

150 DAYS LATER: UNEMPLOYED & EXCLUDED

AUGUST 2020



INTRODUCTION

The levels of COVID-19 infections and deaths in working-class immigrant, Black, and Brown communities in New York have declined since the virus's peak, but economic devastation remains. Nationally and in New York, we continue to see record rates of economic calamity, job loss and financial insecurity, and a brewing housing crisis of untold proportions. Just as the virus hit hardest in Black and Brown communities, data from across the country and New York has consistently shown racially disparate economic impacts of the crisis, with greater job loss and financial and housing insecurity. Community members continue to face the impossible choices between risking one's personal and familial health, on the one hand, and finding a way to feed one's loved ones on the other. This study seeks to quantify the economic realities facing communities in New York in this moment.

In May, MRNY and Hester Street published a novel report with findings from a survey of 244 working-class immigrant, Black, and Brown people across New York City, Long Island, and Westchester. This report builds on that earlier study by returning to the same respondents to see whether and how the economic pain they were facing in the spring has persisted through the summer. The survey was conducted by phone call and text message with 205 respondents in the same urban and suburban geographies. The findings reveal that the communities hit hardest by COVID-19 continue to suffer enormously from job loss, housing insecurity, and a complete failure of the federal government and New York's state government to provide relief.

In the last week of July, we sent an anonymous 12-question survey with 246 community members who had completed a survey in April as part of our initial *Excluded in the Epicenter* report. Of the 205 responses, just over half (53%) of the surveys were completed via automated text messages, 18% completed the survey online and 29% completed the survey over the phone.



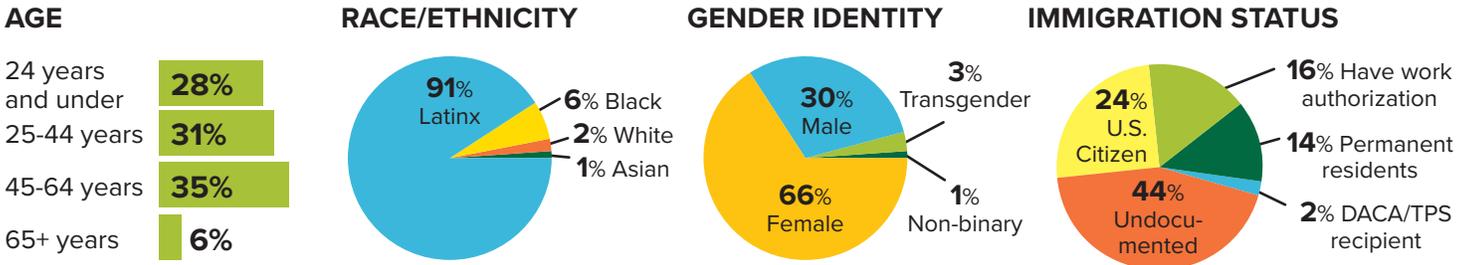
Photos courtesy of Diana Guerra and Joshua Pacheco



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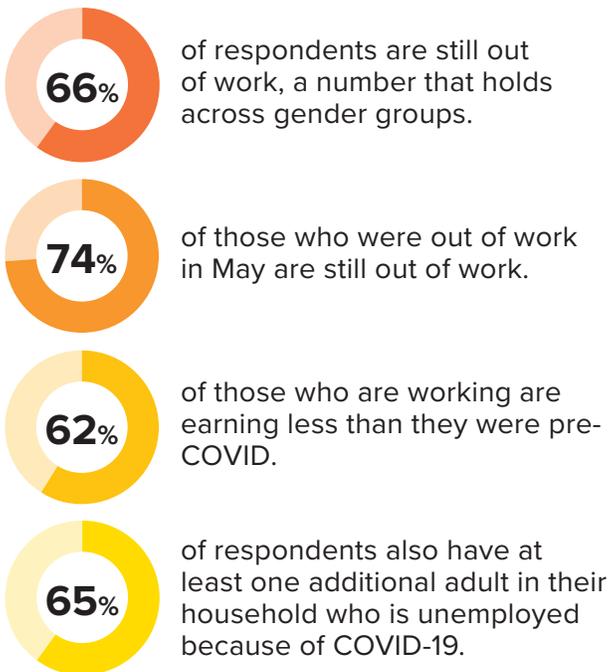
RESPONDENT PROFILE

85% of respondents are immigrants to the U.S.



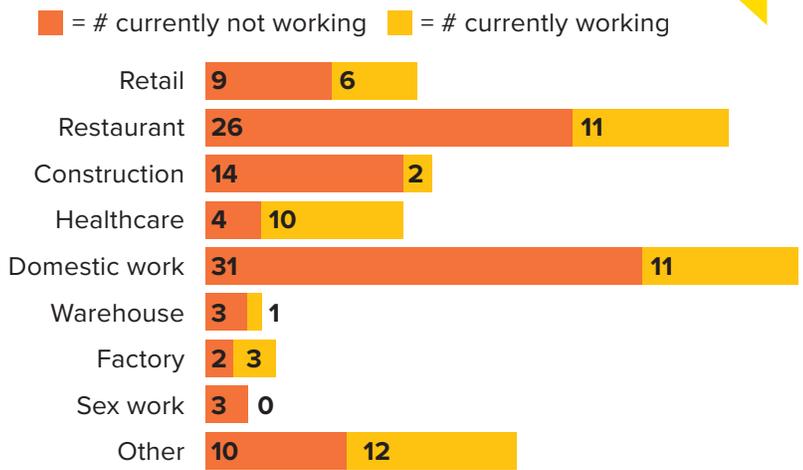
FINDINGS SUMMARY

JOB & INCOME



"No estoy trabajando desde que inició esta pandemia y hasta la fecha de hoy no trabajo. Me preocupa mucho lo de la renta, cómo pagar comida, y el celular. Necesitamos que nos ayuden por favor."

"I have not worked since the start of the pandemic and to date, I have not worked. I am worried about rent, how to pay for food and my phone bill. We need help, please."



HOUSING

"Pude pagar la renta de los meses atrás porque pedí prestado, pero ya no tengo quien me preste mas, ni para devolver."

"I was able to pay the rent from the previous months because I borrowed, but I no longer have anyone to lend me more, nor money to pay back."

Close to **60%** of respondents were not able to pay rent for May, June and July, and **85%** are worried about paying rent in August.



One in five tenants report harassment or threats from their landlord.

Very few tenants (**2%**) have been evicted to date, which makes sense given an eviction moratorium that has been extended. That said, the data points to enormous vulnerability to future evictions.

GOVERNMENT RELIEF

60%

of unemployed U.S. citizen respondents have not received federal or state government economic assistance.

98%

of unemployed undocumented respondents have not received federal or state government economic assistance.

“Las ayudas nunca llegan a las personas que más lo necesitan, a los inmigrantes indocumentados no nos tienen en cuenta. Cada día es mas difícil seguir adelante.”

“Aid never reaches the people who need it the most, undocumented immigrants are not taken into account. Every day it is more difficult to keep going.”

CONCLUSION & ACTION

While the COVID-19 virus has subsided, at least for now, in New York, this report demonstrates enormous and persistent needs in working-class immigrant, Black, and Brown communities hardest hit by the crisis. Workers are overwhelmingly still without jobs and struggling to feed their families, often mapping out complicated routines of scouring local food pantries while trying to take care of their families. Most of these workers and tenants cannot afford rent, and that dimension of the crisis is deepening with each passing month. Meanwhile, the overwhelming majority has not received a dime in support from the federal and state governments.

As the Trump administration and Congress continue to fail to deliver urgently needed relief, these communities need Governor Cuomo and the state legislature to take action to deliver a recovery for all. While there are various dimensions to deliver the full range of relief needed, the two most important immediate policy solutions for the economic devastation and exclusion revealed in this survey are to:

TAX BILLIONAIRES AND CREATE AN EXCLUDED WORKERS FUND

As proposed by State Senator Jessica Ramos and Assembly Member Carmen De La Rosa, New York should provide emergency income replacement for immigrant workers excluded from Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) and similar programs, recently-incarcerated or detained people with no hope of getting work, and many immigrant families who have lost their primary breadwinner to COVID.

CANCEL RENT

As proposed in three separate bills, New York should institute a universal eviction moratorium for residential and commercial tenants that would last for the duration of the crisis plus one year; forgive rent and mortgage payments for tenants and small landlords who have been unable to pay rent and owe money to their landlords from March 7, 2020 through the end of the crisis, plus 90 days; and create a state-funded statewide rent support program that prioritizes resources for homeless New Yorkers and New Yorkers who are chronically housing insecure, which must be available to all income-eligible households.