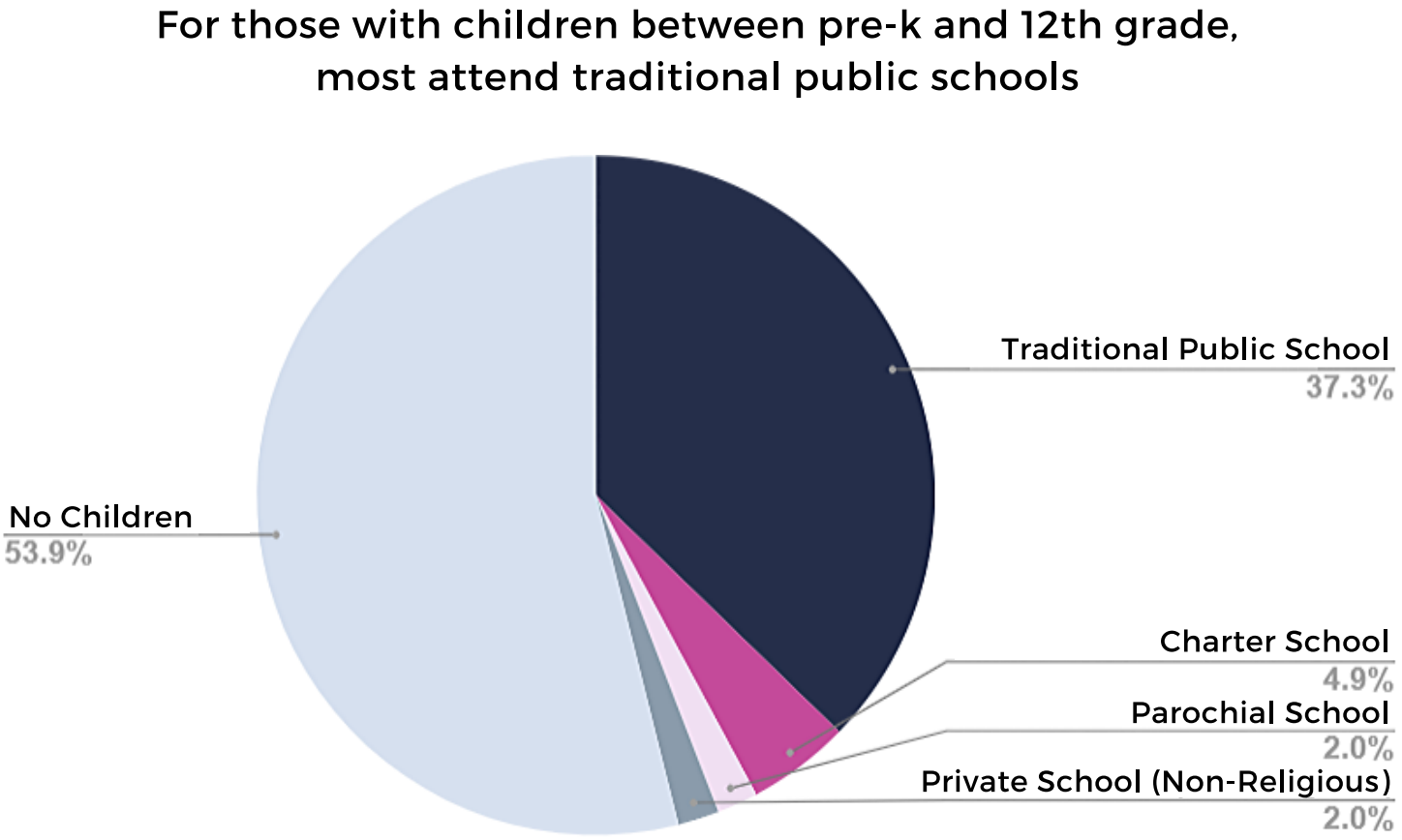
PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION IS A MAJOR CHALLENGE.

Survey respondents found public transportation to be frustrating. 31% reported that the cost and availability of public transportation made work life more difficult; this challenge was 15 percentage points higher (46%) among 18-to-29-year-olds. Meanwhile, 50% of residents, including 56% of females, did not feel safe using public transportation. **During the pandemic, how reliable has public transportation service been for the SELA community?**



SELA PARENTS LARGELY RELY ON PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

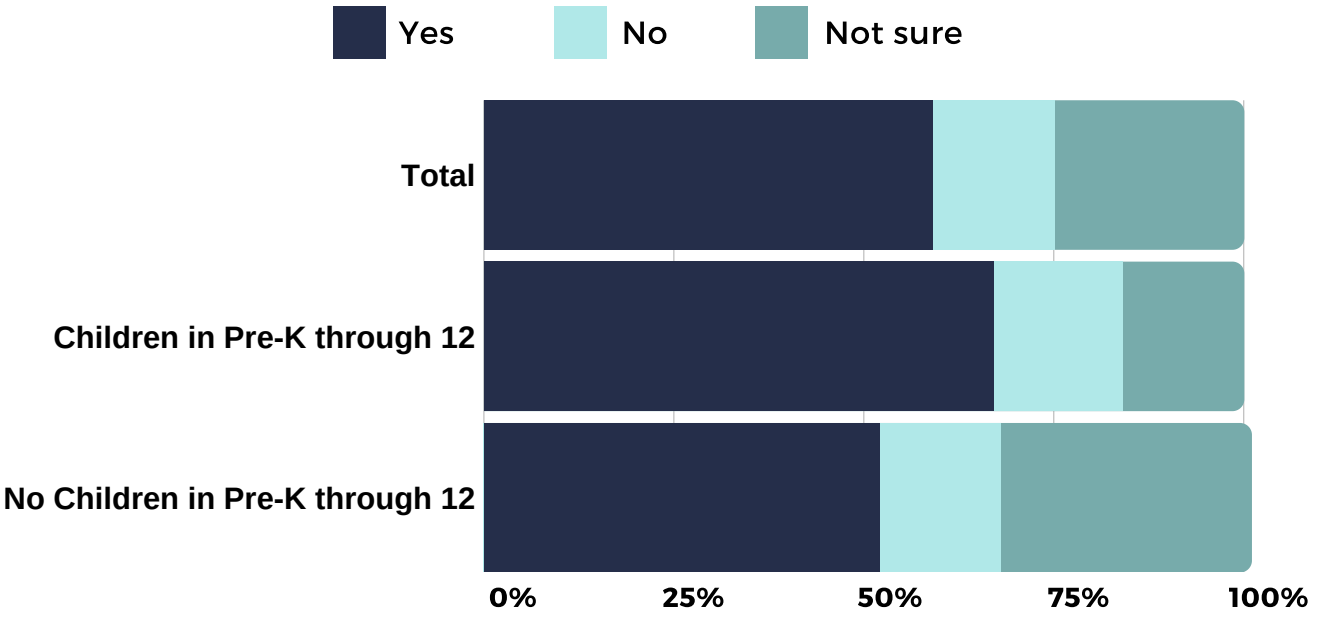
About half of the respondents (47%) had children who were between pre-kindergarten and high school age. The vast majority of parents sent their children to traditional public schools, followed by charter schools (public schools that operate semi-independently of school districts), parochial schools, and non-religious private schools. Parents with school-aged children were 12 percentage points more likely to claim that local schools provided a high quality of education. While 67% of those with children stated that schools provided good opportunities for family involvement, only 52% of those without children did so. **Given the transition to online schooling, do parents have access to the resources to support their children with distance learning?**



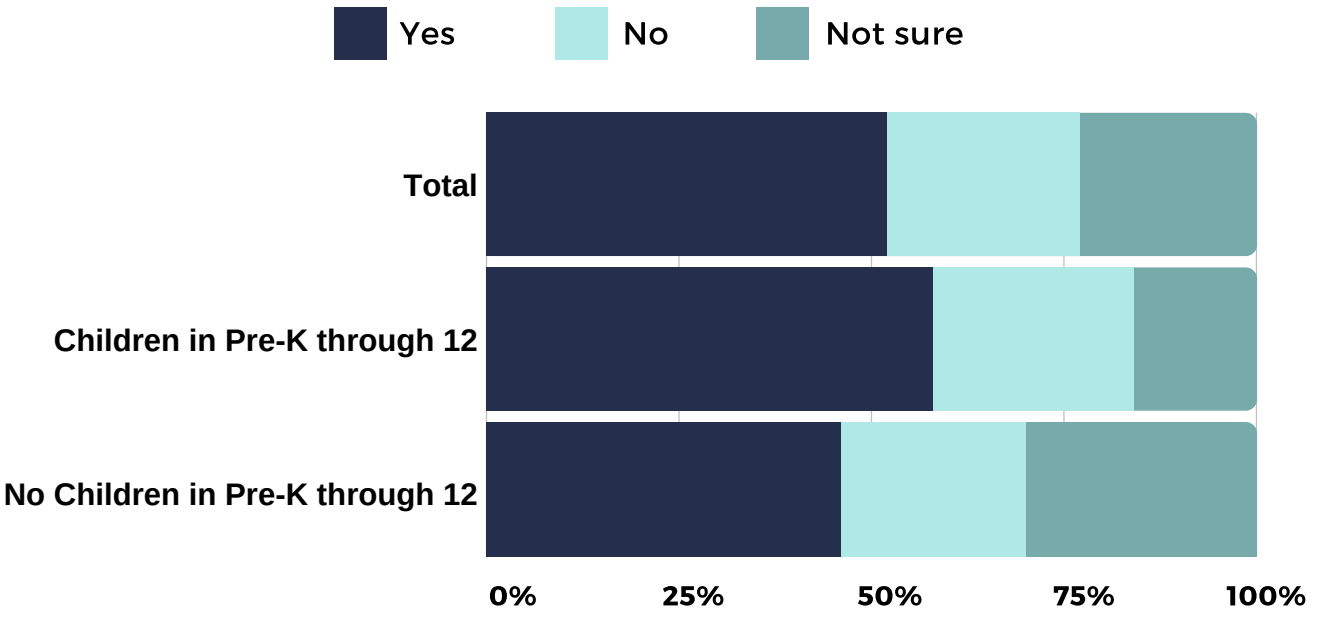
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SELA PARENTS LARGELY RELY ON PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

Parents more likely to claim that schools provide good opportunities for family involvement



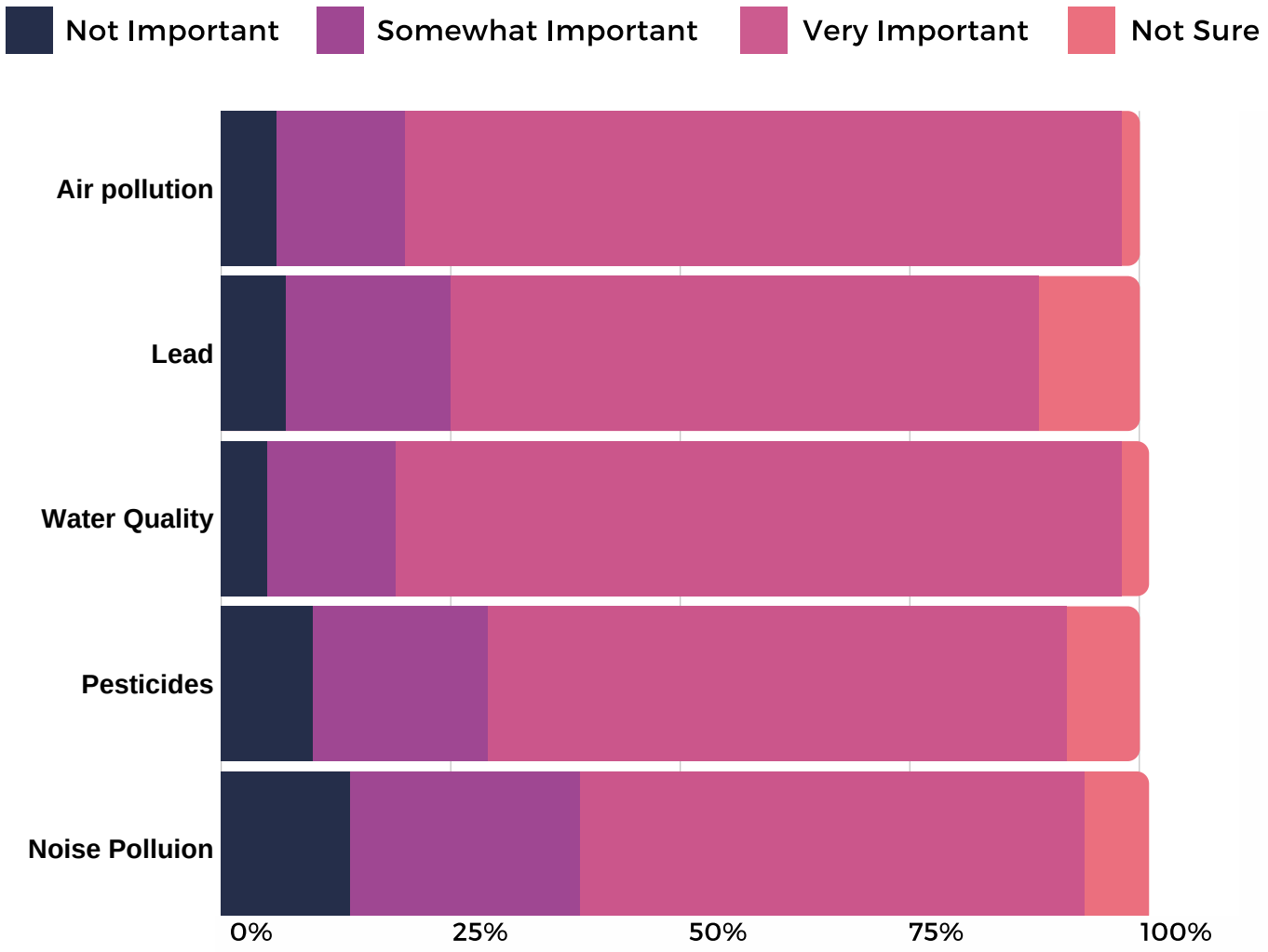
Parents more likely to claim that schools provide high quality education



RESPONDENTS WORRY ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS.

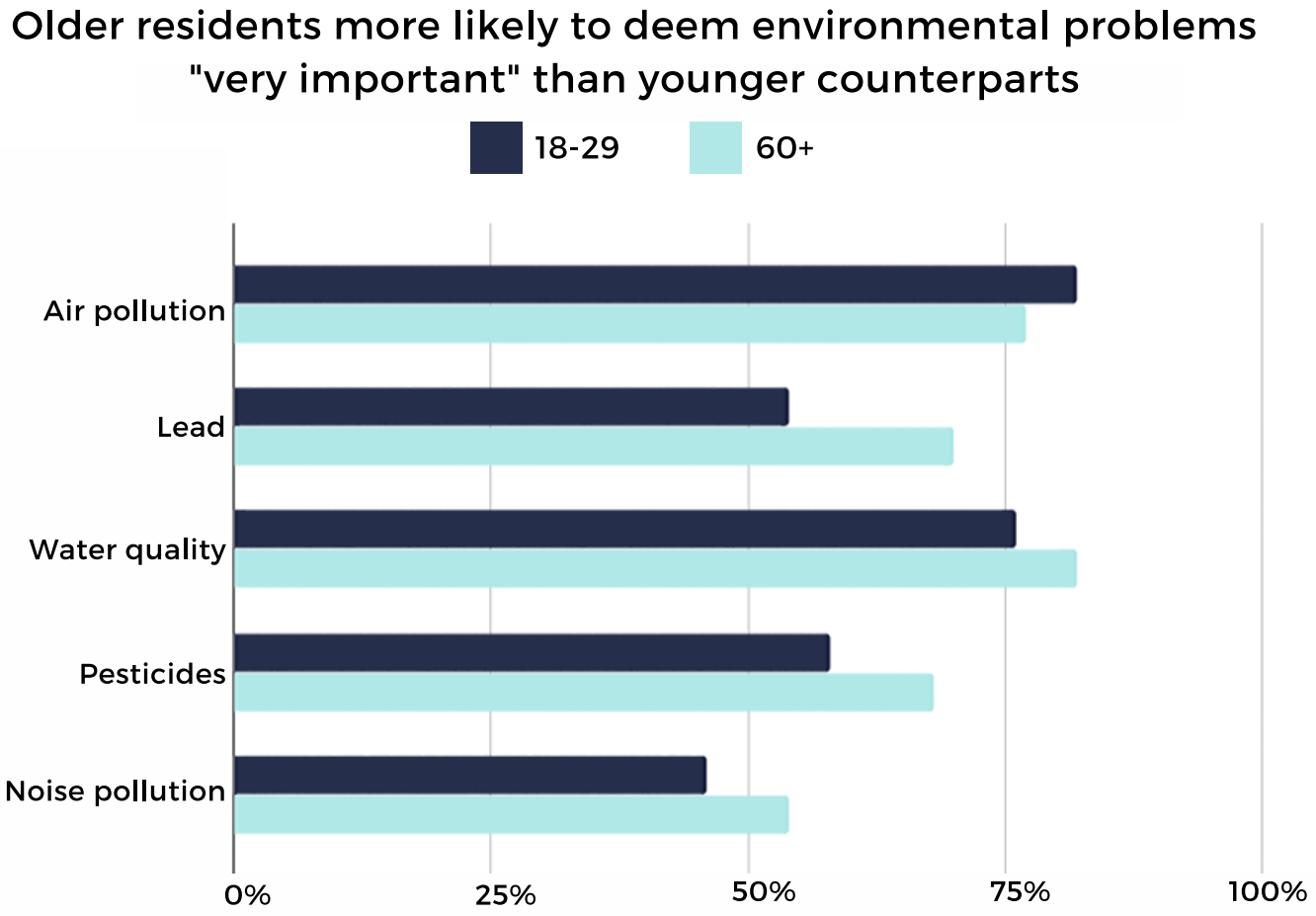
Survey respondents were seriously concerned about environmental problems within the community. Air pollution and water quality were deemed particularly worrisome, followed by lead, pesticides, and noise pollution. Age played a role in shaping these perceptions. With the exception of air pollution, the respondents who were 60 and older were more likely to consider these environmental hazards as "very important" than those who were 18 to 29. **Has the pandemic changed concerns about environmental hazards?**

Residents worry about the environment, especially water quality and air pollution



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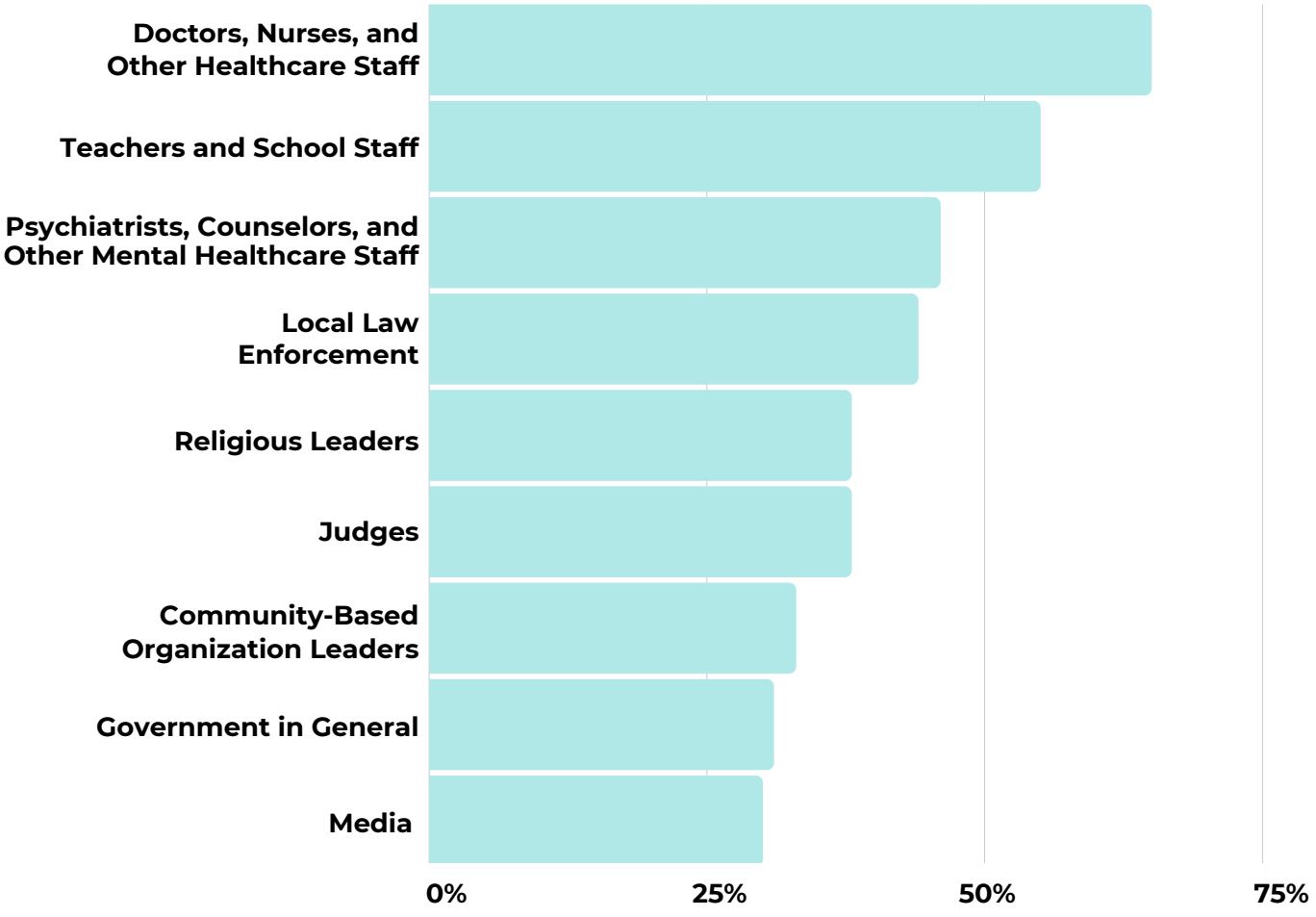
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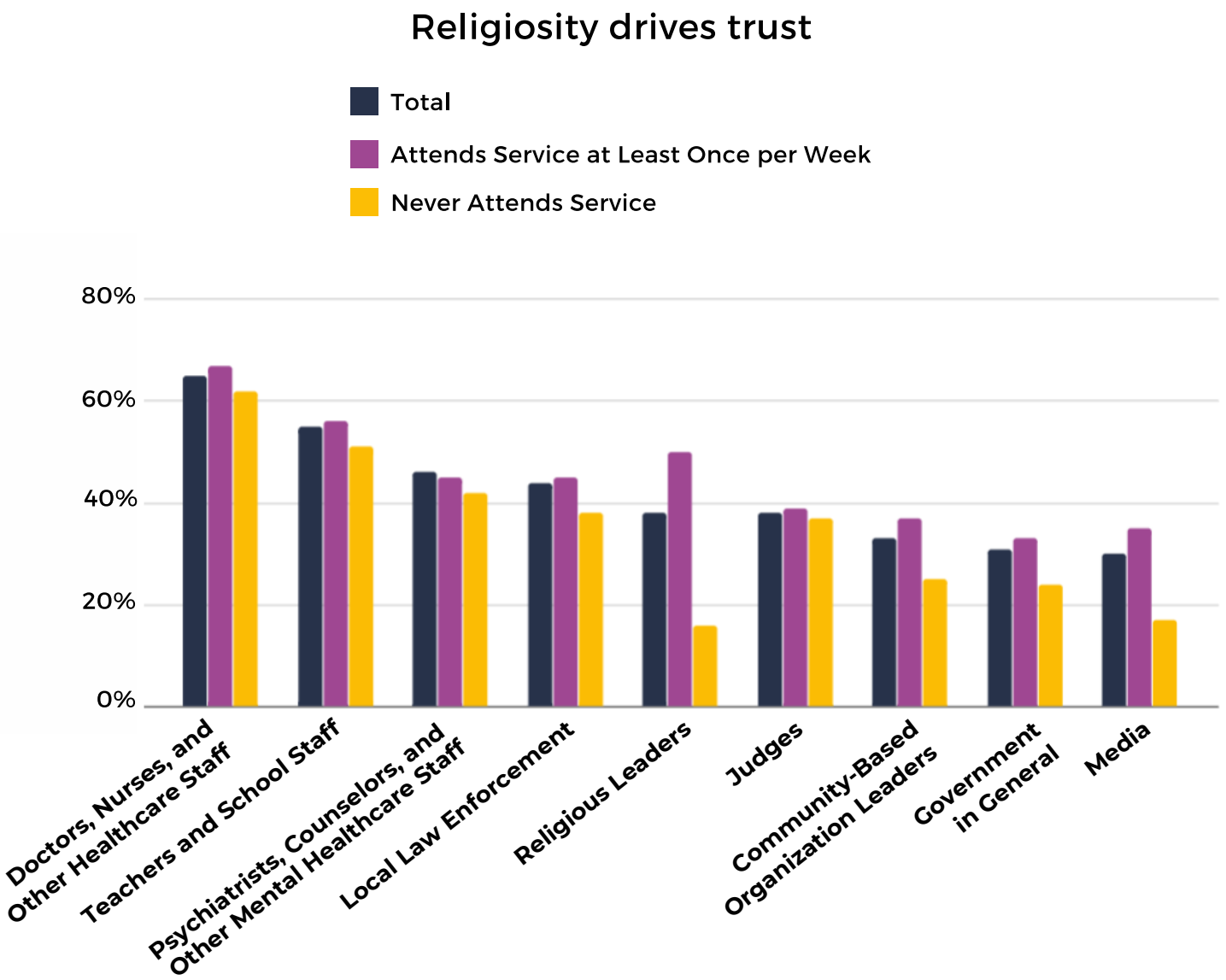
SELA RESIDENTS TRUST HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS AND TEACHERS MOST.

Interviewees expressed highest levels of trust in healthcare workers and school teachers—professionals who are playing key roles in serving the SELA community during the COVID-19 crisis. Respondents believed these professionals were responsive to their needs at least 50% of the time. Local law enforcement, judges, and the leaders of community-based organizations were in the next rung of trustworthiness. Religious services attendance tended to be associated with higher levels of trust. **During this public health crisis, whom do residents trust to provide accurate information about COVID-19?**

Residents deem healthcare professionals and teachers as highly trustworthy



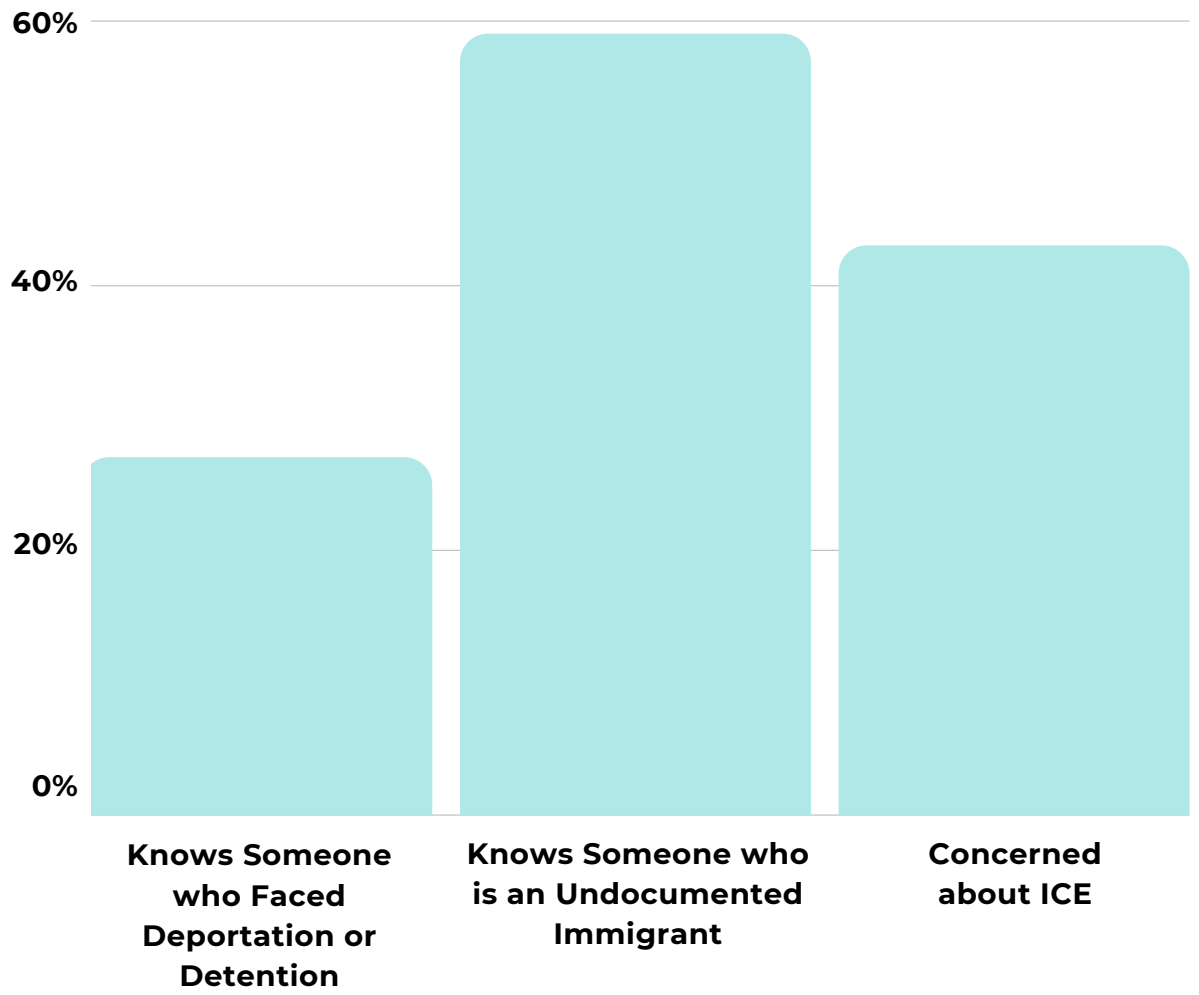
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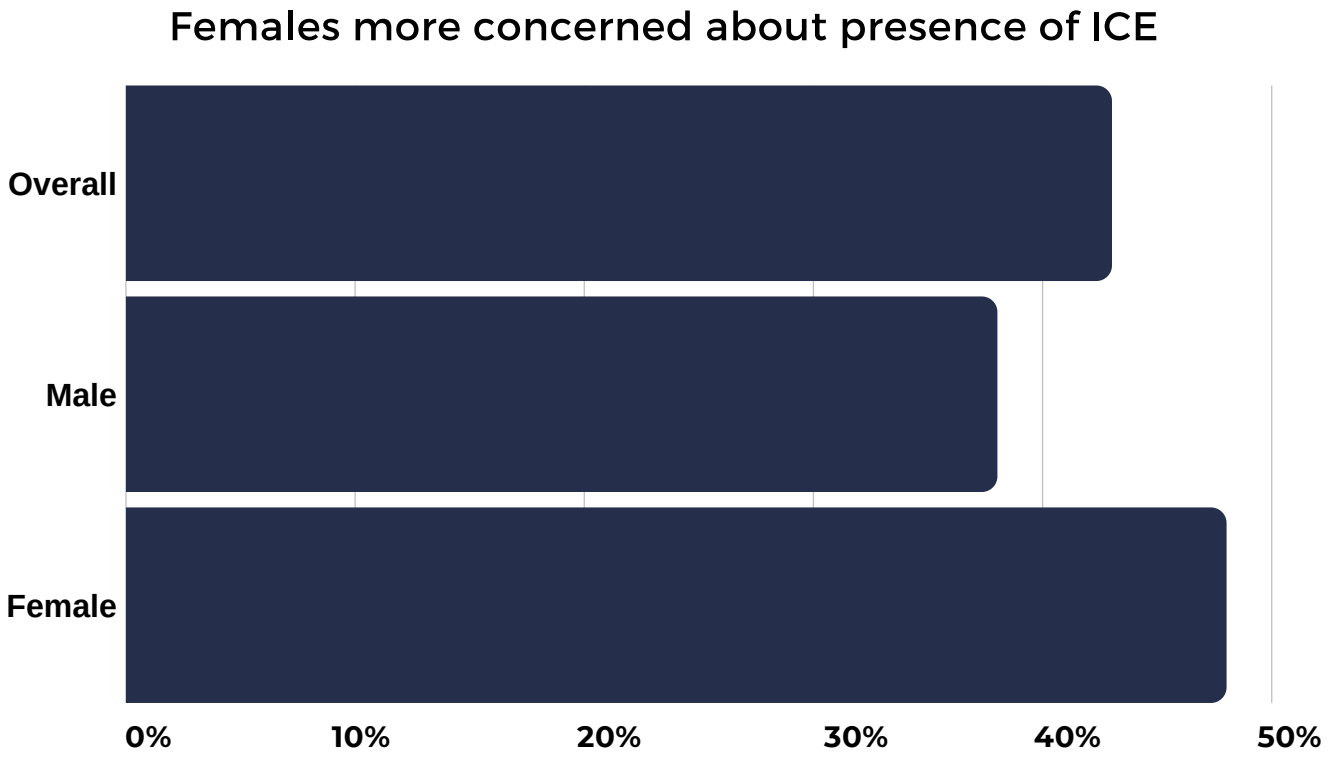
WHILE RESPONDENTS THINK SELA IS A WELCOMING PLACE FOR IMMIGRANTS, MANY ARE CONCERNED ABOUT ICE.

In our sample, about 60% of residents knew someone who was an undocumented immigrant, while 27% knew someone who had been detained or deported. The vast majority (78%) thought that their community was a welcoming place for immigrants. Nearly half of residents (43%), however, were concerned about the presence of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in SELA. Females were 10 percentage points more likely than males to express this concern. **In the midst of this pandemic, how concerned are residents about immigration policy and the presence of ICE in SELA?**

SELA views on immigration are both personal and concerning



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CONCLUSION

By amplifying the voices of SELA's residents, the *Living and Working in SELA* survey provides insight into the region and its baseline conditions just before the pandemic. Many of the challenges of daily life in SELA that are documented in the survey have been compounded by COVID-19. In light of the pandemic, our research team has set out to administer a second survey that will allow us to more precisely understand how the region's residents are contending with the current crisis in light of the assets and challenges that were already present beforehand.

The two surveys together will provide community leaders with a roadmap for addressing the needs of the region during this perilous time and for policies going forward after the crisis is past.