

Communities United Youth Survey Findings, January 11, 2021

Introduction

Lower-income communities and communities of color are seeing elevated rates of COVID-19 fatalities and are also home to a high share of individuals and households experiencing pandemic-related layoffs. To identify housing and community development challenges stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Institute for Housing Studies (IHS) collaborated with Communities United (CU) to engage youth and their families in five of CU's target community areas. Funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the project sought to engage youth and their families around the pandemic's impact on their communities, document existing neighborhood conditions using local data, and build on CU's ongoing youth leadership development work.

This document summarizes preliminary findings of the Communities United (CU) Youth Survey. The survey aims to gather information and insights about housing and economic challenges facing youth, their families, and their neighborhoods during the COVID-19 pandemic in the five City of Chicago Community Areas where CU focuses its organizing efforts. This information was used to guide the development of data indicators that document neighborhood conditions, amplify youth lived experiences, and inform community-led conversations to define strategies to address COVID-19 challenges and inequities.

Survey Instrument

IHS and CU developed, administered, and analyzed the survey collaboratively. Key areas of focus for survey questions were identified by IHS and CU. CU developed specific survey questions to ensure they were written in a way that would be approachable and digestible for a youth audience. IHS reviewed the survey to help ensure questions touched on key housing and community issues and challenges before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. A group of CU's youth leaders also reviewed the survey questions to help ensure the survey was youth-friendly. The survey was administered online over Google Forms in November and December of 2020. Survey dissemination was led by CU youth leaders and organizers through email, social media, and community outreach related to ongoing CU campaigns. The survey sampled CU's network of youth leaders and their peers that reside in one of CU's five target communities and/or are involved in CU's programming. In January of 2021, the survey results were cleaned, coded, and summarized by IHS.

Findings Summary

Two-thirds of youth respondents live in the neighborhoods of Albany Park, Austin, and Belmont Cragin. Most are long-time residents that have lived in their neighborhoods for five or more years and are between the ages of 15 and 20.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the greatest challenges youth and their families faced included housing affordability and community violence. As a result of the pandemic, youth expressed challenges related to loss of household income, increased anxiety, adjusting to remote learning, and gun violence.

In their neighborhoods, youth felt the largest disturbance during the pandemic was an increase in unemployment, increase in community violence, and loss of affordable housing options. Approximately 45 percent of respondents and their families reported that they considered moving from their current residence. Of those that have considered moving, most prefer to stay in Chicago but have considered moving to another neighborhood.

The most important resources youth consider to be missing from their communities include mental health services, job opportunities, and affordable housing. Moving forward, the top two issues youth reported that they would like to see is 1) a greater focus on public safety and 2) improved community resources.

Survey Responses

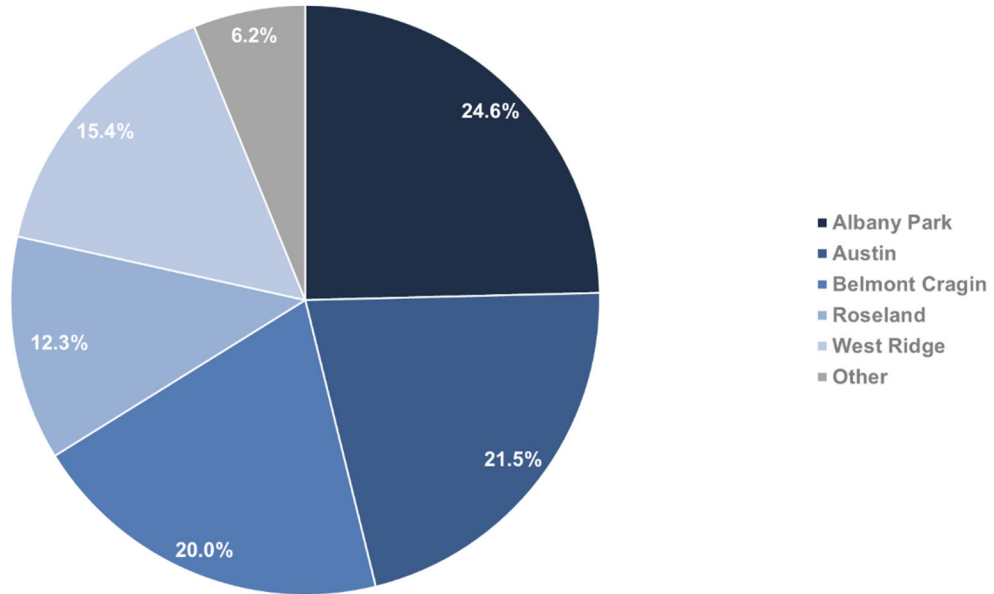
Responses that include percentages and number of responses are used to describe single choice and multiple-choice questions. Responses that include only the number of responses are used to describe 'choose all that apply' multiple-choice questions

Total survey responses: 65

Who are the survey respondents?

- Approximately two-thirds of youth respondents live in Albany Park, Austin, and Belmont Cragin
 - Respondents live in **Albany Park** (24.6%, 16), **Austin** (21.5%, 14), **Belmont Cragin** (20%, 13), West Ridge (15.4%, 10), and Roseland (12.3%, 8). The remaining responses are spread across Chicago community areas and suburbs outside of CU's five target areas.
- More than half (60.9%, 39) of respondents are **longtime residents** that have lived in their communities for 10+ years (71.9%, 49 respondents have lived in their neighborhoods for 5+ years).
- 81.5%, or 53 respondents, are between the ages of **15 and 20**

What neighborhood do you live in?



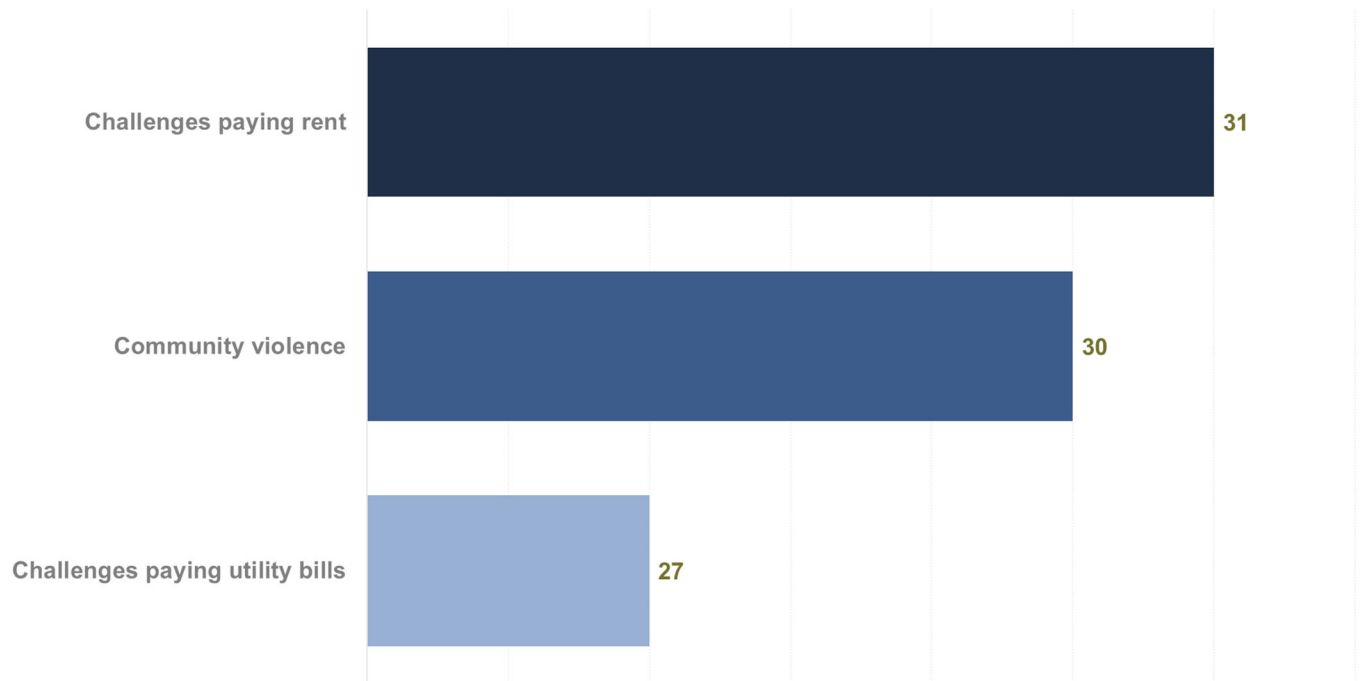
How long have you lived in your neighborhood?



■ Ten or more years ■ Two to five years ■ Five to nine years ■ Less than two years

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the greatest challenges youth and their families faced was:

- Housing unaffordability, including challenges paying for rent (31 responses) and challenges paying for utility bills (27)
- Community violence (30)



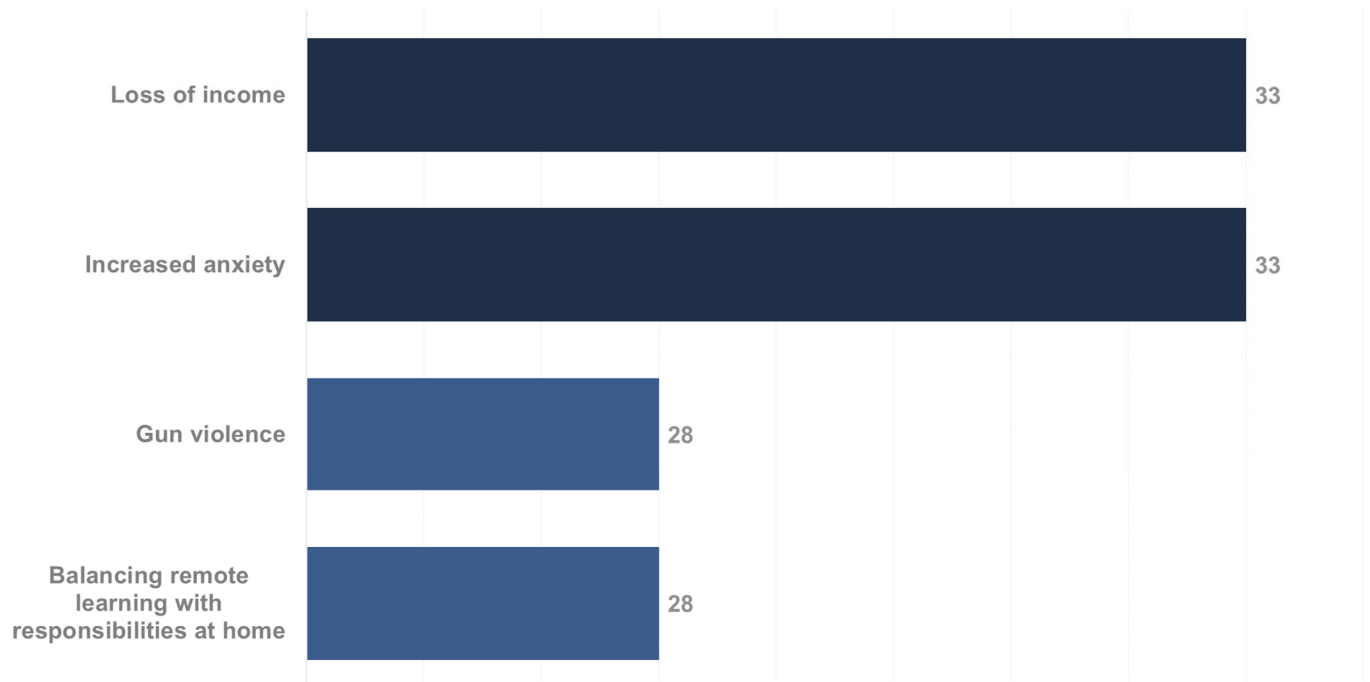
Survey Question: What are some of the ongoing challenges you, your family, or your neighborhood have been experiencing before COVID-19?

“It’s getting hard to find a new home, people keep buying buildings and evicting people who have low income.”

“A lot of people in my community, due to limited resources, can’t afford the high price of living.”

As a result of the pandemic, youth expressed experiencing challenges related to:

- Loss of household income (33 responses)
- Increased anxiety due to the pandemic (33)
- Balancing remote learning and home responsibilities (28)
- Increase in gun violence (28)



Survey Question: What are some of the challenges you, your family, or friends have experienced this year as a result of COVID-19?

“COVID-19 changed a lot. Everybody who’s going to school is forced to use e-learning at home. Some families don’t have Wi-Fi. When we were at school, there was somewhere to go if you’re going through something, having trouble at home, mental help and etc.”

In their neighborhoods at large, youth felt the largest disturbances since the beginning of 2020 included:

- Increase in unemployment (42 responses)
- Increase in community violence (34)
- Lack of affordable housing options (30)

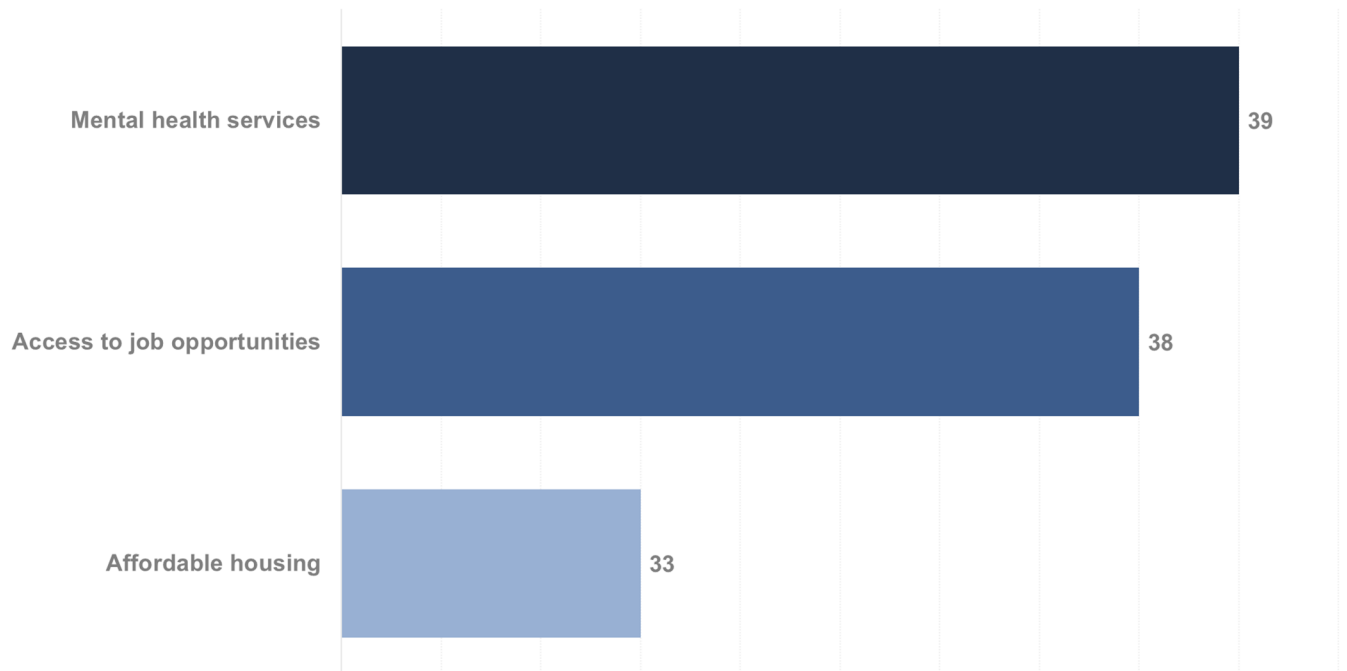


Just under half (44.6%) of respondents and their families have considered moving to another residence.

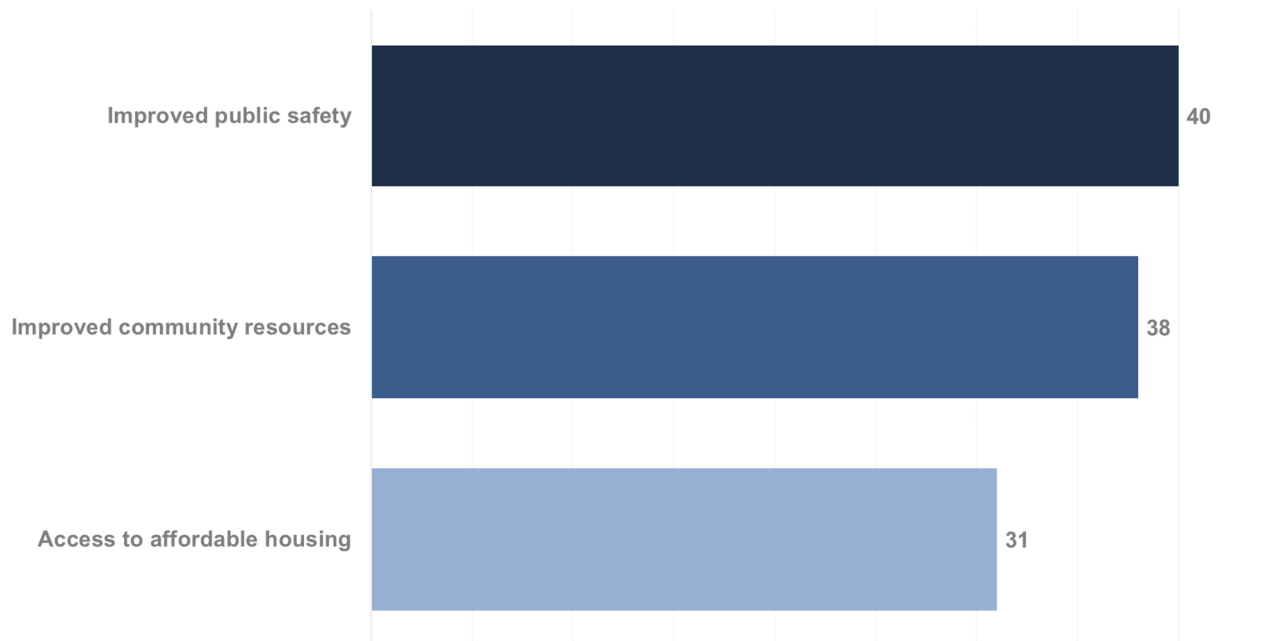
- Of these respondents, most have considered either moving to another neighborhood in Chicago (15 responses) followed by moving out of Illinois to another state (10).

Youth considered these resources missing the most in their communities

- Mental health services (39 responses)
- Job opportunities for youth and adults (38)
- Affordable housing (33)



Moving forward, the top three issues youth would like to focus on as their communities emerge from the pandemic include public safety (40), improved community resources (38), followed by access to affordable housing (31).



Survey Question: If you can bring in any resource in your neighborhood what would they be and why?

“Affordable housing because this is what we lack the most and on top of that the pandemic has put a lot of us out of jobs so now it’s harder to afford the monthly rent.”

“Affordable internet because it’s needed to be able to attend remote learning”

“Better paying jobs, due to what has happened a lot of people are unemployed or are working for less”

“We need a citywide strategy to make people safer in our neighborhoods. Gun violence continues daily but city officials have no plan”
