



CCATE X HEALTHSPARK

Community Assembly Report

An in-depth report on the key findings from a February 2026 convening, featuring data-driven analysis of current events in the immigrant population, detailed insights into families' experiences, and additional evidenced-based perspectives.

APRIL 2026

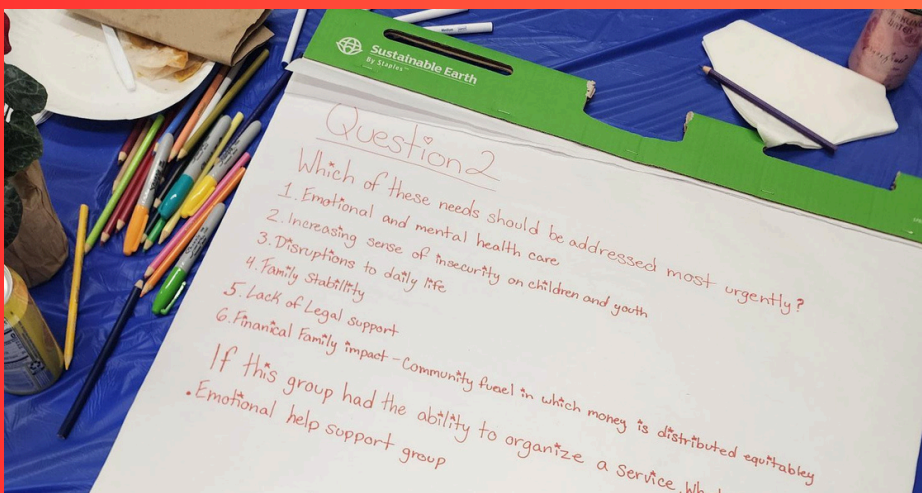
Introduction

In February 2026, Centro de Cultura, Arte, Trabajo y Educación (CCATE) and HealthSpark Foundation convened a Community Assembly to mark one year since the first detention in Montgomery County on January 27, 2025 – a moment that continues to shape the experiences of local families and the broader community.

Originally conceived by CCATE and realized through partnership with HealthSpark, the Community Assembly created a space centered on community voice, healing, and collective care. The convening was grounded in lived experience and designed to foster open dialogue on the evolving challenges facing immigrant families and their neighbors.

To inform the discussion, CCATE and HealthSpark distributed a bilingual questionnaire in English and Spanish in advance. The questionnaire invited community members to reflect on their experiences, awareness of available resources, and perspectives on the challenges impacting immigrant communities.

This report presents the objectives and design of the community assembly, and the detailed results for each question of the questionnaire, along with an analysis of how these results interact with the dialogue that took place during the assembly. Each section includes suggestions and interpretations of data that are not conclusive.



Objective

The purpose of the community assembly was to bring together a diversity of voices to engage in direct dialogue with members of the immigrant community in Montgomery County. The meeting sought to create a space for collective reflection around four guiding questions designed to:

- Humanize the migration experience and highlight the social agency of the immigrant community.
- Recognize and reflect on the current historical moment and the experiences lived by community members during the past 13 months.
- Identify possible solutions through community collaboration and joint efforts.
- Provide direction and establish priorities for action.
- Develop a broad map of the resources that currently exist in Montgomery County.

Attendance

The assembly included 107 participants, not including HealthSpark and CCATE staff, who also took part in the dialogue tables.

Among those present:

- **50** were members of the immigrant community
- **57** represented partner organizations

Participants included:

- Congresswoman **Madeleine Dean**
- **Carlos G. Obrador**, Head of the Consulate of Mexico, Philadelphia
- Representatives from the office of State Senator **Maria Collett**
- Other state representatives
- Nonprofit organizations
- Philanthropy: People's Media Fund and Barra Foundation
- Immigration attorneys and paralegals
- Mental health professionals
- Professor **Sarah Paoletti** from the University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School
- Professor **Michele Pistone** from Villanova Law School
- Students in law, public policy, and political science
- Representatives from the Democratic Party and Socialist Democrats
- Allies of the immigrant community

This diversity allowed for broad dialogue among different sectors that work directly or indirectly with the immigrant community.



Method

Participatory Action Research

As mentioned in the Introduction, prior to the assembly, a questionnaire was distributed in both English and Spanish to gather initial perspectives and prepare participants for the dialogue; the Questionnaire allowed community members and allies to discuss topics prior to the discussion.

The questionnaire included the follow sections:

- Basic demographic information (age, gender, and ethnicity)
- Context and perspective
- Understanding and experiences with the impacts of Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) actions in communities
- Knowledge of existing resources within and for the community
- Financial impact of immigration policies on families and businesses
- Possible next steps to address issues of concern
- Media and communication strategies

The questionnaire allowed participants to arrive at the assembly with preliminary reflections on the topics to be discussed. In this way, the dialogue tables could begin with already developed ideas and substantive contributions.

In total, the following questionnaires were received:

- 51 questionnaires in English
- 51 questionnaires in Spanish



The Dialogue Session

The assembly began with welcoming remarks by Emma Hertz, President and CEO of HealthSpark Foundation, and Obed Arango, Founder and Executive Director of CCATE.

Originally, the room had been prepared for 60 to 80 participants organized into 10 dialogue tables. However, the community attendance exceeded expectations, and the space had to be reorganized to accommodate 21 dialogue groups.

Each table originally designed for ten participants was divided into two groups, and one additional table was set up at the ends of the room.

The organization of each table sought to include a diversity of perspectives, aiming to include:

- one or two members of the immigrant community
- one government representative
- one attorney or legal specialist
- one emotional or mental health professional
- one representative from community organizations or foundations
- community allies

Tables consisted of small groups of five to seven participants in order to facilitate deeper and more participatory dialogue.

The dialogue lasted 65 minutes.

Each group was asked to record their reflections on flip charts and respond to two of the four guiding questions. The questions were assigned as follows:

- Tables responding to Questions 1 and 3
- Tables responding to Questions 2 and 4

This method allowed for a balanced number of responses for each topic.

All flip charts were later digitized for analysis through a process of thematic coding and categorization.

Dialogue Questions

Dialogue protocols were distributed at each table, and all participants received a full packet with the materials and discussion questions.

Question I

During the past 12 months:

What event related to immigration enforcement or ICE actions had the greatest impact on the Montgomery County community?

Question II

Since the election of the current Presidential Administration in November 2024, several community responses have emerged to address needs such as:

- Lack of legal support
- After-school programs
- Emotional and mental health support
- Family stability
- Financial impact on families
- Growing sense of insecurity among children and youth
- Disruptions to daily life

Based on this context:

- Which of these needs should be addressed most urgently?
- If this group had the ability to organize a service, how should it be designed?
- What recommendations would you offer nonprofit organizations regarding the services they should prioritize at this time on immigration issues?



Dialogue Questions Continued

Question III

Over the past year:

- How do you evaluate communication between public officials, authorities, and the community?
- Is there trust in public authorities?
- If so, why?
- If not, why not?
- What are the main obstacles to building trust?
- What suggestions could help strengthen trust and collaboration?
- What questions remain unanswered and should be clarified by authorities?

Question IV

Although immigration policy is a federal responsibility, there are initiatives that can be promoted at the local, county, and state levels.

- What recommendations would you offer elected officials to promote initiatives or legislative changes?

Since 1986, there has been a call to build a more humane immigration system that allows families to obtain documentation and opens a pathway toward permanent residency and citizenship. Although previous attempts have failed in Congress, it is expected that the issue will once again become central in the next presidential cycle.

In this context, CCATE intends to develop a draft legislative proposal to share with members of U.S. Congress.

Participants were asked:

Would you be willing to participate in future workshops to collaboratively design and draft this proposal?

Panel Discussion

A 35-minute panel discussion was held with the participation of:

- **Congresswoman Madeleine Dean**, representing the 4th District
- **Carlos Obrador**, Consul General of Mexico in Philadelphia

The panel was moderated by **Obed Arango** and **simultaneously translated by Vivian Isaak**, former president of Magnum Group Translation Services.

The panelists responded to the following questions:

First (urgent):

We need ICE to stop operating in abusive ways that generate fear in our communities. There is confusion about the limits of its authority and concern about operations that intimidate neighborhoods.

What actions can be promoted—including at the international level—to denounce possible abuses, demand clear identification of agents, and guarantee community safety?

Can the government of Mexico present petitions before relevant international bodies?

Can Congress consider legislative initiatives that establish greater oversight and transparency in these operations?

Second (urgent / medium-term)

We know that DHS is evaluating facilities in **Berks County**, which raises concern about a possible expansion of operations toward the **Philadelphia region and its suburbs**.

How can we coordinate better with you to anticipate scenarios, promote dialogue between authorities, attorneys, and community leaders, and establish limits and safeguards before final decisions are made?

In other words, how can we be firm about the limits that the state, county, and municipalities can impose on these operations before they arrive—or to discourage them from coming?

What is your perspective on this process?

For this effort, we need alignment between the governor, state representatives, municipalities, and federal members of Congress.

Can the federal government of Mexico and its ambassador advocate for ensuring that ICE operations do not violate human rights during detention, incarceration, and deportation processes?

Can violations of these rights be denounced internationally when they occur?

Third (long-term):

How can we support you in advancing toward a more humane immigration system that protects families, workers, and individuals, recognizes their historical and current contributions, facilitates documentation processes, and opens viable pathways to residency and citizenship?

At CCATE—and alongside thousands or even millions of people—we remain committed to working until real change is achieved.

It may seem like a dream, but we believe it is possible, and that is why we are here.

Art and the Collective Poem

For CCATE, art represents a living expression of the community.

Over the past 15 years, artistic expressions have been an essential part of its work—not as an additional activity, but as a way of living, reflecting, expressing emotions, and strengthening the community fabric.

For this reason, each table was invited to propose phrases or ideas that would contribute to the creation of a collective poem, which is currently in progress.



Main Results and Reflections

The teams from HealthSpark and CCATE conducted **three working sessions** dedicated to analyzing the information collected.

The process included:

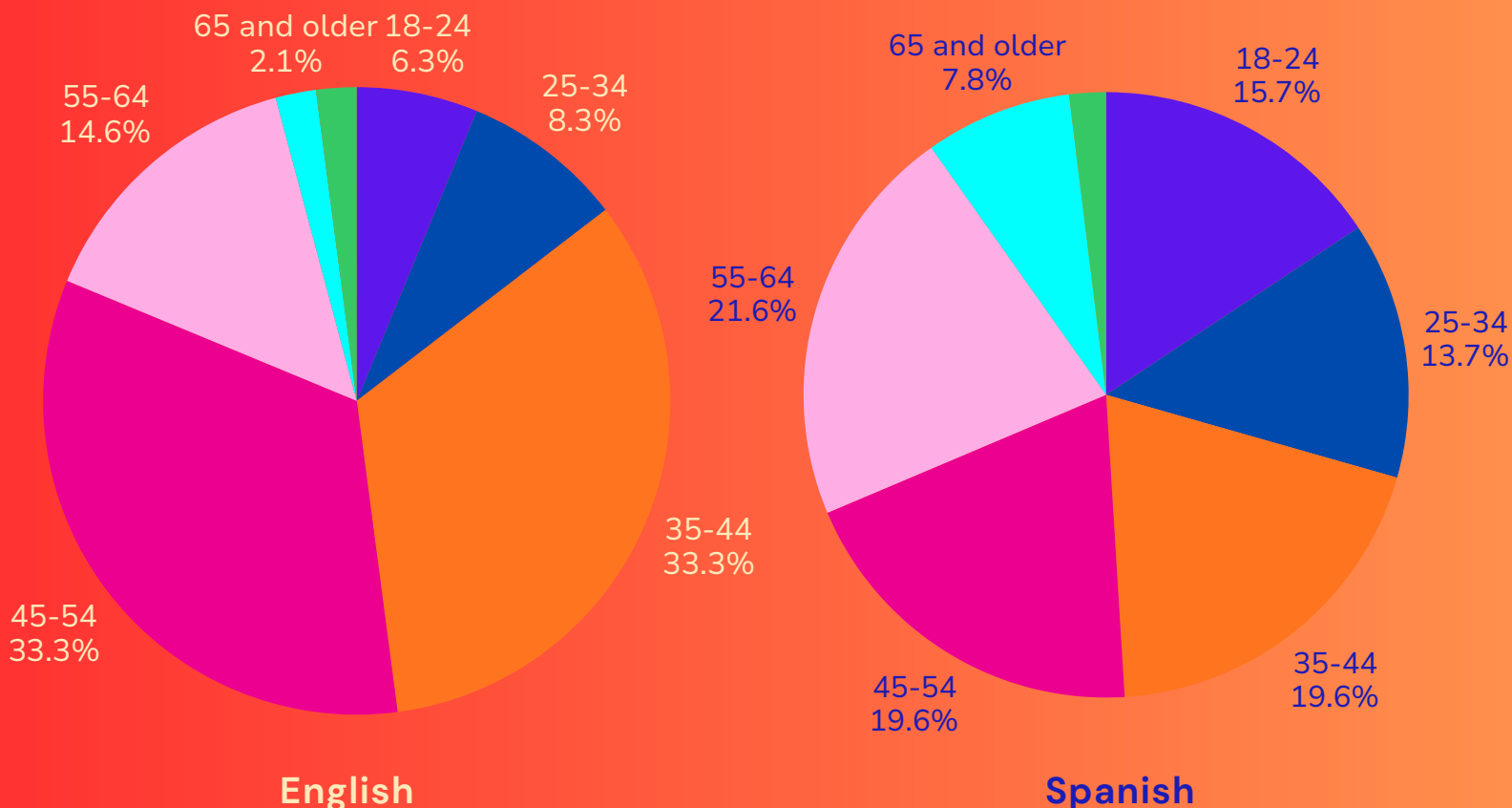
- Reviewing questionnaires
- Thematic coding of responses
- Digitizing flip charts
- Identifying patterns and recurring concerns

Questionnaires

The questionnaires allow us to compare the perspective of the immigrant community with that of allies and institutional representatives in an initial assessment that was later confirmed in the dialogues that took place.

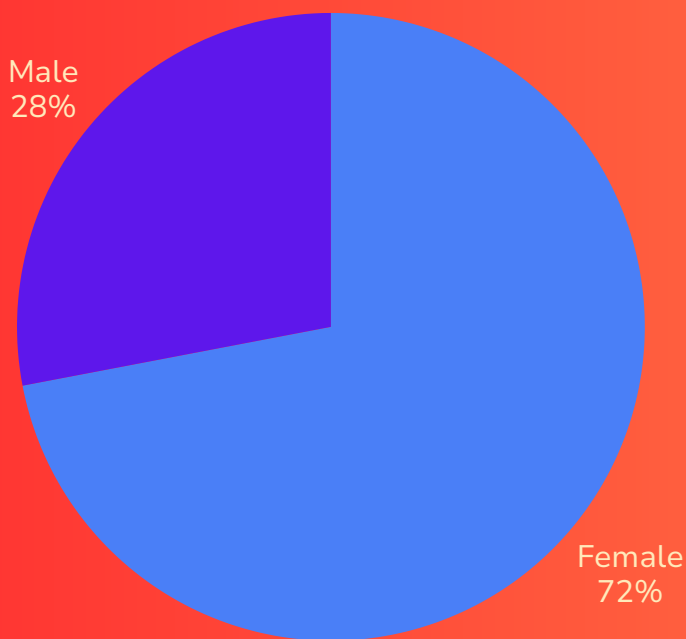
In this section, we will present the results of both English and Spanish versions for comparison and contrast, and dive deeper into some of the responses.

I. Optional Demographic Information

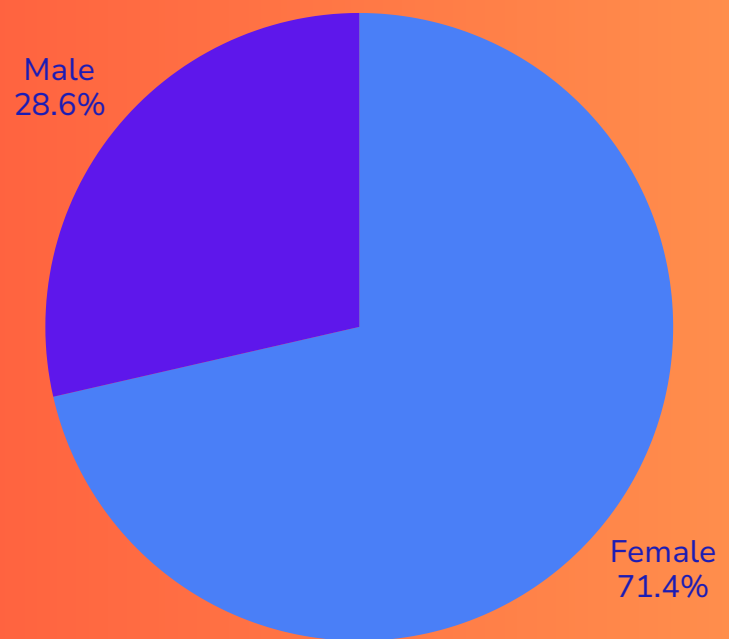


While the questionnaires from allies show a more equitable age distribution, the community's responses are dominated by those aged 25–34 and 35–44, indicating a community in its later years of adulthood where families have been formed. It is noteworthy that the under-18 age group is almost entirely absent from both sets of responses. This highlights a point for CCATE and HealthSpark to continue their research with adolescents and children. To this end, they will conduct a questionnaire in the near future to reach this generation, the majority of whom are children of immigrants, many of whom were born here.

II. Gender Identity



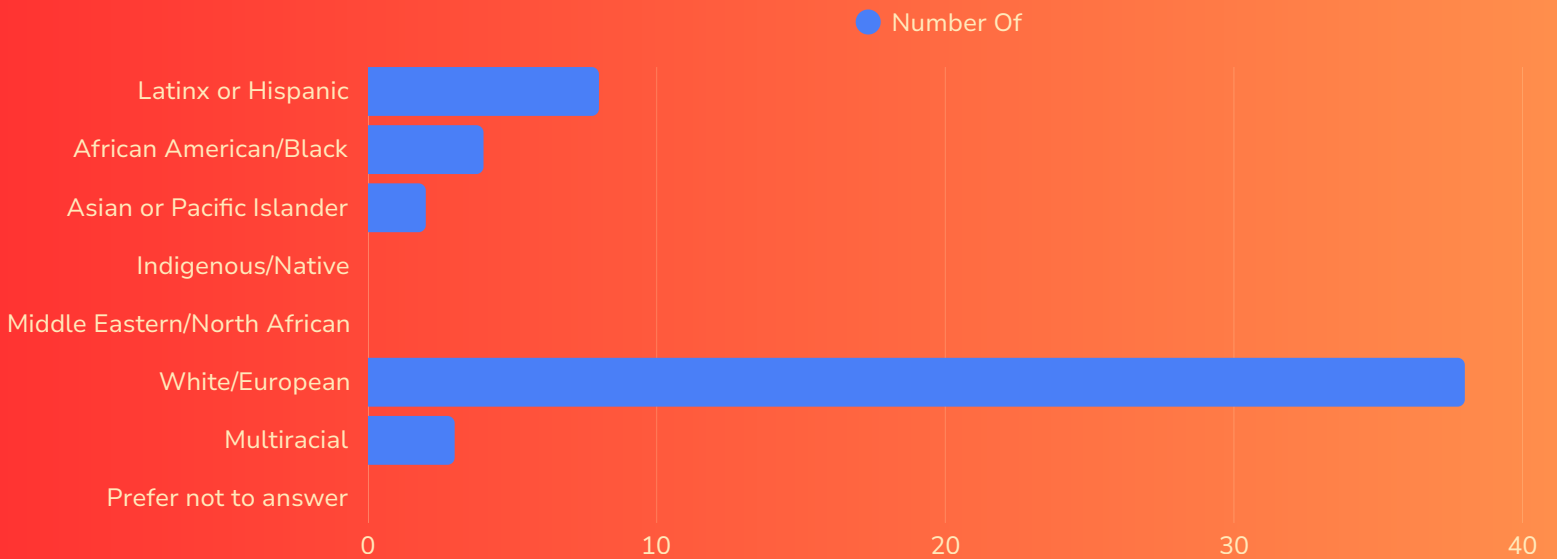
English



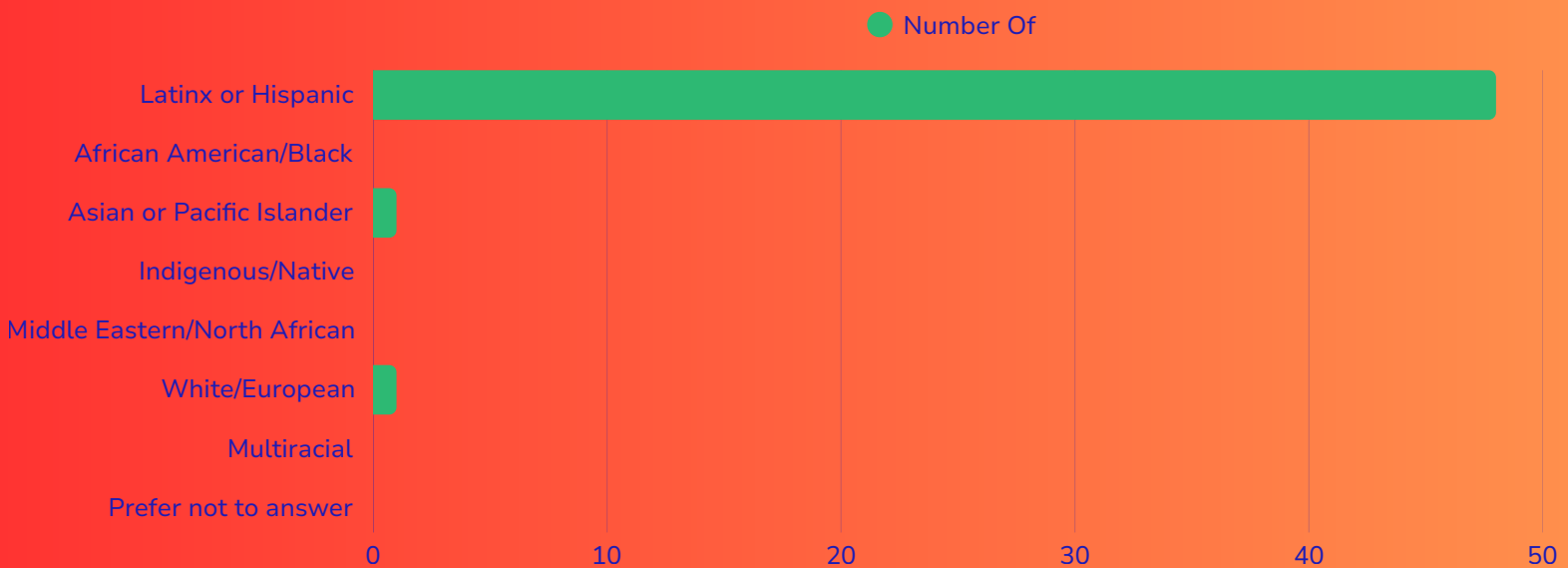
Spanish

The prevalence of female respondents is very similar in both cases. The reasons for this may be diverse, though not conclusive. And although—when the invitation was extended—no specific group was targeted, but rather it was sent to everyone who responded positively, a female majority is evident in both organizations and grassroots movements, a fact reflected in this questionnaire. In our questionnaire, we also had Gender Identity options for Non-binary, whether a person prefers not to answer, or prefers to self-describe. However, none of these options were selected in either language.

III. Ethnicity



English



Spanish

In the English responses, there was a small representation of Latinos who chose to answer the questionnaire in English.

The majority of those who responded were of Caucasian origin.

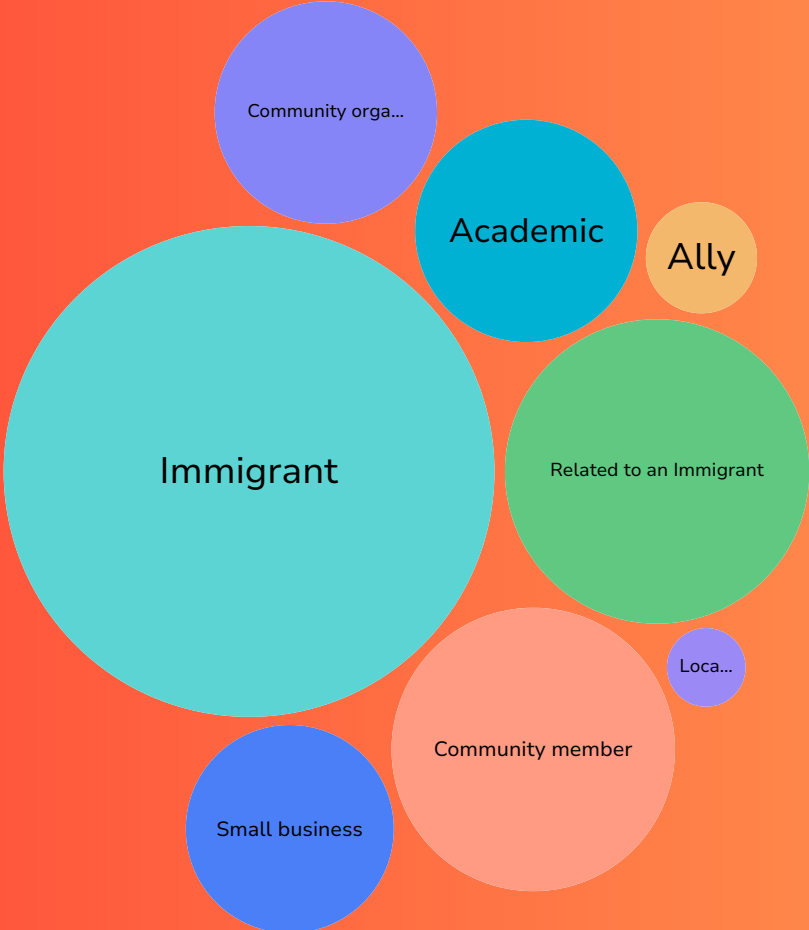
While in the Spanish questionnaire, it is clear that there is a majority of Latin American/Spanish-speaking origin.

IV. Background

English



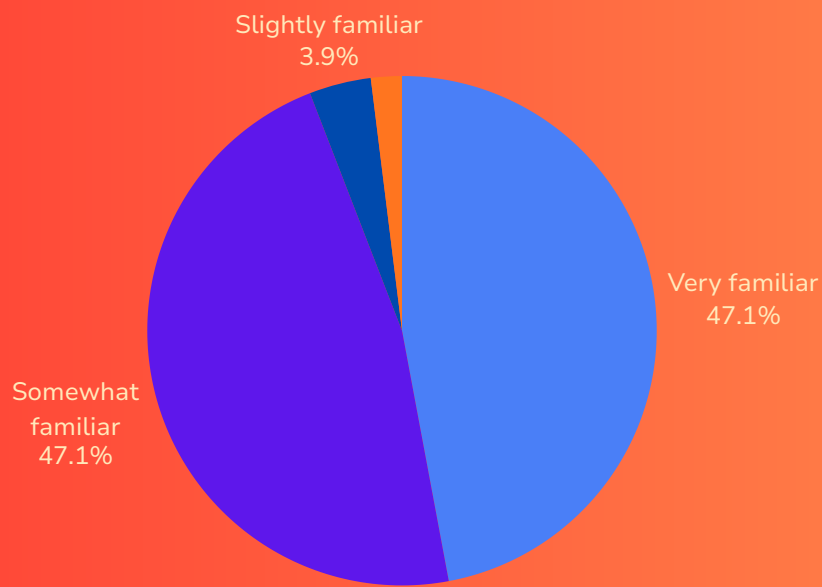
Spanish



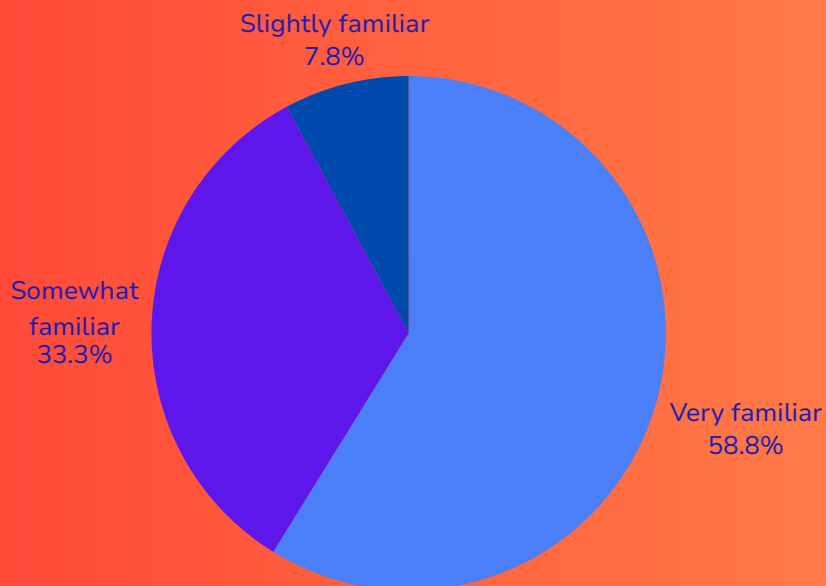
The contrast in positionality and perspective is shown here; those who responded in English primarily define themselves as allies, recognize a family member of immigrant origin, and belong to a non-profit organization or as academics and educators.

In contrast, Spanish-speaking respondents mostly identify and define themselves as immigrants as the primary and dominant reference, followed by having an immigrant family member and belonging to an organization, the latter two being secondary positional elements.

V. How familiar are you with immigration enforcement and ICE activities in your community during 2025–2026?



English



Spanish

In both groups, individuals are generally considered to be familiar with ICE activities in the community. However, there is a segment that remains unaware.

This question was part of the Community Dialogue. We are including below the raw data gathered from the group notes written during the event:

Not sure we can't trust Norristown police.

Increasing sense of insecurity.

**neighbor gone, nobody
can find out**

**eye-witness, so
sad**

- Young kids are being affected:
 - notices changes
 - reacts via cries and increased anxiety.

feeling, day to day life fear

There is no trust in authorities.

**I was stopped
twice by ICE.**

People with another skin tone is not a priority.

Their [lack of] fear of retribution is what keeps them [continuing to do] harm.

I relate authorities = police.

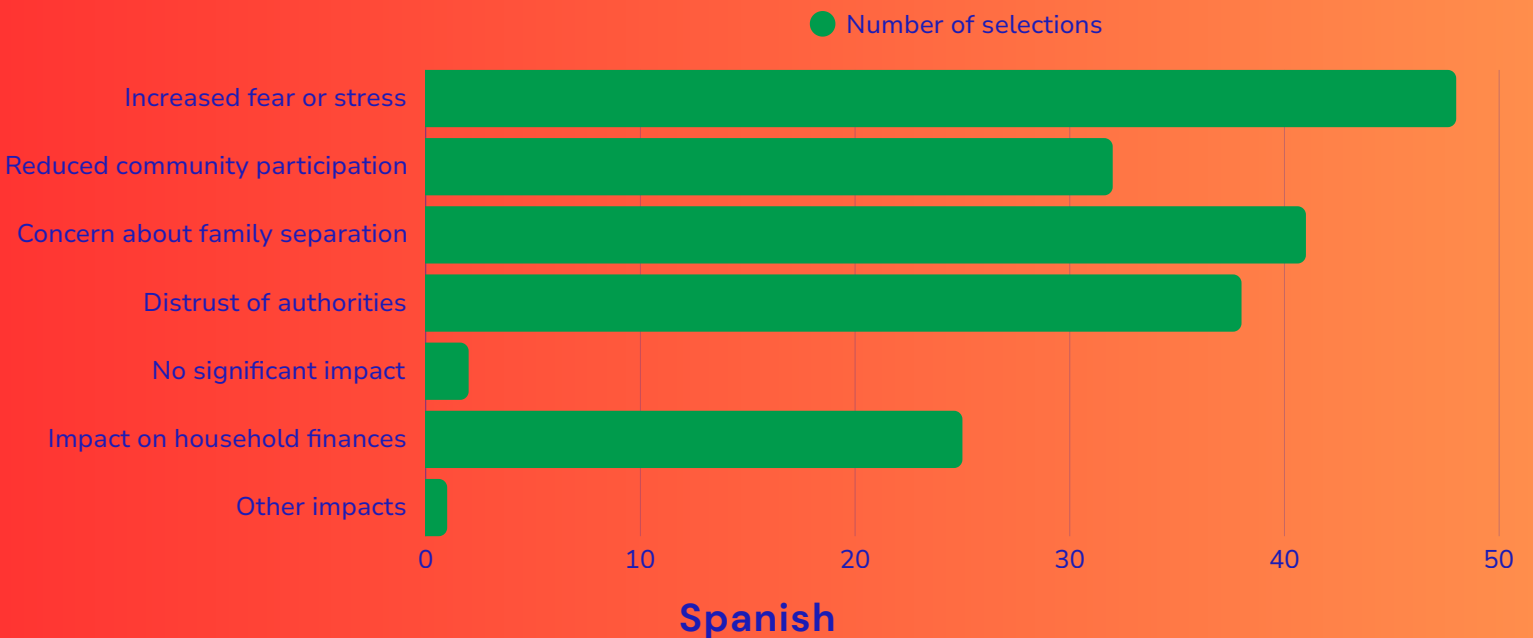
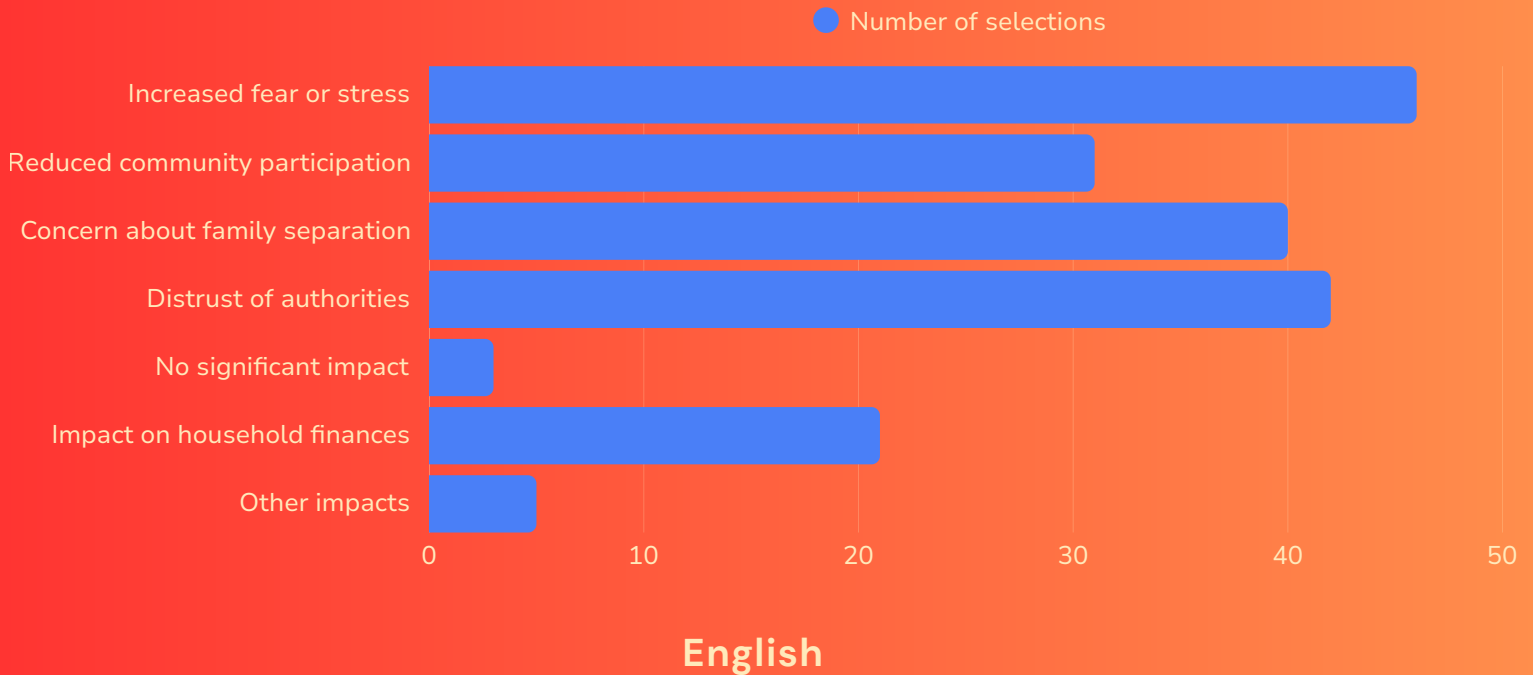
**lack of help &
trust**

They don't live near us, so they don't understand us.

**How can I trust a person that doesn't
believe my truth.**

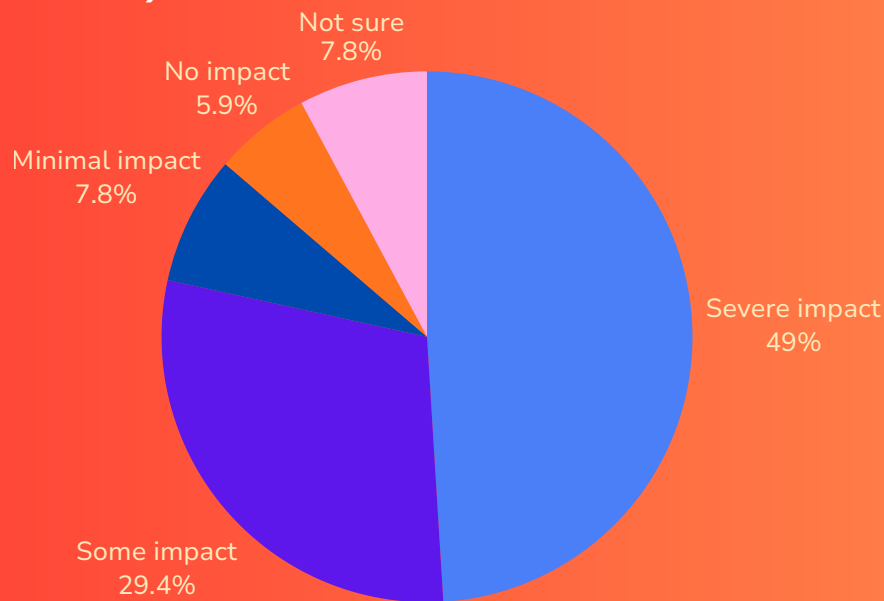
VI. What social impacts have you observed as a result of current immigration enforcement policies and ICE activities?

Respondents could select multiple options.

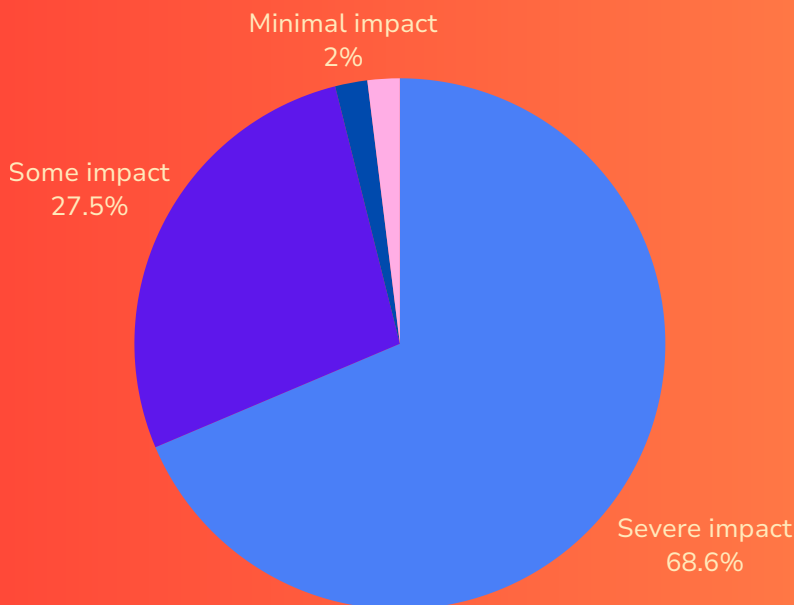


Among the social impacts, both groups agree on increased stress and feelings of fear. Furthermore, distrust of the authorities is also a significant factor. The actions of ICE have undoubtedly had a negative impact on how the authorities are perceived, which is crucial to communicate to them so they can distinguish themselves and clearly communicate with the communities.

VII. How have immigration policies and ICE activities affected the daily routines of individuals or families in your community (work, transportation, education, childcare, time spent outside with family, attending religious services, celebrations) ?



English



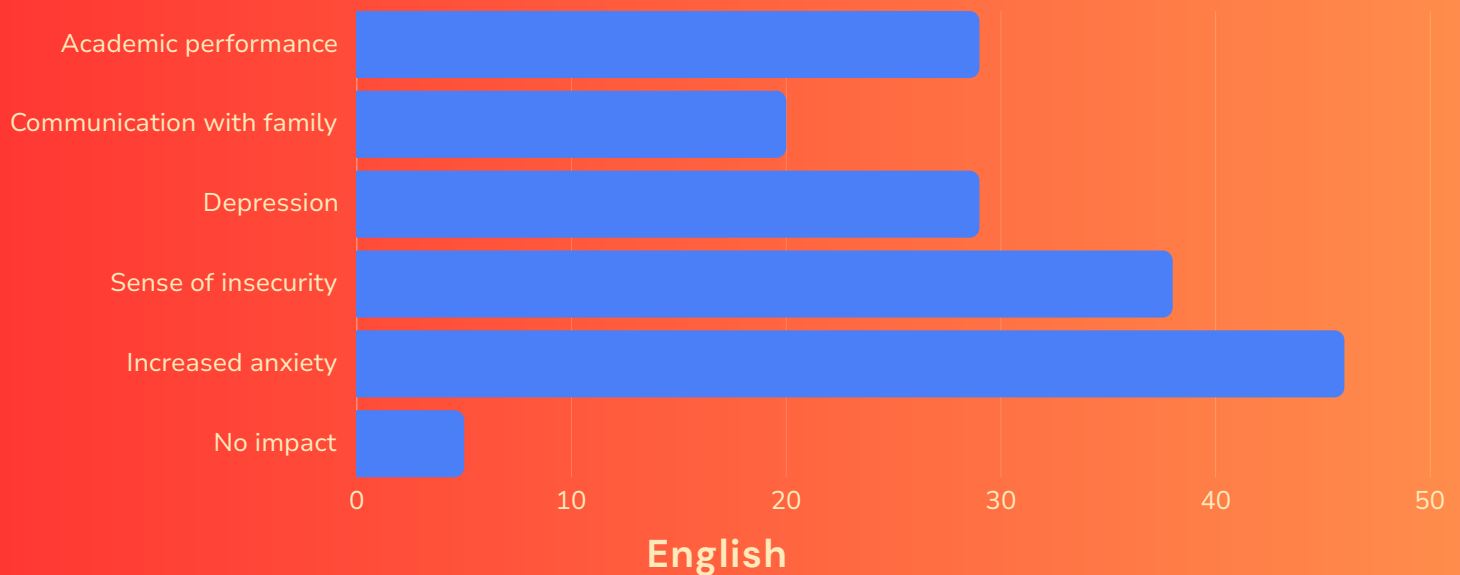
Spanish

The perception of the effects of immigration policies and ICE actions on daily life—meaning routines like shopping, attending religious services, going to the doctor, sending children to school, and going to work—is concerning. While the allied community understands that these actions have been severely affected in 40% of cases, the community itself reports this at 68%. **This indicates that the community's experience is worse than the allied community's perception.** This leads us to explore how we can provide assistance and to identify the most affected routines that may require more targeted support in the future. For now, we need to understand that the situation is worse than the perceived reality.

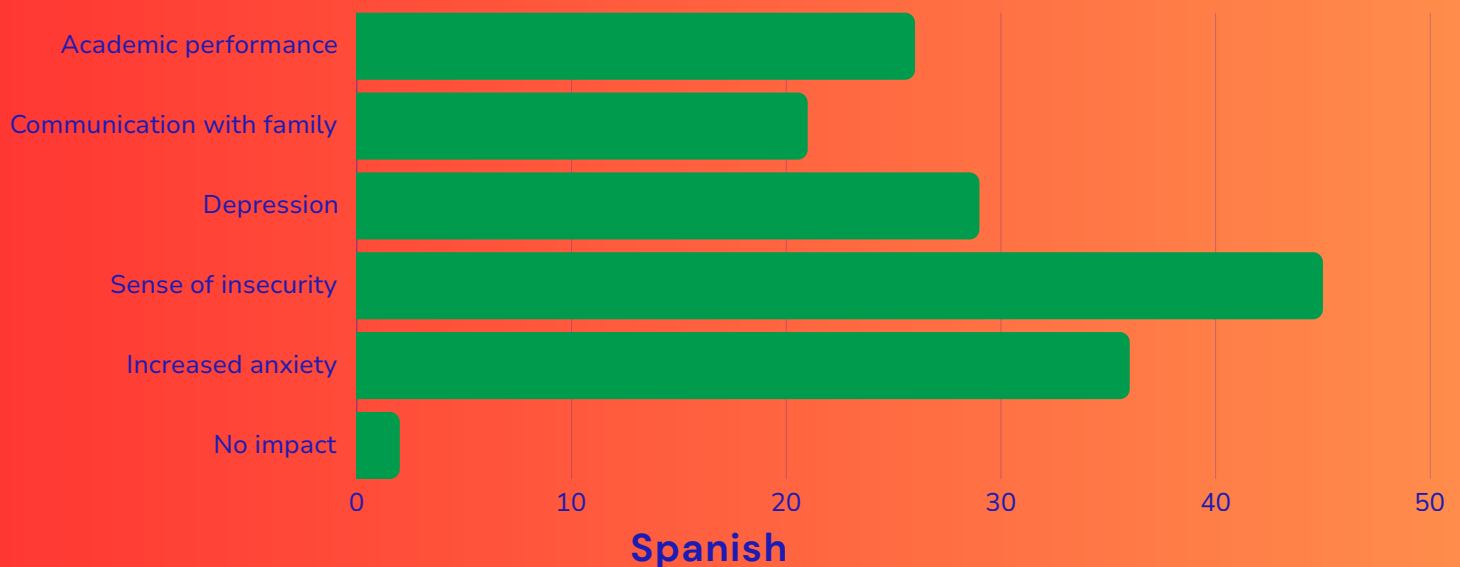
VIII. How have immigration policies and ICE activities affected children and youth?

Respondents could select multiple options.

● Number of selections



● Number of selections



Children and youth are our top priority at CCATE and within the families themselves. We constantly ask children how they feel, and they have expressed this in many ways, often through drawings. **In response to this question, allies and immigrant adults agree that feelings of insecurity and increased anxiety are the most significant effects on children and youth. Both groups consider depression to be the third most significant effect, and an impact on school performance is beginning to be noticeable.** Access to support and resources for emotional well-being are essential to address this situation. Nonprofit organizations and foundations should pay close attention to this data and focus their efforts on supporting emotional well-being programs within the immigrant community.

The following comments provide real-life examples shared in response to this question.

“I take ESL classes at MCCC (Montgomery County Community College). A few days ago, in my class, the teacher brought up the Super Bowl and asked what we thought about it. She said it was disrespectful that the singer (Bad Bunny) performed entirely in Spanish. As a Latina, I shared that I thought it made sense given the city where the event took place and everything happening with migration. From there, she did not stop making negative comments about us—at least that is how I perceived it due to the racist remarks. My story is very long, but it is something I have experienced firsthand.”

“I have students at Villanova University who have shared concerns about their parents’ immigration situation and anxiety that something could happen to them as well.”

“Yes, my youngest son is being affected—he is scared, sad, and I feel that it is impacting him academically.”

“Anxiety crisis.”

“My children (ages 13 and 12) are constantly worried that I could be stopped by ICE just for having a Hispanic last name. Last Monday, my daughter asked me not to leave the house because we live in Eagleville.”

“My daughter avoids talking about the issue in general, but I have noticed that she stays informed about the situation through platforms like TikTok or Instagram.”

Comments continued

“The fear and terror of leaving home and not being able to return to your family, because it no longer feels safe to go out with confidence—the fear and uncertainty of not knowing who is watching you. I can say that terror is now a constant presence in our lives. It is very sad and unfortunate what we go through every day. It is worse than a terminal illness.”

“Children and adolescents do not have an adult to provide socio-emotional and mental health support. Adults in schools are not trained in ‘community awareness’ and only address difficult behaviors, not the root causes. This part of the community is experiencing untreated trauma.”

“My son is worried about family separation.”

“I personally know at least three families with children who lost their father due to detention. Two decided to appeal and, I believe, have remained detained for several months. One chose to self-deport, leaving behind two children not born in the U.S. The wife plans to reunite with her husband, without the younger children.”

“One time, a coworker did not show up to work and we were all terrified, thinking he had been detained.”

“When we go out, the kids ask us to be careful.”

“Constant fear that my parents won’t return from work.”

“I attended an activity called ‘Speak Up’ at my daughters’ high school and heard several student stories.”

“Bullying in my children’s middle school with comments about ICE.”

“A lot of fear about going to work and sending children to school.”

“Children and parents feel more anxiety and do not participate in community activities.”

“Greater fear of going out, not feeling safe doing necessary activities like working or shopping, increased anxiety.”

Comments continued

“At ACLAMO, we have seen firsthand how the immigration climate is deeply affecting our community. More and more children and adolescents come to our programs showing signs of depression and anxiety, which is reflected in declining grades and difficulty concentrating in school. Many live with the constant fear that when they return home from school, their parents will no longer be there. We have also seen how, out of fear of exposure, some families have stopped taking their children to medical appointments or continuing necessary treatments. Additionally, many primary breadwinners have been detained or deported, forcing many mothers to go out to work in order to support their families, often under very difficult conditions. In response, ACLAMO has had to change how we serve the community. We have moved many appointments to virtual formats to avoid putting families at risk. Even during food distribution days, we have used internal resources to deliver food directly to families, because although safety in our buildings is a priority, we understand that for many families, going out still poses a risk. We have also implemented ICE drills, offered many ‘Know Your Rights’ seminars, and strengthened education and support for families. All of this ongoing stress impacts emotional health, academic performance, and family stability, and has led us to further strengthen our services to ensure that these families are not alone and can continue forward with dignity and hope.”

“My children worry about being left alone without their parents.”

“One of my daughters, although she was born here, told me she was worried because she heard a rumor that ICE was going to come to her school.”

“Children see and hear everything that has been happening recently at school. You can see the worry on their faces. They say things like ‘be careful driving, dad.’ Sometimes a text message becomes an alarm that something bad has happened. The sadness and concern of our children is painful, and there is no way to ease that worry and emotional harm for such young and tender minds.”

“The fear of taking children to school.”

“Concern for parents.”

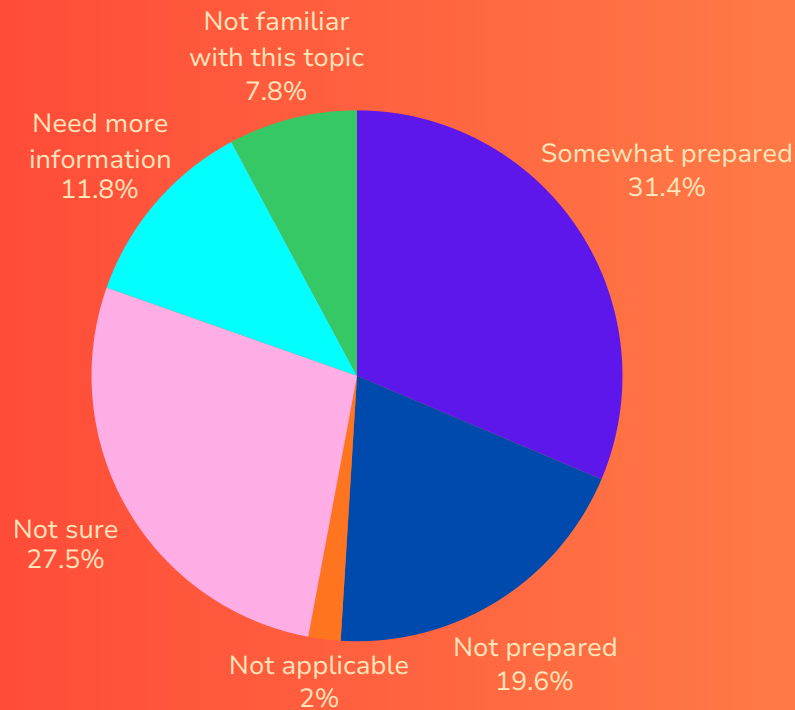
“He isolates himself, lost in thought, and only makes comments about what might happen.”

“My children are afraid that something might happen to me.”

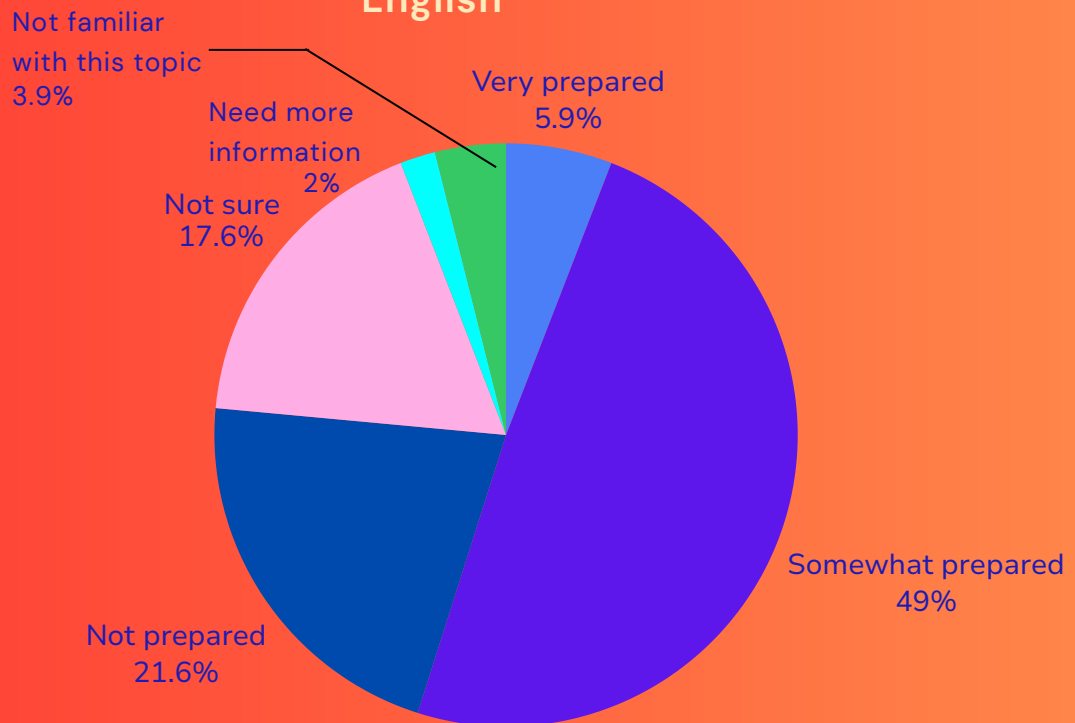
“Feeling like life has no meaning.”

“At the consulate, we receive referrals for cases in which the Mexican community is affected during raids, and we provide the services and recommendations available to us.”

IX. To what extent are families prepared to respond to possible ICE actions (family safety plans, guardianship documents, emergency contacts)?



English



Spanish

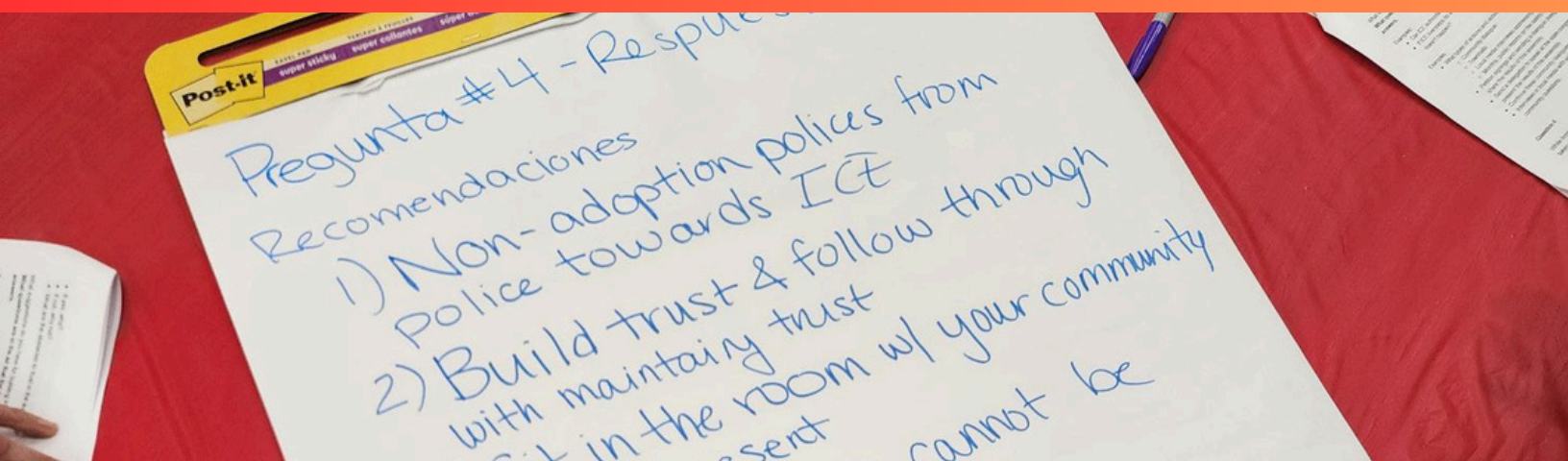
This is a worrying and critical finding. The responses reflect a broader lack of preparedness, a perception that is echoed—albeit to varying degrees—by our partners. **This underscores an important opportunity for organizations and foundations to invest in family preparedness workshops.** Funding, such as HealthSpark’s contribution to CCATE, has been instrumental in launching and sustaining this work.

At CCATE, since November 2024, we have recognized the importance of preparing families for any eventuality and have observed that when a family has already developed a contingency plan, the support provided is significantly more effective; in contrast, in cases where no prior preparation exists, it becomes much more difficult to offer assistance, as many of the procedures that could have been completed in advance are now complex or unfeasible. In the year 2025, CCATE launched a family preparedness program consisting of personalized appointments with a community migration liaison and a fully trusted paralegal. Cases are followed up on.

XI. What resources do families need most right now?

This question was part of the Community Dialogue. Based on the compiled group notes, the following needs emerged as the most urgent, in the order listed.

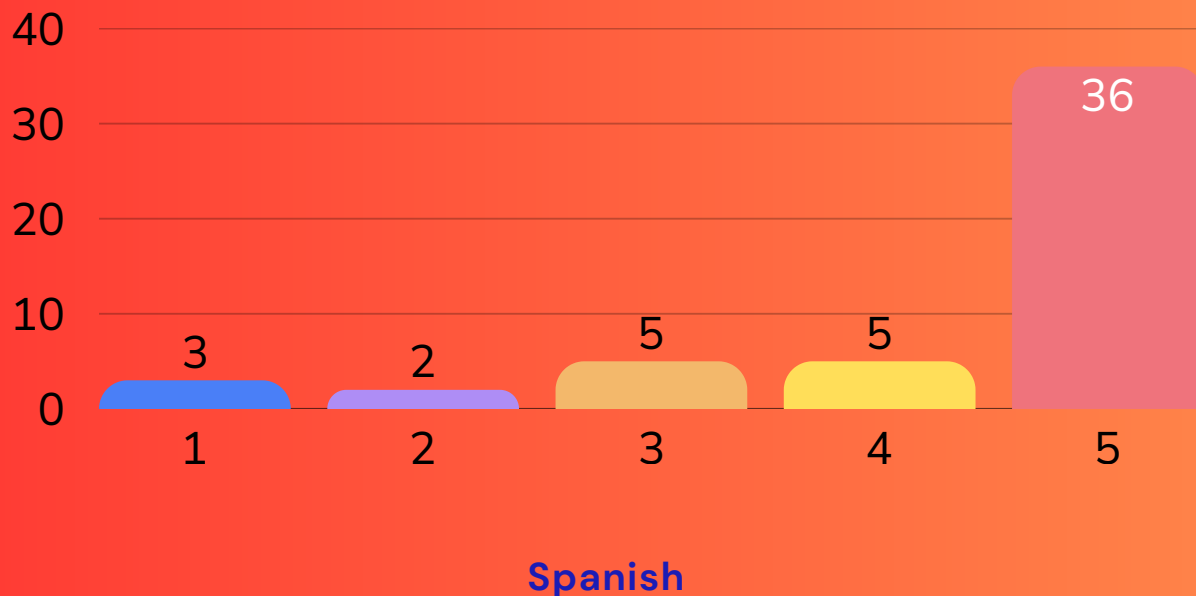
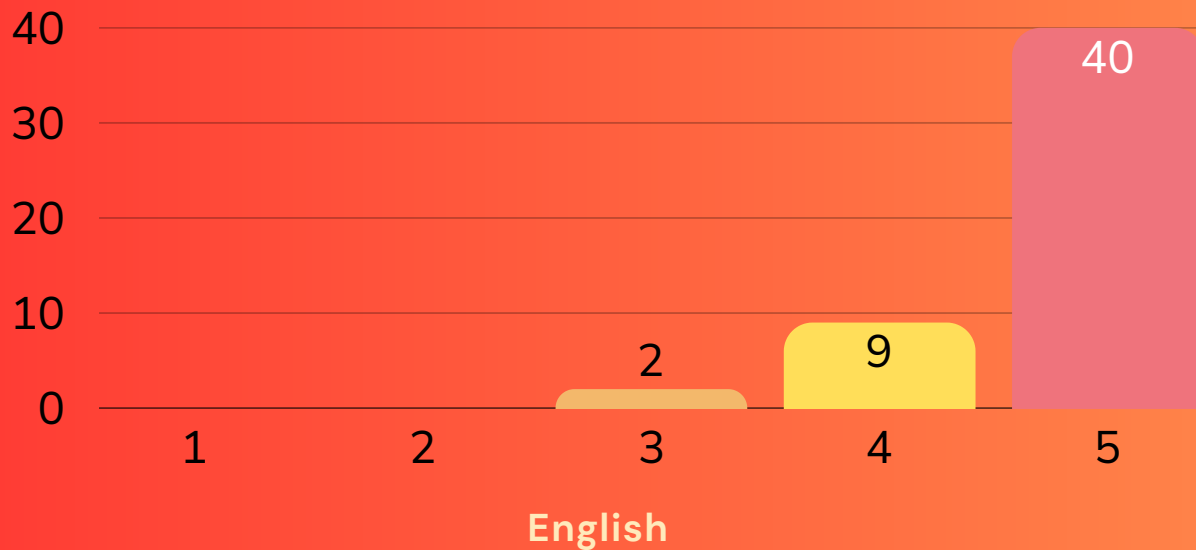
1. Emotional and mental health care
2. Increasing sense of insecurity on children and youth
3. Disruptions to daily life
4. Family Stability
5. Lack of Legal support
6. Financial Family impact – Community fund in which money is distributed equitably.



The following reflects the needs listed on the previous page and how questionnaire respondents ranked them from not very important to extremely important (1 to 5).

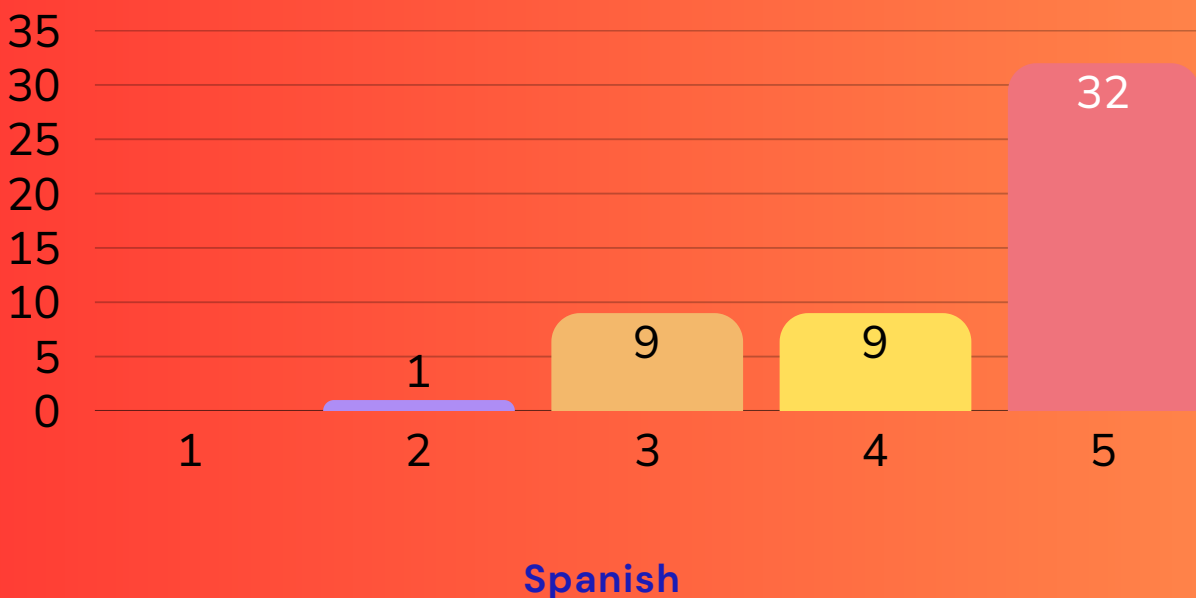
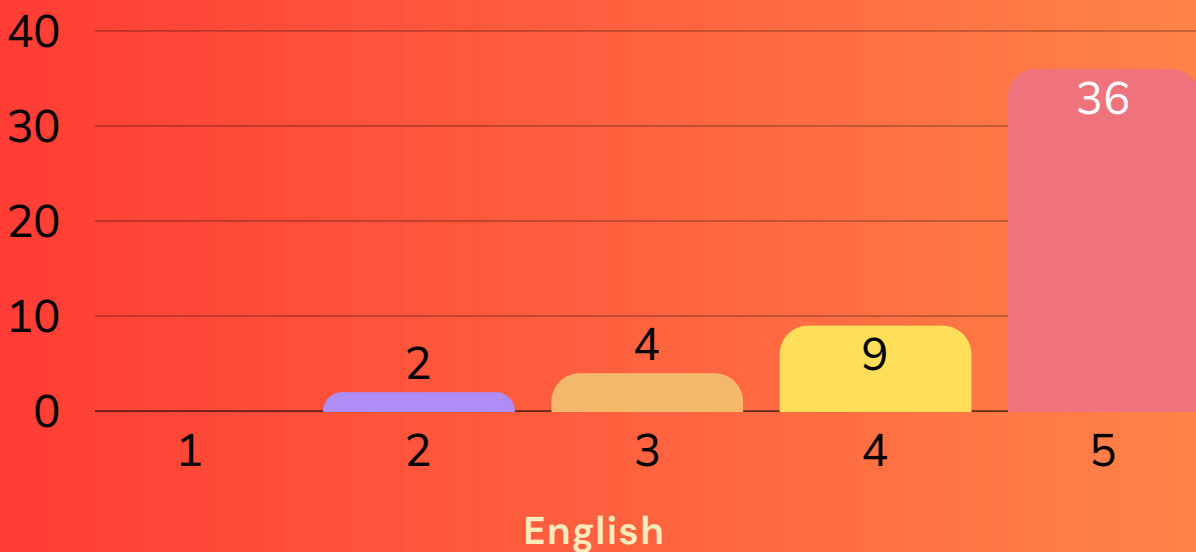
XI.A Based on what you know, what resources do immigrant families need most at this time?

Legal Representation Number of Responses



Legal representation is definitely a priority, which confirms the importance of being able to speak with a lawyer beforehand to explore options, prepare the family, or in the event of an arrest. However, there is a variation in the perceptions of allies and the immigrant community. This variation may stem from several factors, including the circumstances under which legal assistance was needed and the experiences of families and allies.

Education on "Know Your Rights" Number of Responses

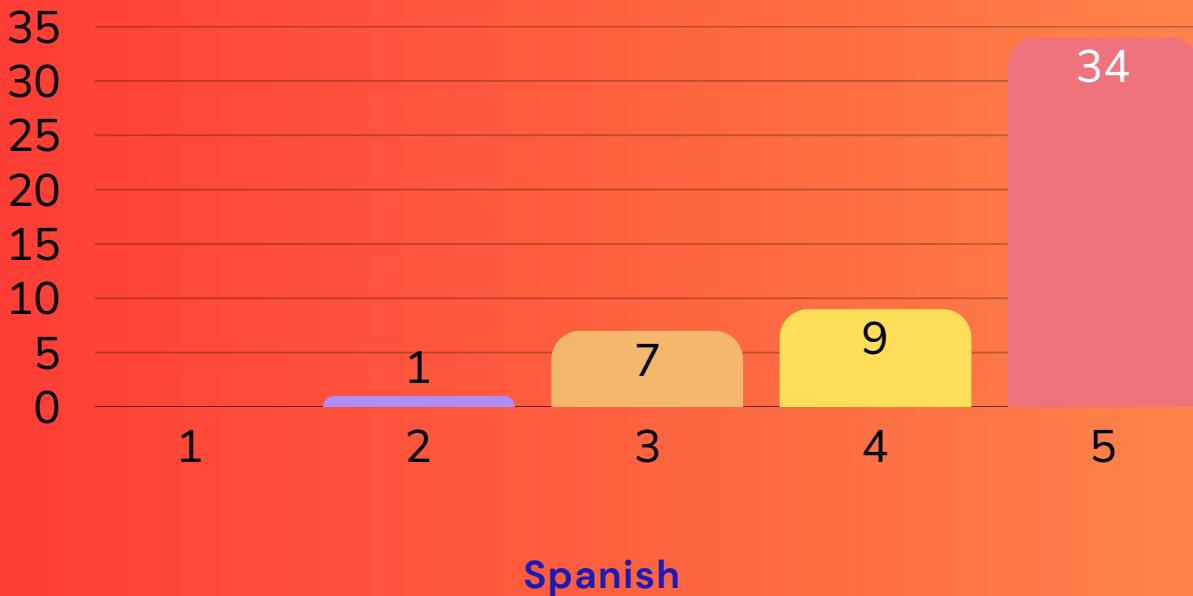
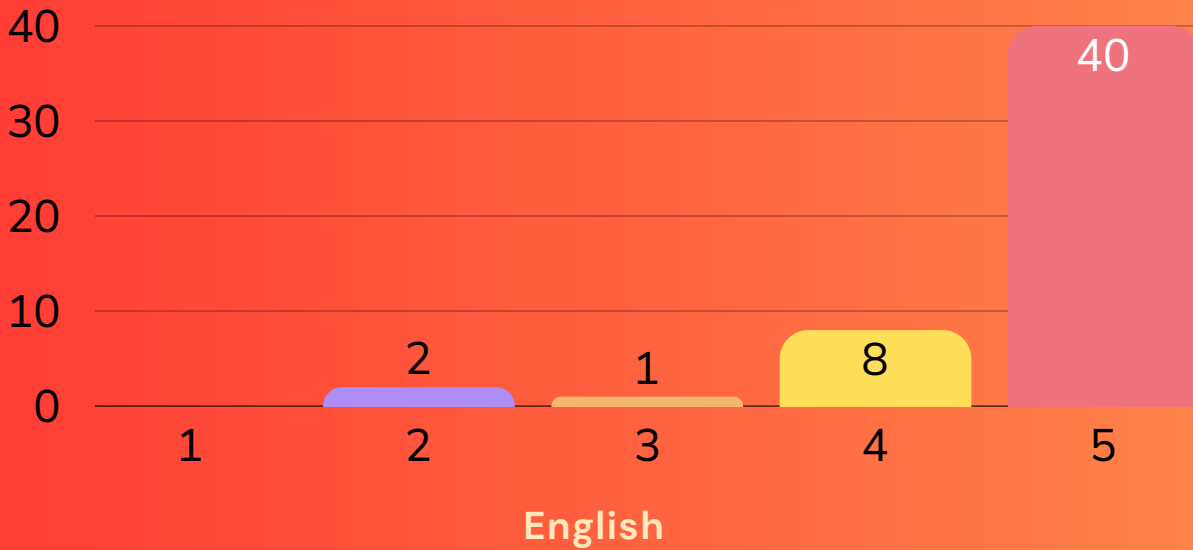


Knowing one's rights remains important and a priority as an aspect of preparedness, but it should not be confused with preparing families. Knowing one's rights is especially relevant at the time of arrest and detention.

Meanwhile, family preparation involves exploring the migration case, making family decisions in the event of the detention of any family member, and preparing legally and financially for a contingency.

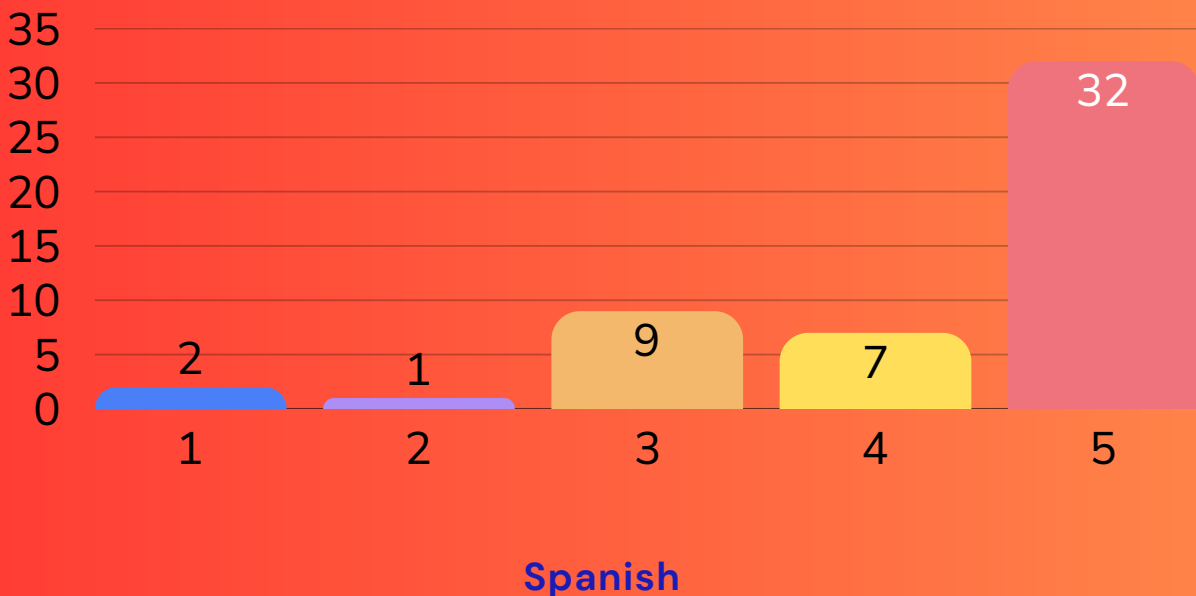
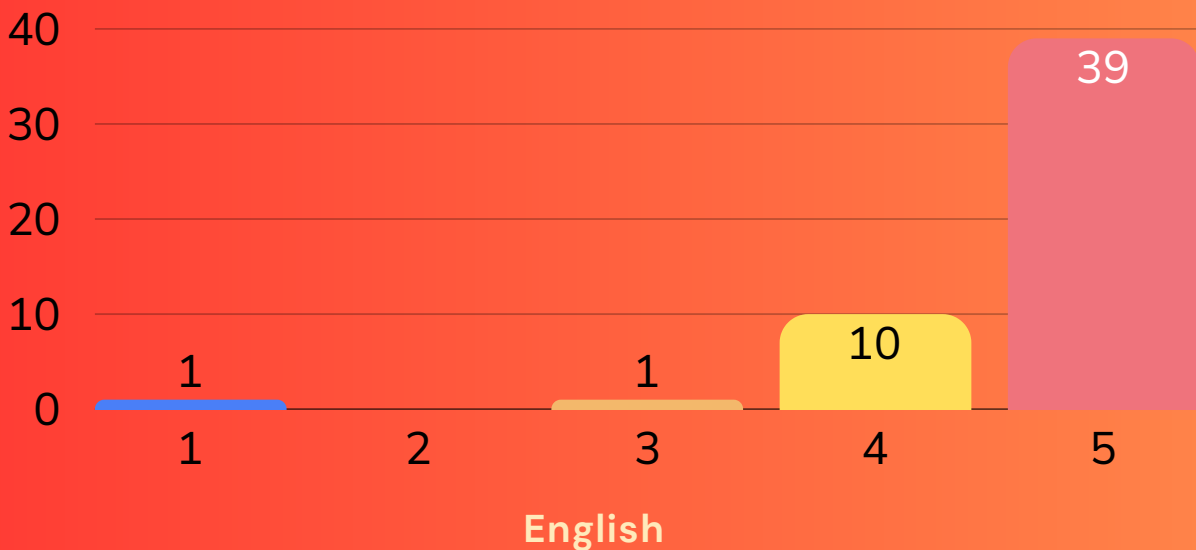
Both are important.

Family Emergency Plans Number of Responses



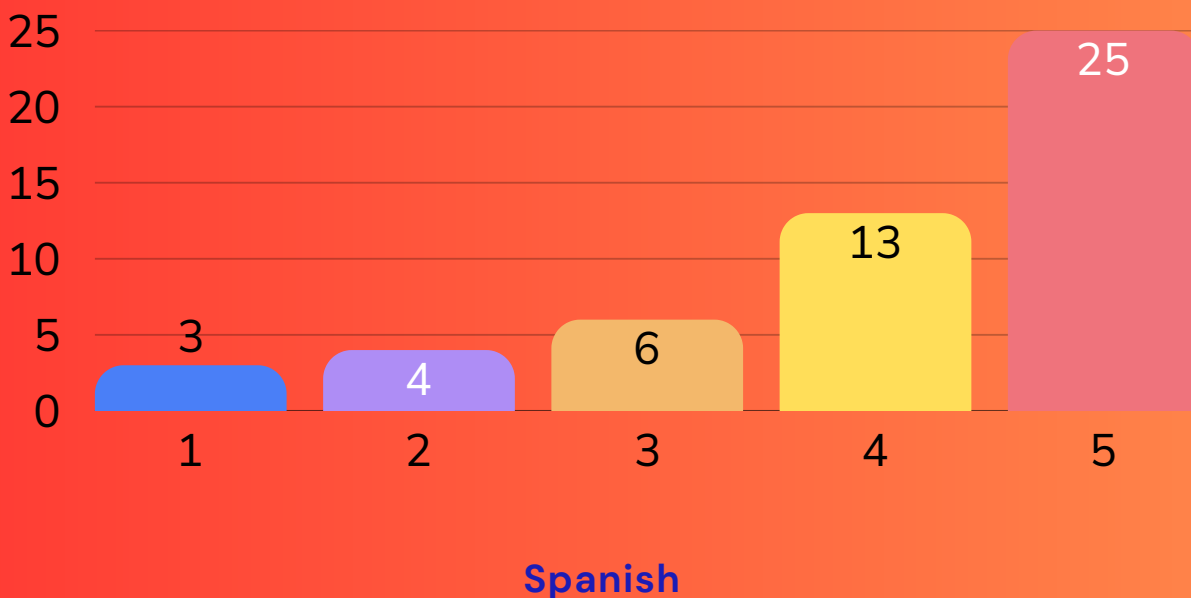
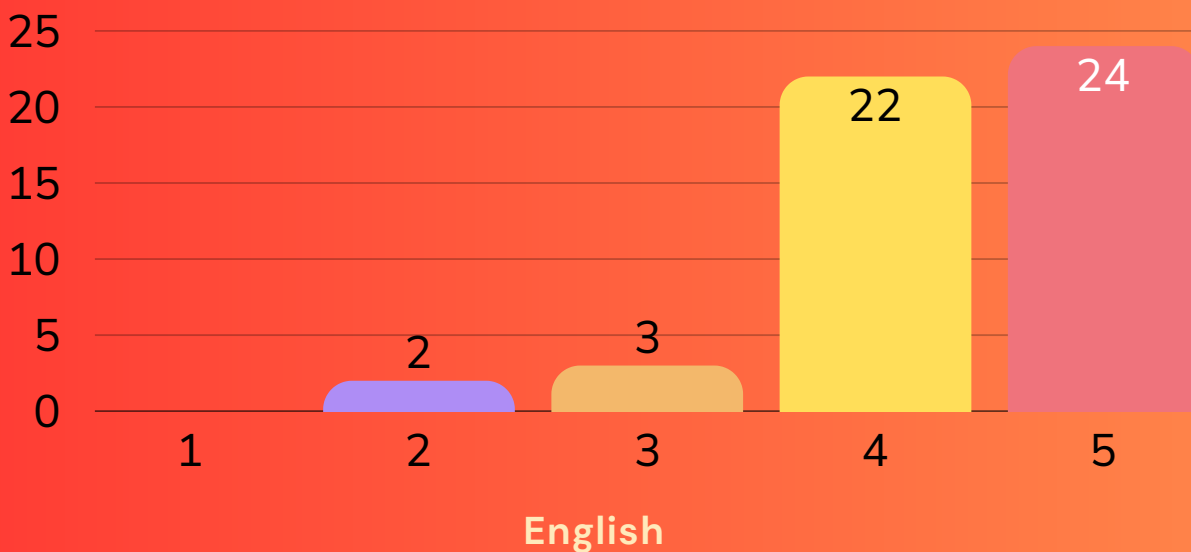
Although there is a difference in perception between allies and the immigrant community, the trend in response is the same, confirming that family planning or preparation workshops are a priority. Therefore, it is an open suggestion to non-profit organizations to prioritize such a program and to foundations to allocate resources to support this work, as well as to lawyers, law schools, and volunteer paralegals.

Emotional Health Support Number of Responses



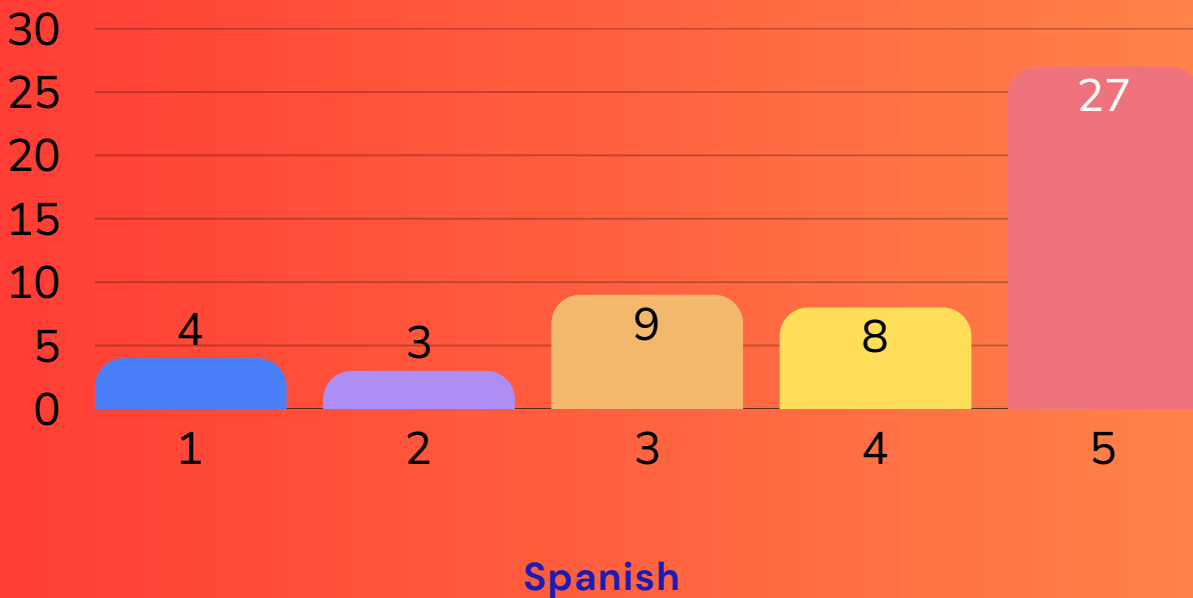
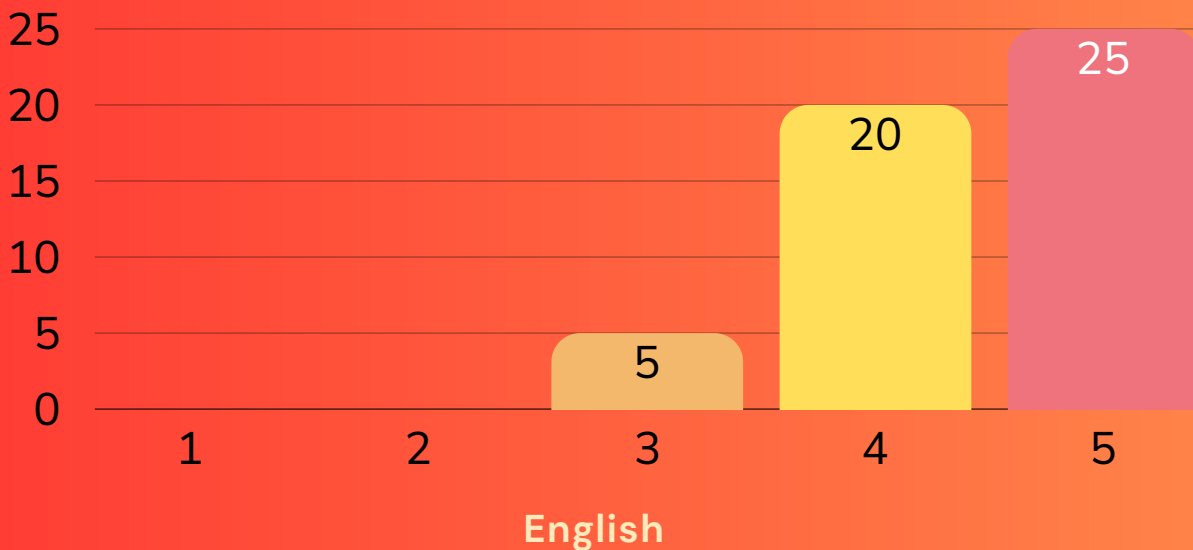
Once again, there is variation in the perceived prioritization—in this instance, regarding emotional health assistance. However, the overall trend remains similar. And although emotional health ranks second—behind legal aid and family preparedness—it is undoubtedly a top priority, as we observed during the analysis of the group's dialogues, and as was evident in previous questions where anxiety and a sense of insecurity emerged as some of the most significant impacts families have endured. This, in turn, gives rise to a recommendation for non-profit organizations, partners, and foundations: to support and develop programs that provide assistance for the emotional well-being of families.

Financial Assistance Number of Responses



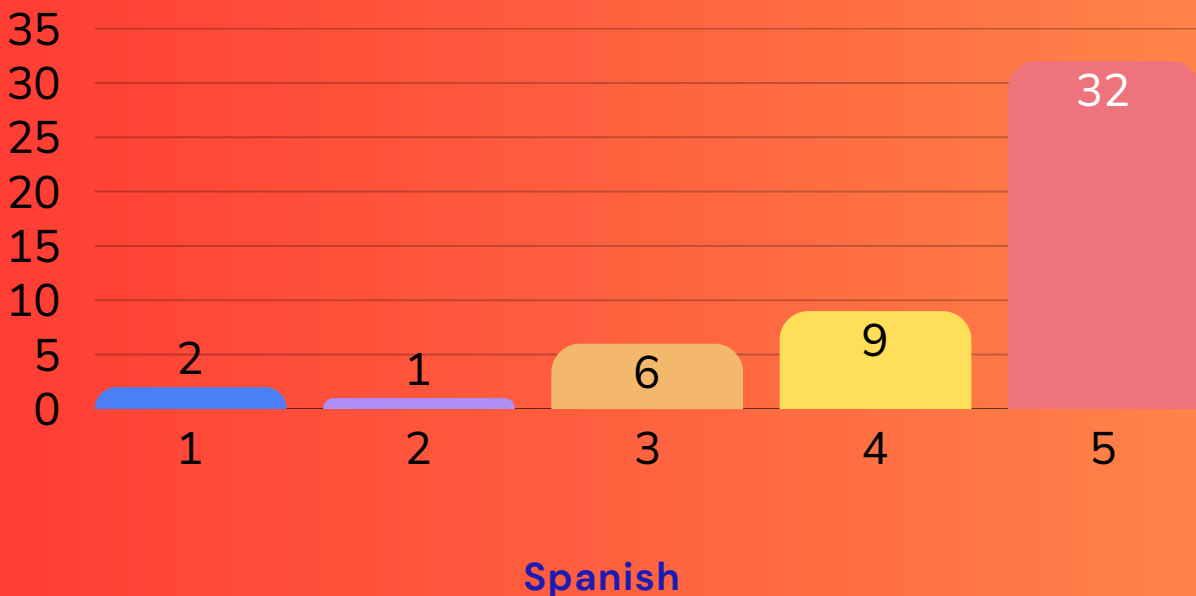
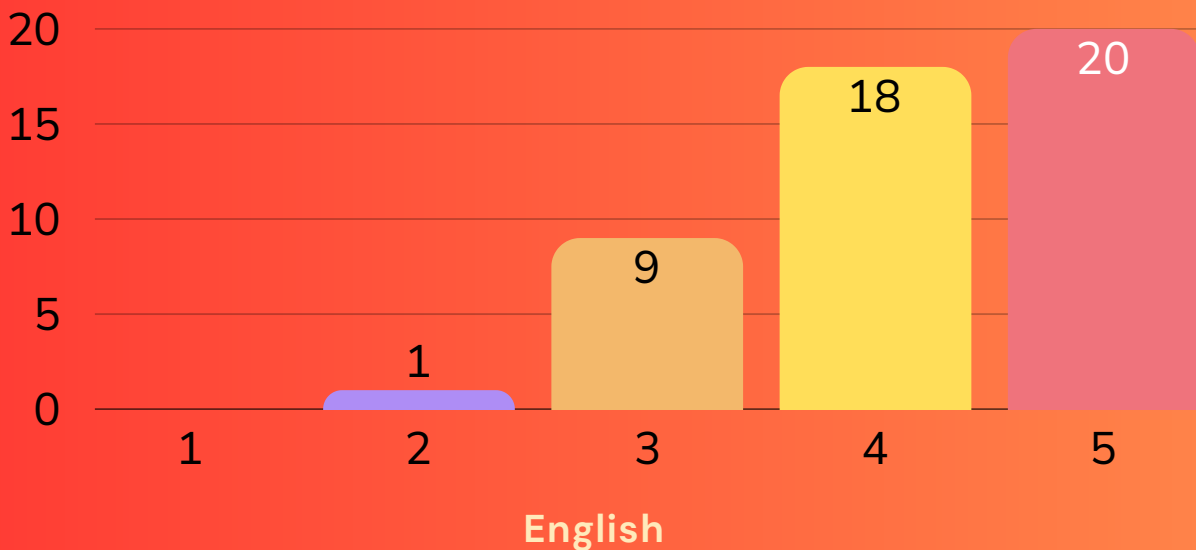
In this question, financial assistance is not a primary priority—it ranks behind legal aid and emotional support. However, the data is incomplete, insofar as—based on CCATE’s experience—financial aid typically becomes necessary only after a detention occurs and the family suffers the loss of the household’s primary financial provider. In family preparedness workshops, strong emphasis is placed on establishing a three-month contingency fund to provide the family with adequate time to react and make decisions. Raising funds to assist families has not been an easy task; clear mechanisms for both fundraising and distribution are required to prevent fraud. We anticipate that as the situation intensifies, the need for financial support will grow—a trend that must be closely monitored.

Language Access Number of Responses



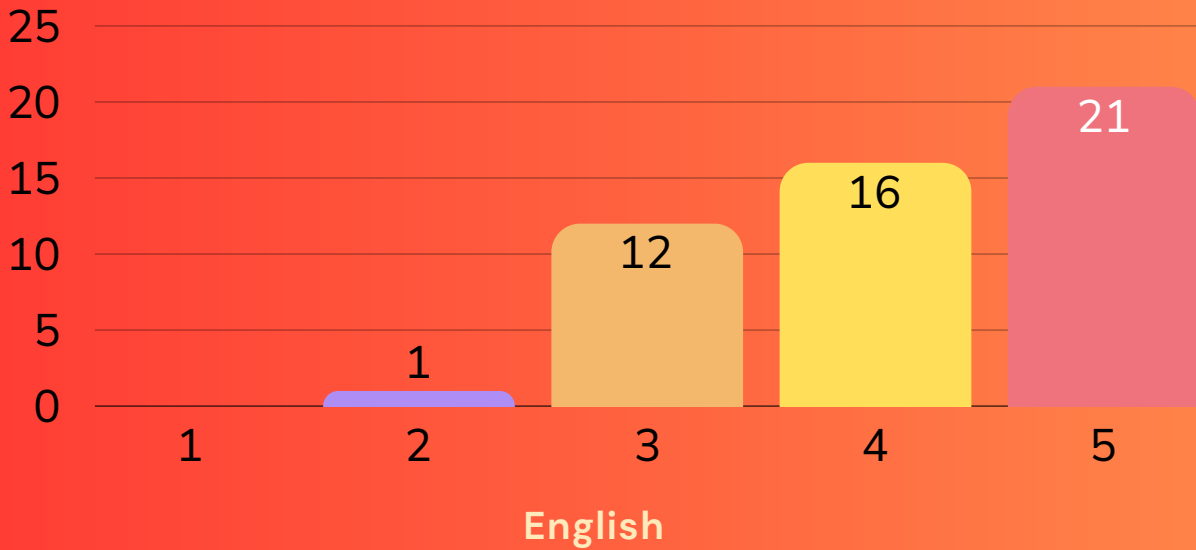
Once again, there is a divergence in perception between allies and the immigrant community: while allies have perceived a greater need for assistance with the English language, the community considers it important—yet it does not rank among their top three priorities. However, if we combine the 25% of allies who rated this as "very important" with the 20% who rated it as "important," the data suggests that this is indeed a necessary resource—particularly given that allies have frequently provided assistance in this area.

After-School Programs for Children and Teenagers Number of Responses



Although perceptions regarding the urgency and necessity of these matters vary among allies and the community, the community views the importance of after-school programs as being on par with that of emotional health programs. While academic performance ranks third among the issues identified as having a negative impact, its necessity and importance remain evident. This has prompted CCATE and HealthSpark to bridge this information gap by engaging in direct dialogue with students—thereby ensuring their voices are heard on this subject—and by reaching out to school districts to determine whether they have observed any shifts in student performance or attitude. Interview-based and ethnographic research is essential to gather information that provides deeper insight into this topic.

Food Delivery Program to Home Number of Responses



Food is always important—something we experienced firsthand during the pandemic—and CCATE launched a program that ran for 18 months with the assistance of various collaborators. However, the growing need has not yet been fully met. We must pay close attention to how this need evolves over the coming months. For now, as members of the community have expressed: “We continue working and providing.”

The following comments are thoughts shared in response to this question:

“More mental health support.”

“Familiarize yourselves with pro-immigrant organizations; be proactive in participating in cultural enrichment activities to improve matters of diversity, representation, and integration.”

“I think that a home-delivery laundry and food pantry service would be very helpful.”

“The ‘Madre Tierra’ Comprehensive Women’s Center for Latina women.”

“Many legal services are unreliable because there is significant profit to be made within the system from the threat of detention and from prolonged detention.”

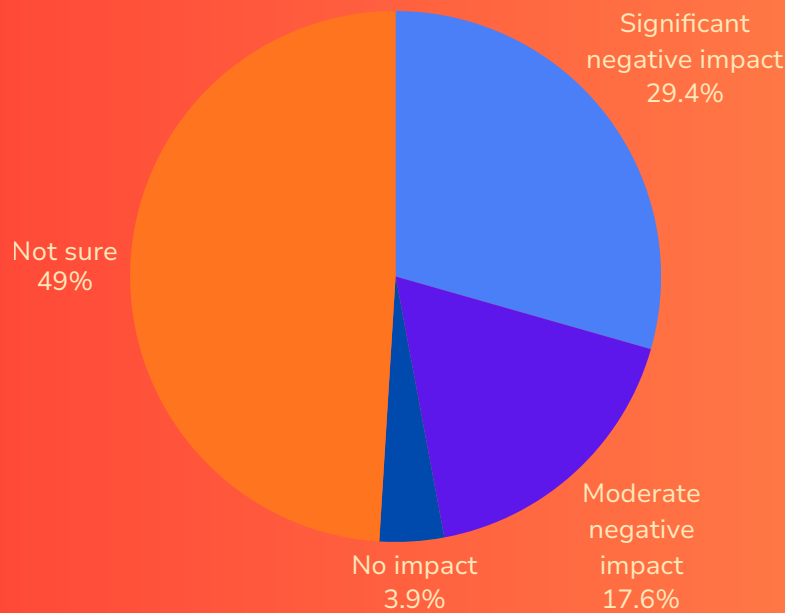
“CCATE’s weekly family plan preparation counseling sessions.”

“At ACLAMO, we are already doing a great deal: we have moved many appointments to a virtual format so as not to put families at risk; we conduct ICE raid drills; and we offer ‘Know Your Rights’ workshops, community education, and accompaniment services. Furthermore—even on pantry days—we have utilized internal resources to deliver food to families when they are unable to leave their homes, though safety within our buildings remains a top priority. Even so, more is needed: specifically, greater access to legal representation, more emotional health support, more resources for emergency family plans, and increased financial assistance for families who have lost their primary provider due to detention or deportation. We recommend strengthening alliances with legal aid organizations, culturally competent mental health service providers, and emergency funds for families in crisis.”

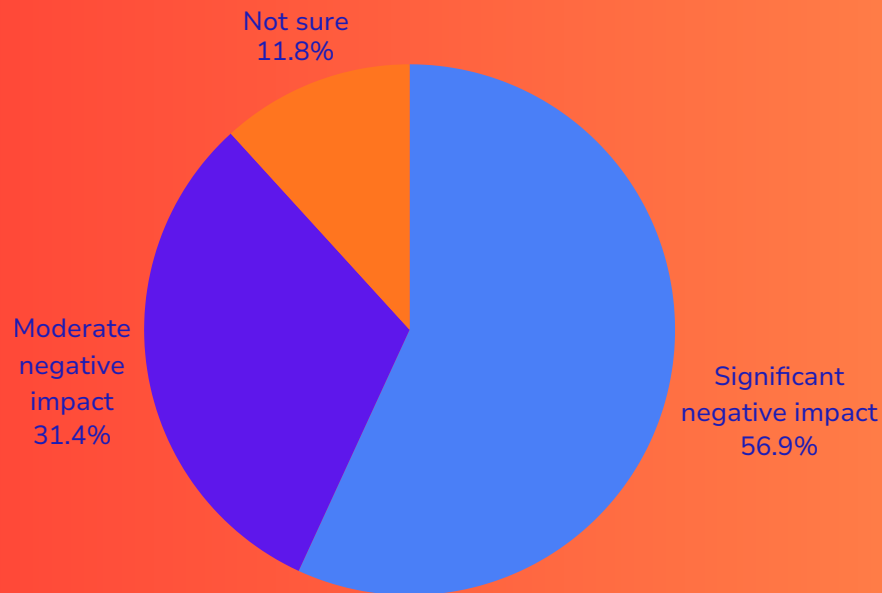
“Legal representation.”

“Greater unity among organizations.”

XII. How have immigration policies and ICE actions affected the financial stability of households in your community?



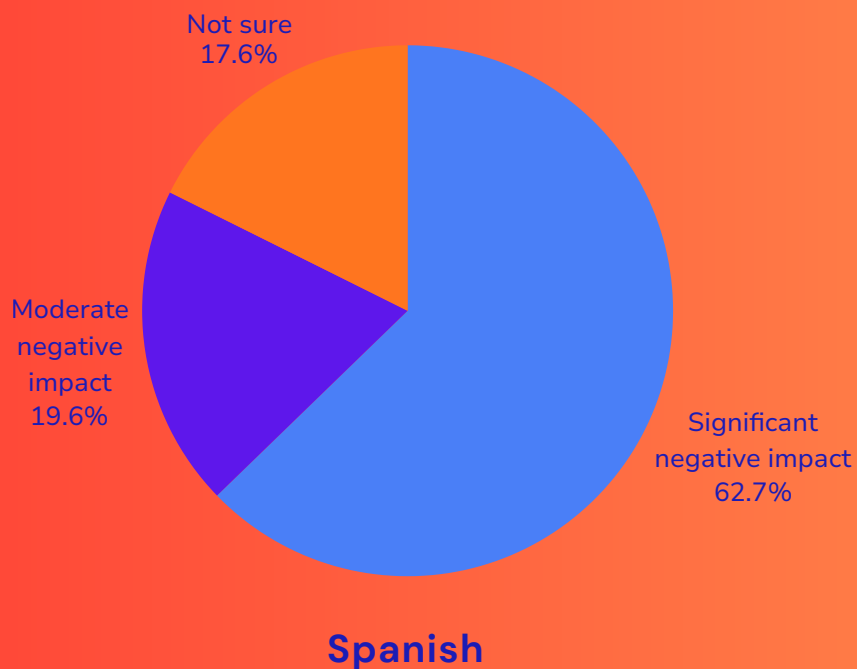
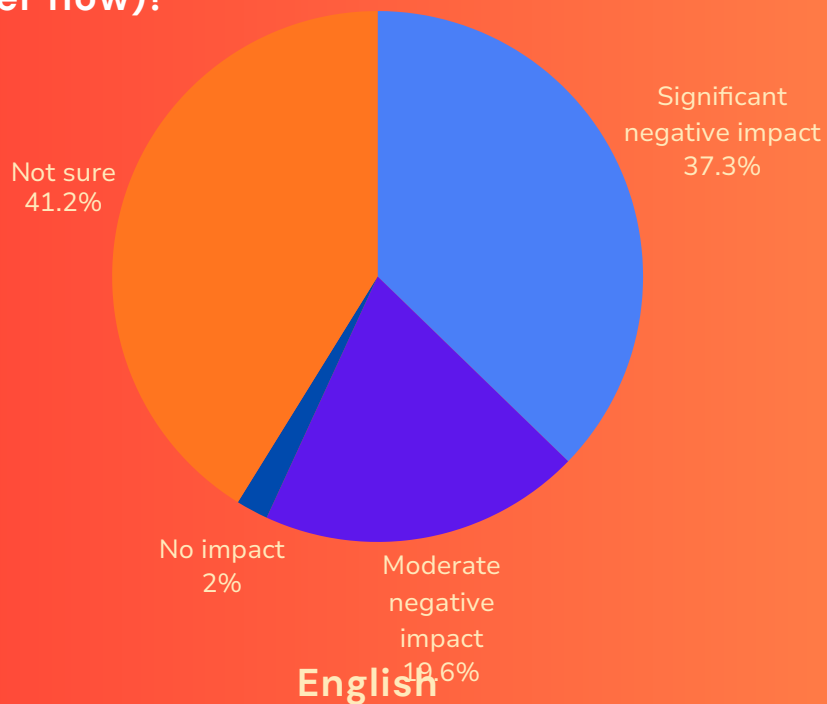
English



Spanish

Allies' perceptions differ from those of the immigrant community on this issue. While financial assistance is not yet seen as an immediate priority, the data show clear and growing strain: 90% of immigrant respondents report financial pressure (56.9% significant negative impact, 31.4% moderate negative impact). Although it is not currently ranked as a top priority, this trend warrants close monitoring as conditions evolve.

XIII. What impact, if any, has immigration enforcement and the presence of ICE had on local small businesses and local commerce (workforce, revenue, customer flow)?

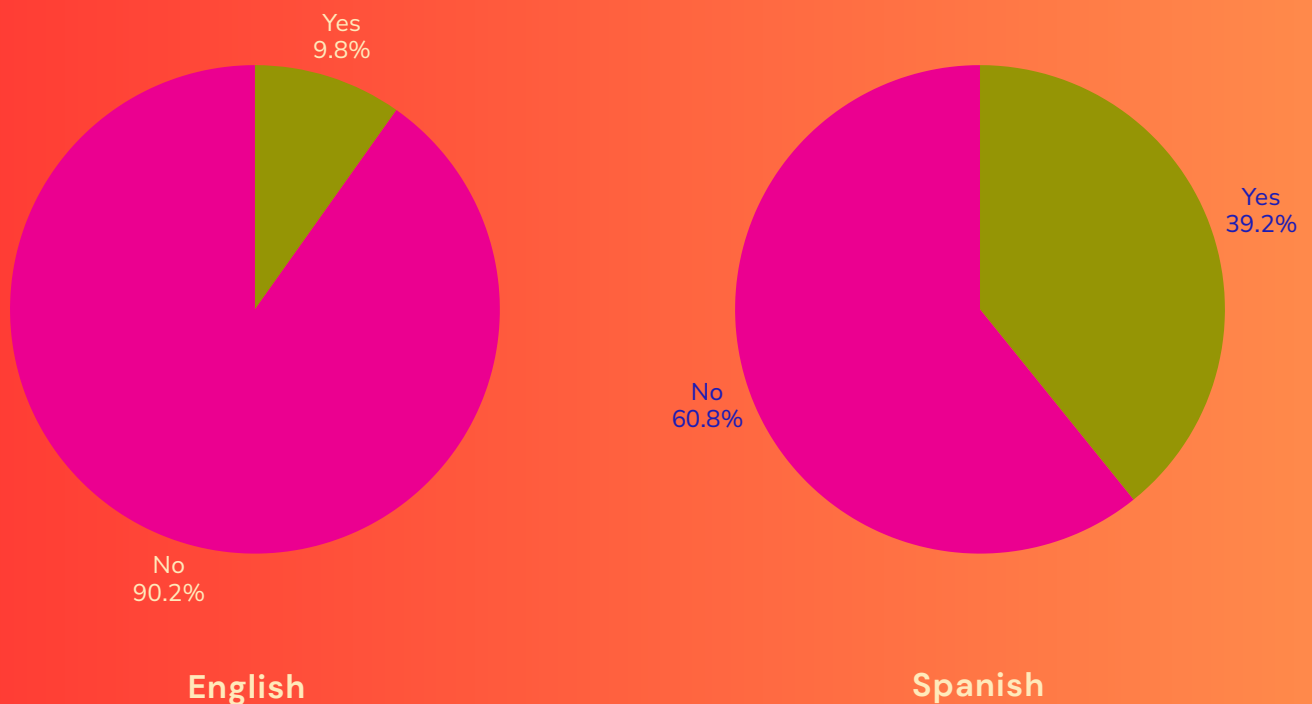


While perceptions regarding the extent of significant negative impact vary, both groups acknowledge that immigration enforcement and the presence of ICE have adversely affected local businesses. Our session included members of the food service, restaurant, cleaning, landscaping, and construction sectors. From the perspective of the immigrant community, 62.7 percent of small businesses report experiencing a high level of impact over the past year—an impact that, naturally, affects entire families and jobs.

The immigrant community serves as a generator of jobs and tax revenue, and acts as a pillar of the local economy. This constitutes a counter-narrative that refutes the prevailing narrative of criminalization and the notion that immigrants merely drain local resources. Small businesses are essential; they serve as the engine of local economies. In this regard, ICE destabilizes the lives of tens of thousands of people and precipitates a local crisis through the "domino effect" triggered by reduced consumer spending.

We urge the state, county, and municipal authorities to develop an economic stimulus plan. For if small businesses fall into crisis, a vast segment of the population—extending even beyond the immigrant community itself—will follow suit. This creates a domino effect that could ultimately result in rising unemployment, diminished tax revenue, and the demise of dozens of community-grown business enterprises.

XIV. Does your business or family need any training sessions to develop emergency plans?



One avenue requiring closer exploration is the fact that, while businesses acknowledge a negative impact, only a minority express the need to develop emergency plans. We must reach out to them to determine, first, what constitutes an emergency plan, and second, what specific programs need to be created to support them. Without presuming the underlying reasons, this opens up the possibility for CCATE and HealthSpark to convene a community assembly dedicated exclusively to small businesses in Montgomery County in the future.

XV. Which approaches to immigration enforcement do you believe should be considered moving forward?



English



Spanish

This question is crucial for identifying—and subsequently exploring—the legislative vision proposed by the community and its allies. We observe a clear concern regarding the protection of families, workers, and schools, as well as the establishment of a documentation process. This implies that the only arena in which this can be achieved is at the federal level; to this end, a legislative initiative must be crafted—one that originates within the House of Representatives.

As Obed Arango noted in his speech at the event: “Language determines the narrative. While the term ‘illegal alien’ criminalizes the immigrant and dehumanizes them—thereby stripping them of their rights—the actual problem lies in a document. It is a document that does not define a person’s humanity, but rather a circumstance—a lived reality. Modern migration is, in fact, a response to systems of oppression. Yet the immigrant is an individual possessing social agency—a powerful and decisive capacity for change and contribution. Therefore, pursuing documentation will spare this country the trauma of harming this generation, dividing families, and destroying businesses, schools, and communities. We envision a documentation process that serves as a stepping stone toward regularization—a migration status that eventually leads to permanent residency and, ultimately, citizenship. We are advocating for a new path—a new legislative framework that humanizes the migrant population, thereby enabling them to fully realize and contribute their entire potential.”

XVI. Media Communication

This category was part of the Community Dialogue. We are including below the raw data gathered from the group notes written during the event:

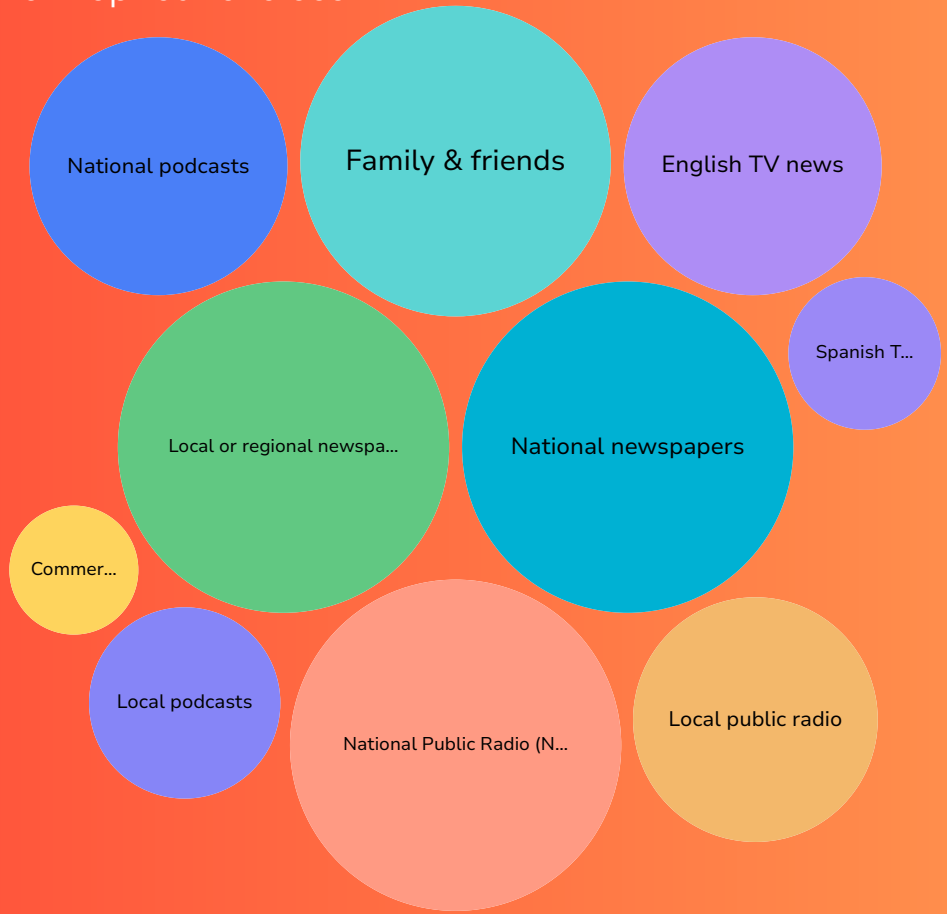
- Media isn't reporting the ICE activity - level of activity - news & updates are coming from friends & neighbors
- Community journalism is key
- Chief of Norristown PD + [CCATE] Podcast = Facts
- Hold local police accountable
 - Communication
 - Invite more police chiefs for dialogue



Which news source do you use to stay informed?

Participants were asked to select their top four choices.

English



Spanish

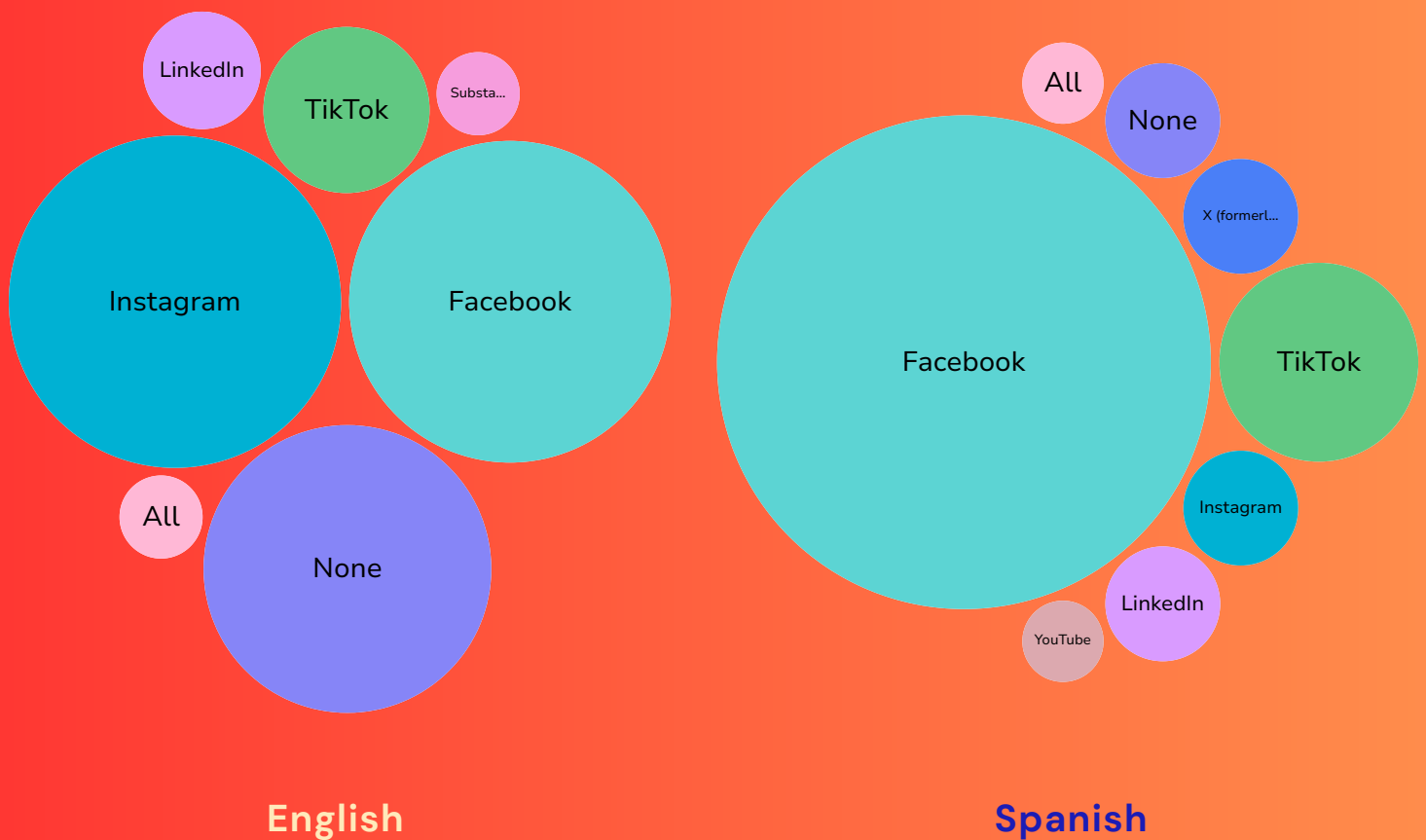


A comparison of the two groups reveals that while allies obtain their information through national media—specifically national newspapers and National Public Radio—the immigrant community relies on Spanish-language television and local podcasts.

In both cases, there is a crucial detail that must not be overlooked: family members and friends serve as sources of information. It is through dialogue with those closest to them that information is exchanged—and, perhaps, that public opinion is shaped.

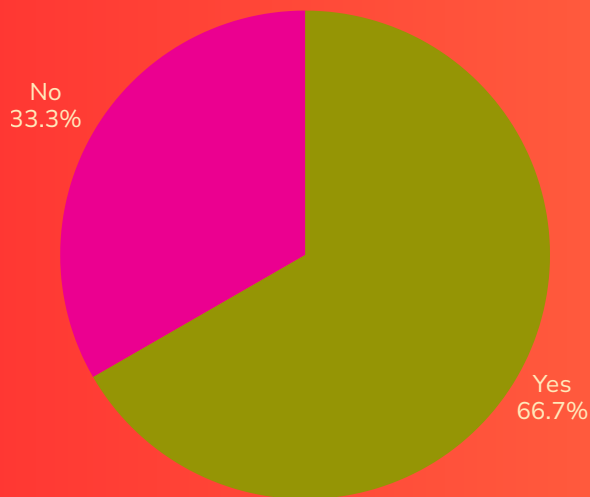
This point underscores the importance of community dialogue as a source of information. Hence, it is vital that media outlets report with clarity and rely on verified facts.

Participants selected their primary social media platform:

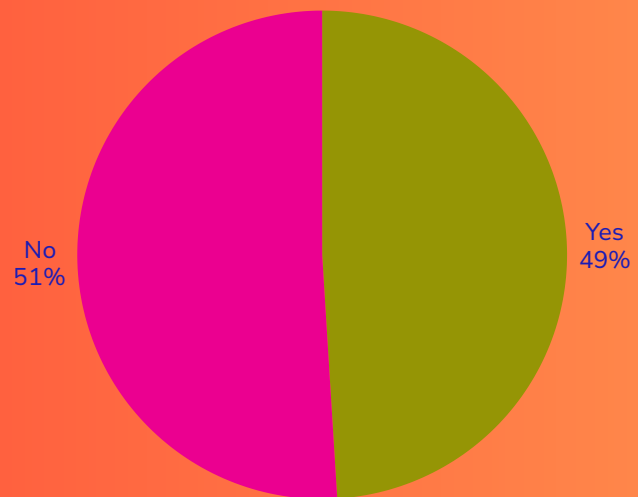


While allies vary in their use of social media, the immigrant community primarily engages via Facebook. It is precisely on Facebook that the majority of groups promoting businesses, services, and podcast announcements operate. This insight can assist organizations, lawmakers, and community leaders in determining where to reach diverse communities—specifically, the immigrant community and the various groups of allies.

Participants shared whether they trust the news they receive:



English



Spanish

While allies—a group whose trust in the news is linked to the specific sources they turn to—generally place their confidence in a relative majority of news outlets, one-third of them do not. This stands in contrast to the immigrant community, where 51 percent of respondents do not trust the news and information they receive. Here are some of the reasons shared by members of the immigrant community:

The following comments are thoughts shared in response to this question:

“I very carefully select the news sources I consult.”

“Sometimes I trust them, and sometimes I don’t.”

“Some outlets just spread fear and aren’t trustworthy.”

“Not all of them; some broadcasts exaggerate or fail to provide enough details about what is truly happening.”

“It’s news and information provided by people who live right here in our community.”

“As a communicator myself, I have to verify the information I receive; it isn’t always factual news, and sometimes it merely serves to instill fear.”

“There are too many sources of information; the constant repetition becomes overwhelming. There is too much opinion and emotion, and not enough hard data.”

“Most of it is sensationalist or completely unfounded.”

“It depends on the source.”

“News outlets often serve specific interests, so one has to listen to multiple sources in order to draw informed conclusions.”

“Because the majority of it is fake.”

“Well, because there have been instances where they claim to be reporting on real cases, but they aren't.”

“Because, often, in an effort to make a story go viral, they exaggerate the facts—or, depending on the specific media outlet, the reporting is biased.”

“Because the same stories have appeared in various places—such as on social media and in traditional news broadcasts.”

“Just in case—be prepared for the worst to happen.”

“The truth has been turned into lies, and lies into truth.”

“They are live videos—verified information.”

“I wouldn't go so far as to say that I distrust **all** sources of information; however, I certainly do distrust those outlets where it is evident that their reporting is focused on protecting or favoring a specific segment of the population.” “They have been timely.”

“Because most of them are sensationalist.”

“Most of them are real.”

“A lot is said, and sometimes I'm not sure if it's true.”

“The sources are verified.”

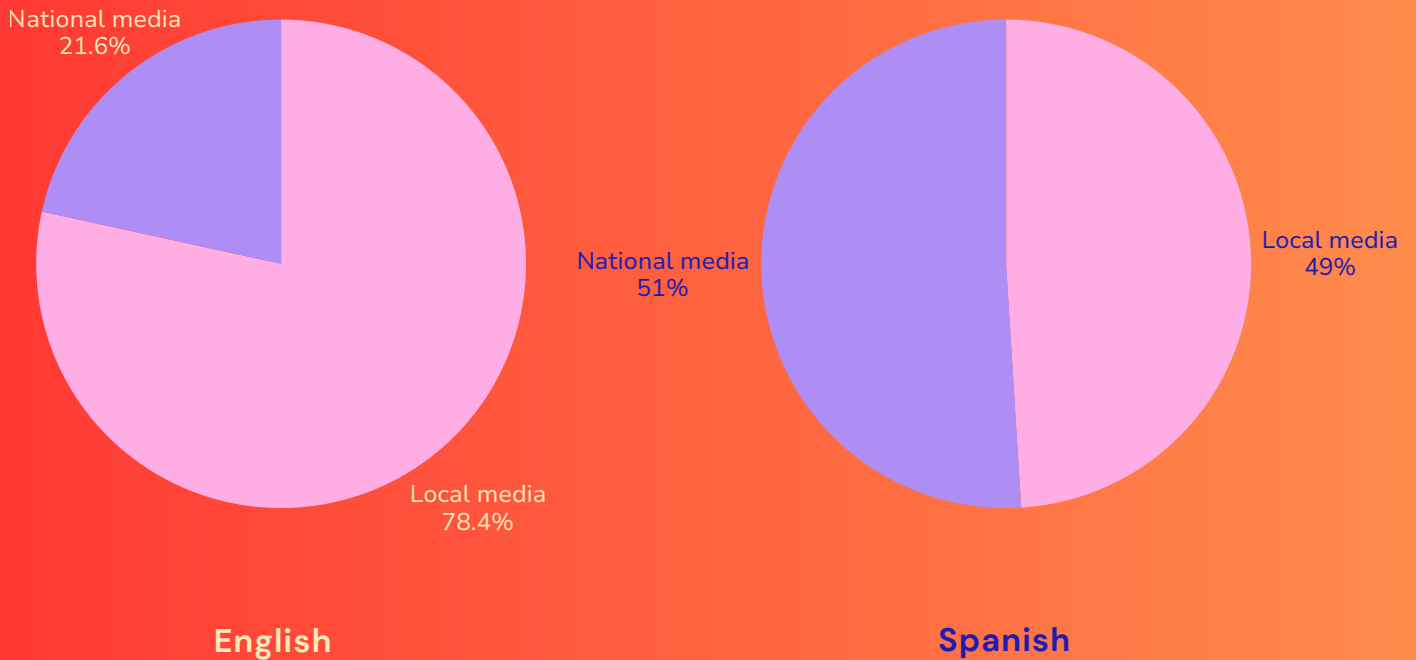
“There are times when they aren't true.”

“I'm not sure if they're true because of artificial intelligence.”

“Because they are legitimate.”

“Because they come from journalists.”

Finally, respondents shared what type of media they trust more:



This response is unequivocal: both groups place greater trust in local media than in national media. This finding may point to two possible reasons: first, their interest lies primarily in immediate events occurring within their own community; and second, immediate—or nearby—events are precisely those that can be verified or confirmed. It is therefore crucial—and indeed necessary—for organizations, legislators, public officials, and community leaders to appear in local media in order to effectively communicate and disseminate information. Communities seek out this direct information while simultaneously scrutinizing its source; consequently, local communicators play a vital role—both in building credibility and in providing information and analysis in a professional and responsible manner.

This report highlights a clear alignment around the urgency of supporting immigrant communities, while also revealing important differences in perception between allies and those directly impacted. Grounded in lived experience and community voice, the findings underscore both immediate needs and emerging pressures that may intensify over time.

The Community Assembly and accompanying data offer not only a snapshot of current realities, but a foundation for ongoing dialogue, accountability, and collective response. Sustained attention to these insights will be critical to ensuring that actions remain responsive to the evolving needs of community.

This moment calls for continued partnership and a commitment to act in step with the community's expressed needs.

Priority actions emerging from these findings are detailed in the Executive Summary.

