

# MONTANA COVID-19 FAMILY IMPACT SURVEY REPORT



April 2020

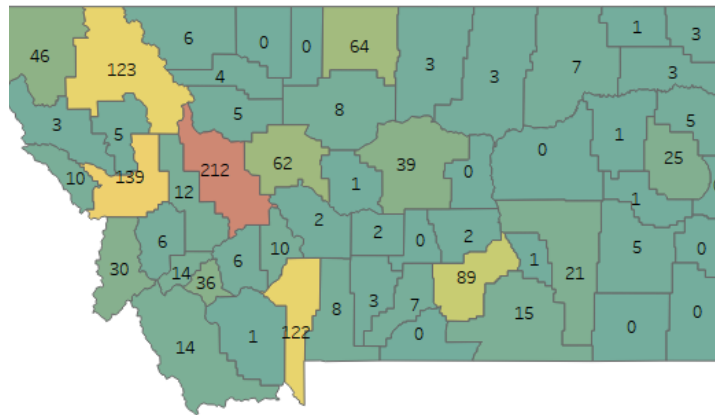
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# MONTANA COVID-19 FAMILY IMPACT SURVEY REPORT

## Executive Summary

COVID-19 has changed the way of life for families in Montana, and to help coordinate local and state responses, Zero to Five surveyed families across Montana to gather information on their experiences. The COVID-19 Family Impact Survey was conducted April 2-10, 2020. Zero to Five utilized a non-probability sample to collect the data. While this survey does not provide a representative sample, it offers an expedited view of how the pandemic has impacted Montana families. This executive summary highlights core findings. The full results follow on pages (5-12) along with the methodology.



Reported from convenience sample of COVID-19 family impact electronic survey 4/2/20 – 4/10/20

## Survey Respondents

There were 1,190 responses received from 46 counties. For this report, respondents are defined as family members, which include parents and caregivers.

- Sixty-two percent of respondents had children in the household age five or younger
- The most frequently reported occupations were healthcare, public health, and human services (26.7%), education (15%), and child care providers (12.3%)
- Twelve percent of respondents were recently unemployed due to COVID-19

## Sources of Information on COVID-19

- Ninety-nine percent of respondents reported that they had received enough information on how to slow the spread of COVID-19
- Most respondents received their information from government websites (85.4%)

## Concerns about the Impact of COVID-19

Respondents main concerns are not being able to:

- Meet financial needs (58.1%)
- Take care of children (47.7%)
- Leave home/connect with friends and family (43.8%)

Multiple responses could be selected.

## Anticipated Need

Fifty-one percent of respondents anticipate accessing Montana assistance programs to support their family during COVID-19.

The main programs identified:

- Health coverage assistance (45.7%)
- Unemployment insurance (43.6%)
- Supplemental Nutrition and Assistance Program (SNAP) (27%)

*“My kids mother has been laid off. I have my hours reduced by more than half and will be laid off soon. We are keeping our kids home due to COVID concerns. It looks as though I will have to pay in full for time missed at daycare. We cannot afford to do that.” — Parent*

## Child Care

Respondents with children ages five years or younger were asked specific questions on child care.

The top child care challenges reported:

- My child care center has closed (48.4%)
- Essential worker in need of child care (27.9%)
- Child care program requiring payment regardless of attendance (22.5%)
- Affording the cost (22.5%)

*Multiple responses could be selected.*

*"I am a healthcare worker, but because my childcare is closed and I am a single person, I cannot work. I am still required to pay childcare expenses, but also do not have a predictable income now." — Parent*

## Kindness in Montana

Communities across Montana are coming together to support one another through these difficult times. Over 500 community acts of kindness were submitted in the survey.

*"Our local Hutterite colonies have been so generous to donate their time & materials to make homemade masks for our community. My staff at our health dept have worked hard to package & distribute these to our community. Between 3 colonies — they've made nearly 3000 masks."*

*— Parent, Conrad, Pondera County*

*"I am amazed at our community helping out. I have had some of the customers at my job call and ask if we need anything. The men and women who stand outside making sure kids get food through the lunch program. The kindness of people is amazing."*

*— Parent, Helena, Lewis and Clark County*

## Conclusion

This is an incredibly fast-moving crisis, and policy decisions are changing daily. The goal of the Montana COVID-19 Family Impact Survey is to help guide local and statewide strategies to support coordinated and targeted response efforts. We hope to bridge the experiences of parents to support evolving program and policy decisions.

# MONTANA COVID-19 FAMILY IMPACT SURVEY REPORT

## Background

COVID-19 has changed the way of life for families in Montana as preventative steps are taken to minimize the impact. The effects of COVID-19 are far-reaching and go beyond public health. Families are facing uncertain and challenging times, which is why Zero to Five is committed to ensuring families across Montana have access to vital information about available resources. To help coordinate local and state responses, Zero to Five surveyed families across Montana to gather information on their experiences. Zero to Five utilized a non-probability sample to collect data for the COVID-19 Family Impact Survey. While this survey does not provide a representative sample, it offers an expedited view, from 46 counties around the state, of how Montana families are impacted by the pandemic.

## Results

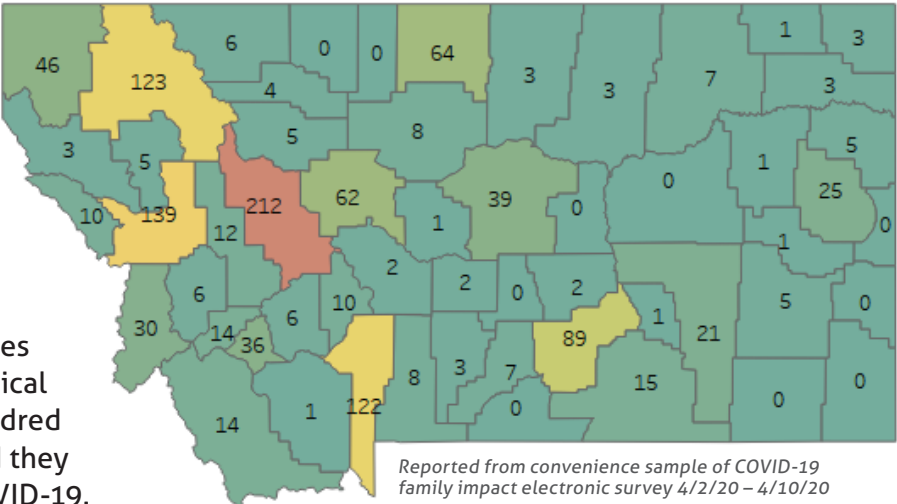
This report summarizes findings at the statewide level.

### Demographics

There were 1,190 responses received from 46 counties across Montana. For this report, respondents are defined as family members, which include parents and caregivers. Figure 1.1 shows total responses by county. Sixty-two percent of respondents had children in the household age five or younger, and 38% had children in the household over the age of 5.

**Figure 1.1: Responses by county**

Figure 1.2 shows the occupations of respondents. The occupation categories are based on the federal essential critical infrastructure workforce list. One hundred and forty-three respondents reported they were recently unemployed due to COVID-19. Of the 143 respondents, the top five former occupations were Hospitality and Food Services (49), Child Care Provider (20), Retail and Small Business Owner (16), Healthcare, Public Health, and Human Services (12), and Education (9). Other occupations reported as recently unemployed included Critical Manufacturing, Construction, Energy, Financial Services, First Responder, and Government Operations.



Reported from convenience sample of COVID-19 family impact electronic survey 4/2/20 – 4/10/20



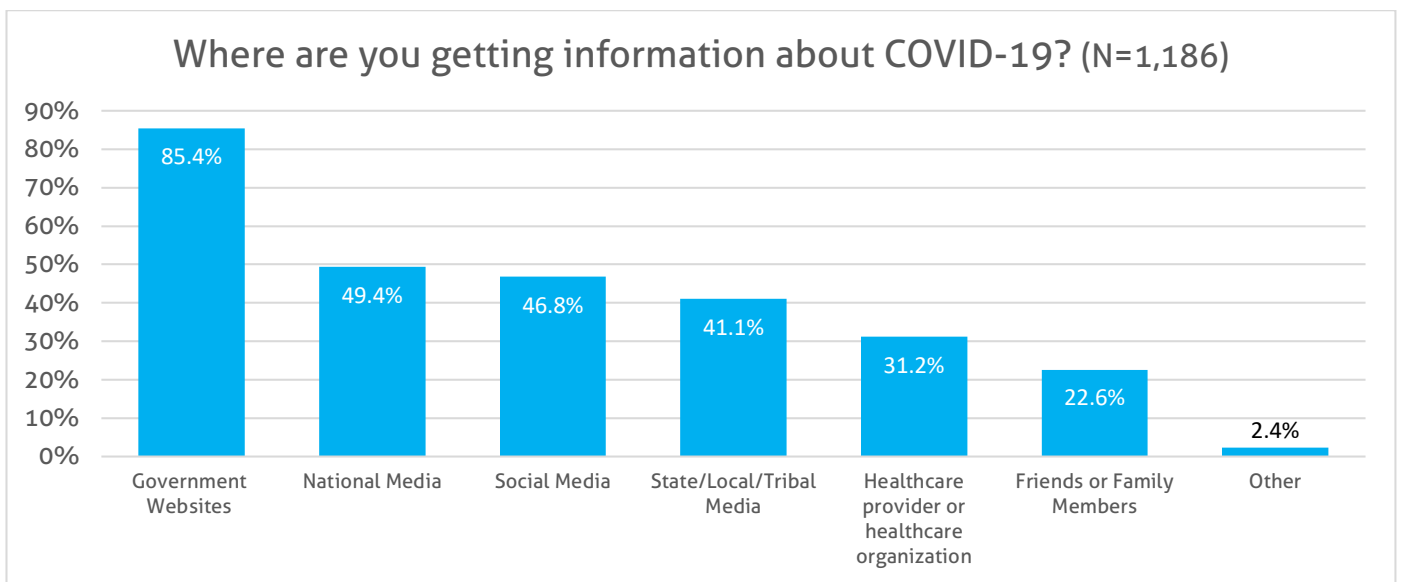
**Figure 1.2: Respondent Occupation**

Occupation (N=1,189)	N (%)
Healthcare, Public Health, Human Services	318 (26.7)
Education	179 (15)
Child Care Provider	146 (12.3)
I am recently unemployed due to COVID-19	143 (12)
Other Community Based Essential Functions and Government Operations	57 (4.8)
Financial Services	55 (4.6)
Retail and Small Business Owner	42 (3.5)
Hospitality and Food Services	39 (3.3)
Communication and Information Technology	33 (2.8)
Law Enforcement, Public Safety, First Responders	29 (2.4)
Construction	27 (2.3)
Food and Agriculture	26 (2.2)
Energy	10 (0.8)
Critical Manufacturing	6 (0.5)
Other	273 (23)

### Information on COVID-19

Ninety-nine percent of respondents stated that they had received enough information on strategies to slow the spread of COVID-19. Respondents were asked to identify their top three sources of information on COVID-19. Figure 1.3 shows the primary sources of information (multiple responses could be selected). The other category included work, library, schools, and community organizations.

**Figure 1.3: COVID-19 Sources of Information**

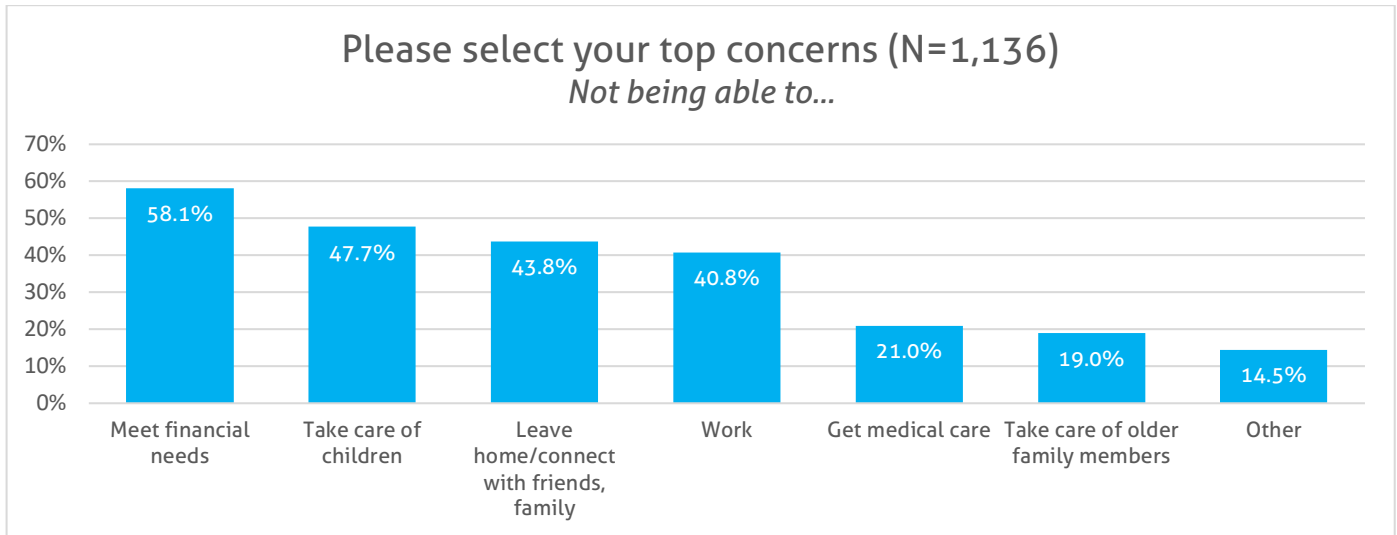


*Reported from convenience sample of COVID-19 family impact electronic survey 4/2/20 – 4/10/20*

## Concerns and Needs

Respondents were asked to select their main concerns about COVID-19. The top three concerns reported were not being able to meet financial needs (58.1%), take care of children (47.7%), and leave home/connect with family and friends (43.8%). Figure 1.4 shows all the concerns reported (multiple responses could be selected). The other category included concern for their child's education, vulnerable populations, and managing work and caring for children.

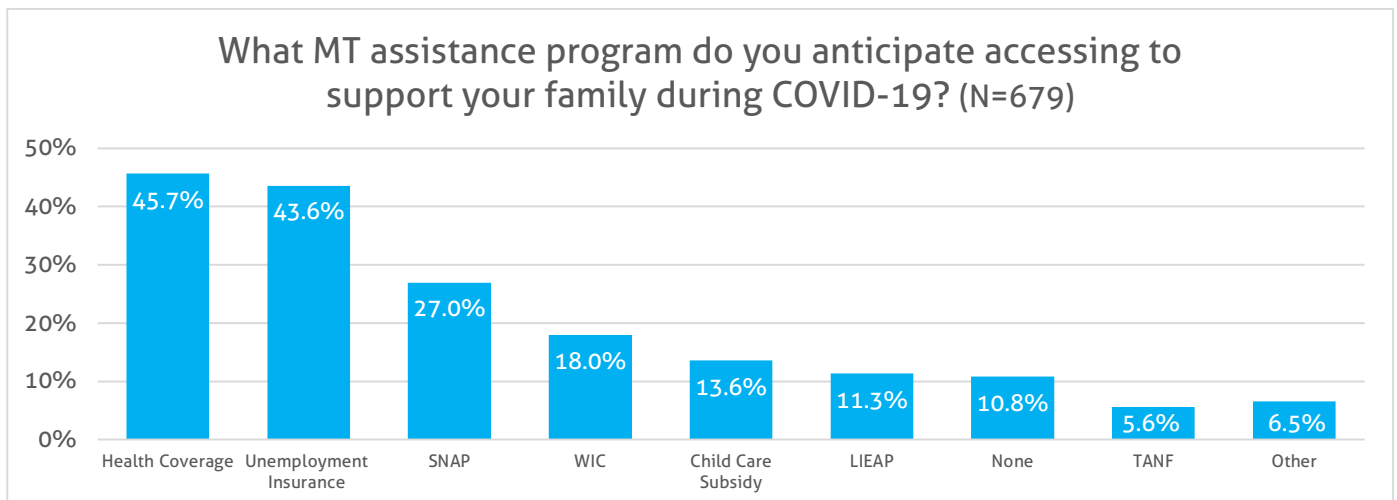
**Figure 1.4 Top Concerns**



*Reported from convenience sample of COVID-19 family impact electronic survey 4/2/20 – 4/10/20*

Respondents were asked to report which Montana assistance programs they anticipate accessing to support their family during COVID-19. Fifty percent of families anticipate accessing Montana assistance programs for support, nearly half reported a need for health coverage assistance (45.7%) and unemployment insurance (43.6%). Figure 1.5 shows all the responses reported (multiple responses could be selected). The other category included food banks, child care, small business loans, and family leave. Figure 1.6 describes each program.

**Figure 1.5 Anticipated Need**



*Reported from convenience sample of COVID-19 family impact electronic survey 4/2/20 – 4/10/20*

**Figure 1.6 Program Description**

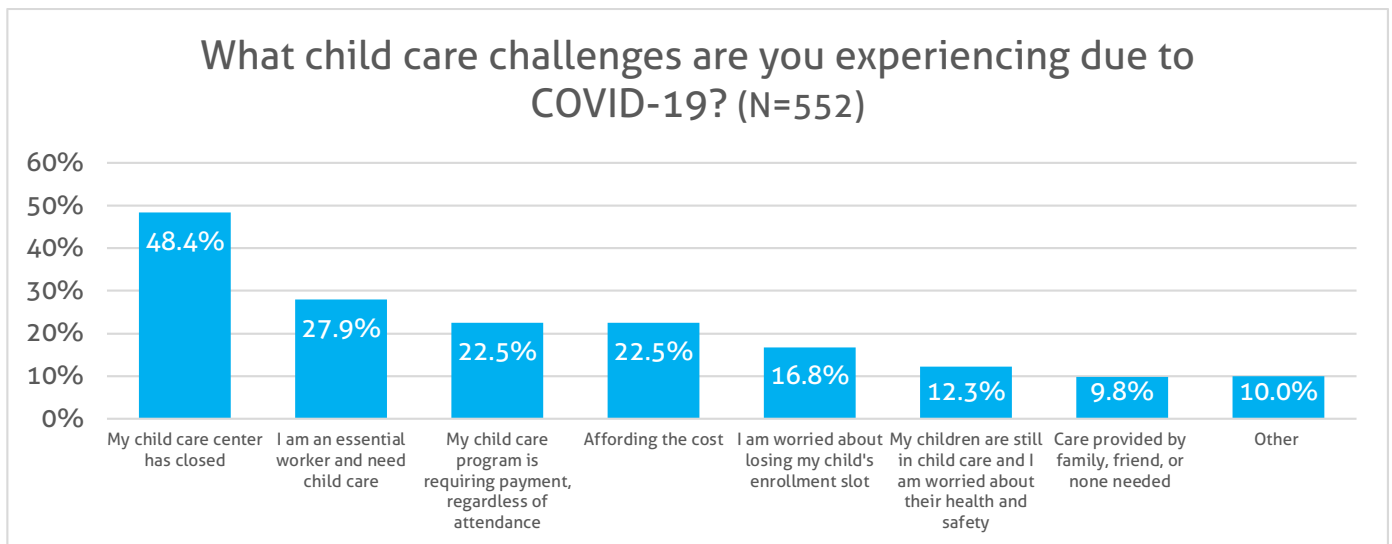
Program	Description
Health Coverage Assistance	Medicaid, Healthy Montana Kids, Health Insurance Assistance
Unemployment Insurance	Unemployment insurance program provides unemployment benefits to eligible workers who become unemployed through no fault of their own and meet eligibility requirements.
Supplemental Nutrition and Assistance Program (SNAP)	SNAP provides supplemental food and nutrition assistance to low-income people.
Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)	WIC provides healthcare and nutrition for low-income pregnant women, breastfeeding women, and children under the age of five.
Child Care Subsidy	Best Beginnings Scholarship supports child care costs to qualified families whose child receives care from a licensed child care provider.
Low Income Energy and Assistance Program (LIEAP)	LIEAP assists eligible Montana residents and families with their heating and cooling costs.
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	TANF cash assistance is a program providing temporary financial assistance to needy families.

*“Our biggest challenge is simply the unknown... not knowing how long everything will last, not knowing if we’ll be able to receive unemployment benefits/how much/when, not knowing if we’ll be able to get anything from the U.S Small Business Administration’s Payment Protection or Economic Injury Disaster Loan programs, not knowing if there will be any kind of fishing guide season for my husband.”*

## Child Care

There were 729 respondents with children 5 years or younger. These respondents were asked a specific set of questions about child care. Twelve percent of families reported utilizing the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship, 86% did not receive the scholarship, and 2% did not know. Figure 1.7 shows the top child care challenges experienced (multiple responses could be selected). The other category included fear of sending child to child care due to COVID-19 and providing care at home and supporting education.

**Figure 1.7 Child Care Challenges**



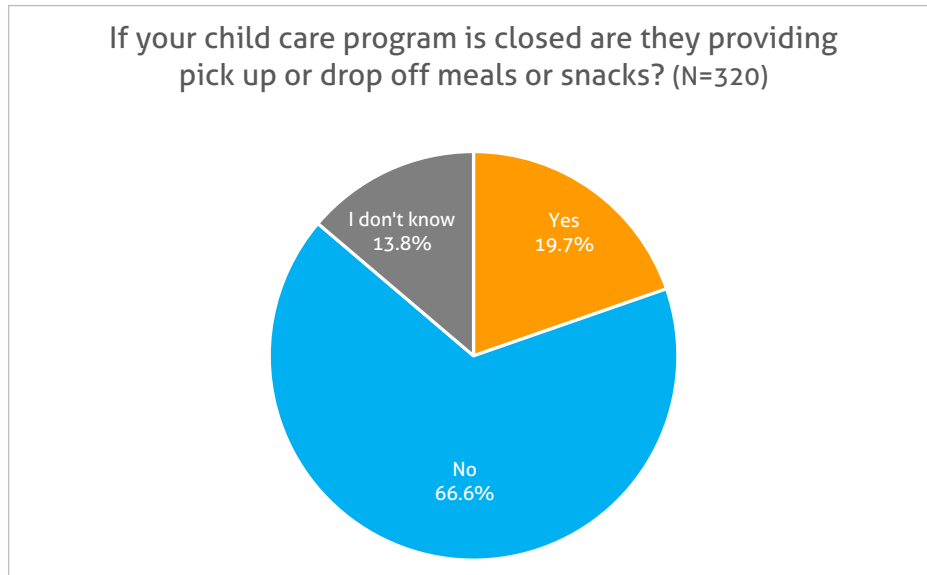
*Reported from convenience sample of COVID-19 family impact electronic survey 4/2/20 – 4/10/20*



*“My kids mother has been laid off. I have my hours reduced by more than half and will be laid off soon. We are keeping our kids home due to covid concerns. It looks as though I will have to pay in full for time missed at daycare. We cannot afford to do that.” — Parent*

Respondents were asked if their child care program closed, were they still providing snacks or meals. Figure 1.8 shows the results. Yes (19.7%), no (66.6%) and, I don't know (13.8%).

**Figure 1.8 Closed Child Care Food Assistance**



Reported from convenience sample of COVID-19 family impact electronic survey 4/2/20 – 4/10/20

## Family & Community Challenges

The COVID-19 Family Impact Survey included two open-ended questions to learn about the challenges families and communities are experiencing. The open-ended questions were reviewed and categorized based on core themes that emerged.

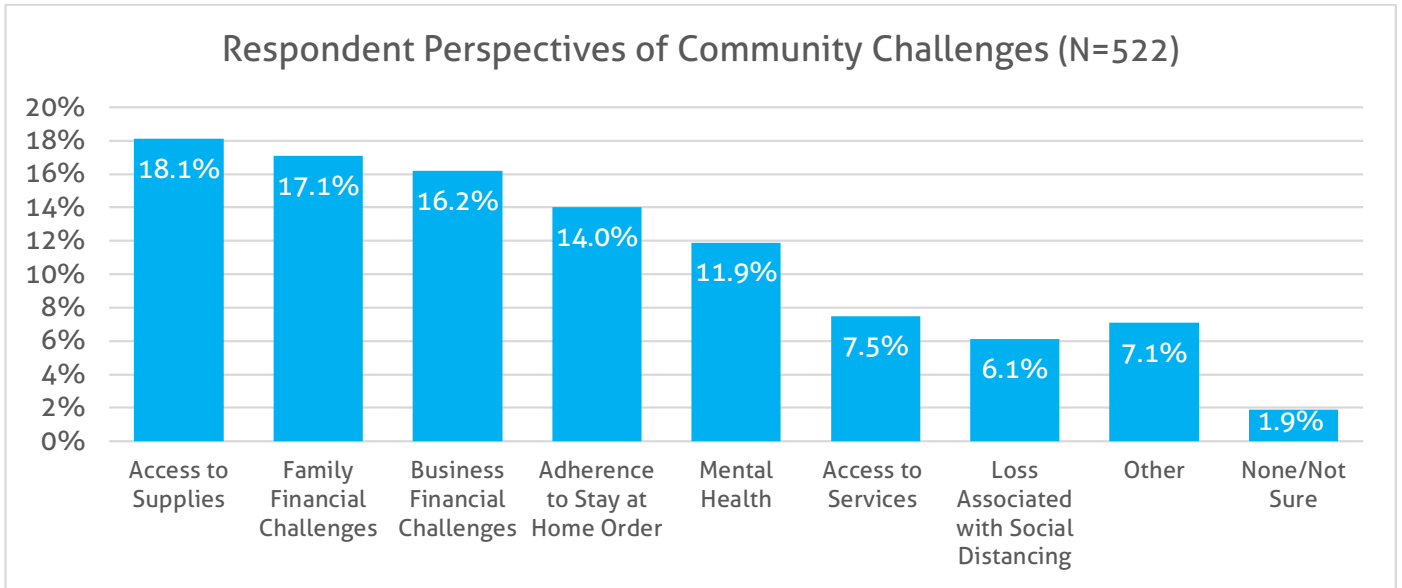
### Community

The first question asked respondents to describe their perspectives on the challenges their community is experiencing. Five hundred and twenty-two responses were received and organized into themes. The themes were created based on the challenges most often reported. Figure 1.9 shows the community challenges reported. The main themes identified were:

- Access to supplies (food, cleaning, household supplies, and healthcare PPE) (18.1%)
- Family financial challenges (paying bills, unemployment, and financial stress) (17.1%)
- Business financial challenges (16.2%)
- Adherence to stay at home order (people not taking it seriously) (14%)
- Mental health (depression, anxiety, isolation, fear, and uncertainty) (11.9%)
- Access to services (healthcare, child care, education) (7.5%)
- Loss associated with social distancing (cancelled events, contact with friends, family, and community groups) (6.1%).
- None/Not sure (1.9%)

*“Our town is dependent on tourism to support the local economy. Most of the town is laid off. Parents are anxious, makes kids anxious. I am gone all day, and my child is left to do school without assistance because I am an essential worker.” — Parent*

**Figure 1.9 Respondent Perspectives of Community Challenges**



*Reported from convenience sample of COVID-19 family impact electronic survey 4/2/20 – 4/10/20*

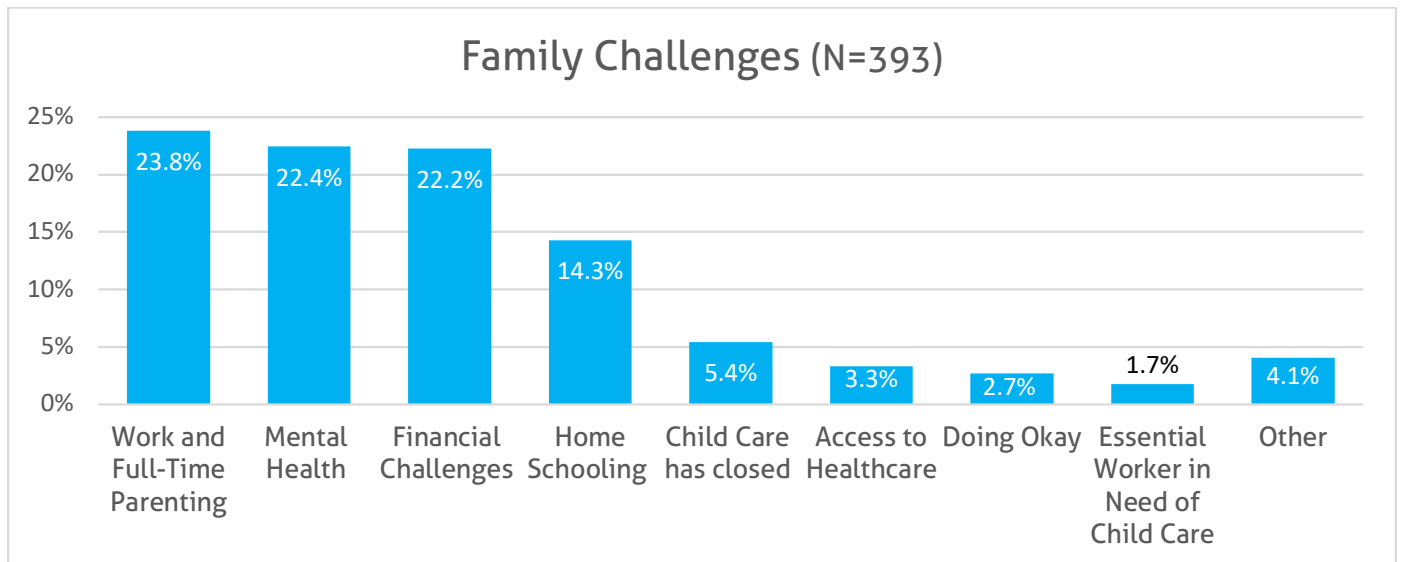
## Family

The second open-ended question asked respondents to share the challenges their family is experiencing. Three hundred and ninety-three responses were received and organized into themes. The themes were created based on the challenges most often reported. The main themes identified were:

- Work and parenting full-time (23.8%)
- Mental health (depression, anxiety, isolation, fear, and uncertainty) (22.4%)
- Financial challenges (unemployed, difficulty paying bills, paying for child care when closed) (22.2%)
- Home schooling (14.3%)
- Child care has closed (5.4%)
- Access to healthcare (3.3%)
- Doing okay (2.7%)
- Essential worker in need of child care (1.7%)

**Figure 10 Family Challenges**

*Reported from convenience sample of COVID-19 family impact electronic survey 4/2/20 – 4/10/20*



## Acts of Kindness

The final open-ended questions asked respondents to share any acts of kindness they have witnessed in their community. Five-hundred and twenty-two acts of kindness were submitted. The acts of kindness will be posted on the Zero to Five Montana social media to highlight ways that communities have come together during this crisis.

*"Food is being dispersed regularly. Meals are delivered throughout the week to the elderly. Tonight the Center Pole Organization sent food and fresh produce to be delivered to Wyola residents. The Crow Tribal Legislators met with another tribe to negotiate the purchase of potatoes to be given away to their constituents. The legislators bought 16,000 lbs of potatoes and gave them away."*

— Parent, Wyola, Big Horn County

*"I am amazed at our community helping out. I've had some of the customers at my job call and ask if we need anything. The men and women who stand outside making sure kids get food through the lunch program. The kindness of people is amazing."*

— Parent, Helena, Lewis and Clark County

*"We have seen numerous restaurants offer food for students, no questions asked. An internet provider is now offering service to students for school. Friends and neighbors have offered to donate any food they have to those who need it. Teachers at my kid's preschool are keeping in contact with their students and providing crafts and activities to parents even though they are not being paid."*

— Parent, Great Falls, Cascade County

*"Rocky Boy schools have provided work packets and coloring supplies. The Rocky Boy community has been checking in on us, and our friends have been offering to pick up groceries."*

— Parent, Havre, Hill County

*"A neighbor of ours took the time to leave a note introducing themselves to their neighbors. They shared how long they had lived in the neighborhood, gave ideas on adventures kids could do and invited people to connect with them via email, phone and social media."*

— Parent, Bozeman, Gallitan County

*"Our local Hutterite colonies have been so generous to donate their time & materials to make homemade masks for our community. My staff at our health dept have worked hard to package & distribute these to our community. Between 3 colonies, they've made nearly 3000 masks."*

— Parent, Conrad, Pondera County

*"On top of being the sole provider for our family right now, plus taking care of an infant and 8 year old, I had to have emergency surgery this week. This community is amazing. People have been doing an online meal train for us (gifts cards to local restaurants, etc.) and donating \$ for groceries. I know some of the people who gave to us don't have a lot themselves. Their generosity has been very moving."*

— Parent, Kalispell, Flathead County

*"A lady made cloth masks and refused any payment for them. I tried, but she told me the materials were donated by Joann Fabrics and she didn't feel right charging people."*

— Parent, Missoula, Missoula County

## Conclusion

The goal of the Montana COVID-19 Family Impact survey is to help guide local and statewide strategies to support a coordinated and targeted response. Information is regularly changing and we hope to bridge the experiences of families to inform the rapidly evolving program and policy decisions. The more we know about families' situations, the more we can communicate to local, state, and national policymakers about resources needed as this pandemic evolves.

This is an incredibly fast-moving crisis, and families' experiences are changing daily. The Montana COVID-19 Family Impact Survey will remain open over the duration of the state's stay-at-home directive to monitor changes in family experiences.

## Methodology

### Survey Design

Zero to Five reviewed several surveys, specific to COVID-19 impacts for parents, child care providers, and communities. The child care questions came from a parent survey developed by the Advocates for Children of New Jersey, with slight modifications to fit the state needs in Montana.<sup>1</sup> The questions on family concerns, sources of information, and anticipated need came from the University of South Dakota COVID-19 Community Impact Project survey, with slight modifications.<sup>2</sup> The COVID-19 Acts of kindness question was inspired by the Mount Airy Pennsylvania Community Impact survey.<sup>3</sup> The survey did not collect any identifying information all responses were kept anonymous. The survey was created online in survey monkey.

Zero to Five also engaged core partners to gather input on areas of interest. Zero to Five requested feedback from the following stakeholders:

- Zero to Five Local Collaborative Coordinators
- Early Childhood Services Bureau, Department of Public Health and Human Services
- Child Care Resource and Referral Network
- Montana AEYC (Montana Association for the Education of Young Children)
- Head Start Association
- Center for Children Families and Workforce Development, University of Montana

### Survey Outreach and Dissemination

The COVID-19 Family Impact Survey was made available Thursday, April 2, 2020, and remained open through Friday, April 10, 2020. The survey was disseminated through the Zero to Five website, social media, local collaboratives, a local television station, and partner organizations at the local and state level.

### Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the basic elements of the survey data. Respondents did not have to answer every question. A skip logic was applied, and families with children 5 years or younger were asked specific child care questions. The fixed response questions with a text entry option were recoded into matching categories when applicable. New categories were created when enough responses were received. The open-ended questions were analyzed by conducting a content analysis to identify overarching themes. To minimize bias, two researchers analyzed the qualitative data and then compared findings to gain a deeper understanding of the data.

## Limitations

This survey was fielded among a convenience sample, not a randomized sample. Findings are not generalizable. Individuals needed access to the internet and a computer or smartphone to complete the survey.

## References

<sup>1</sup>Advocates for Children New Jersey. (2020) Has your family experienced child care challenges due to COVID-19? [online survey]. Retrieved from <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScX6Fzv9eRjEza1HiKVbkFRBiNmLHgAhtrSrOcDADMujABwqA/viewform>

<sup>2</sup>University of South Dakota. (2020). COVID-19 community impact survey [online survey]. Retrieved from <https://www.usd.edu/covid19/south-dakota-covid-19-survey>

<sup>3</sup>Mount Airy CDC. (2020). COVID-19 community impact survey [online survey]. Retrieved from <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScX6Fzv9eRjEza1HiKVbkFRBiNmLHgAhtrSrOcDADMujABwqA/viewform>