

## BACKGROUND

Bexar County is Texas's fourth-most populous county with just over 2 million residents. The population is a majority-minority, with over 60% of residents identifying as Hispanic/Latino and nearly 7% identifying as Black/African American. Historical policies and practices have resulted in highly geographically defined economic, racial, ethnic, and health disparities in the county. The northern areas of San Antonio, the seat of Bexar County, have higher wealth, higher levels of education, and better health outcomes compared to central and southern areas of the city. This economic segregation is deeply entwined with racial segregation. Nationally and locally, almost every major adverse health outcome and cause of death is disproportionately represented in Black and Hispanic/Latino communities. The COVID-19 pandemic worsened deep-rooted health and socioeconomic disparities.

## OBJECTIVE

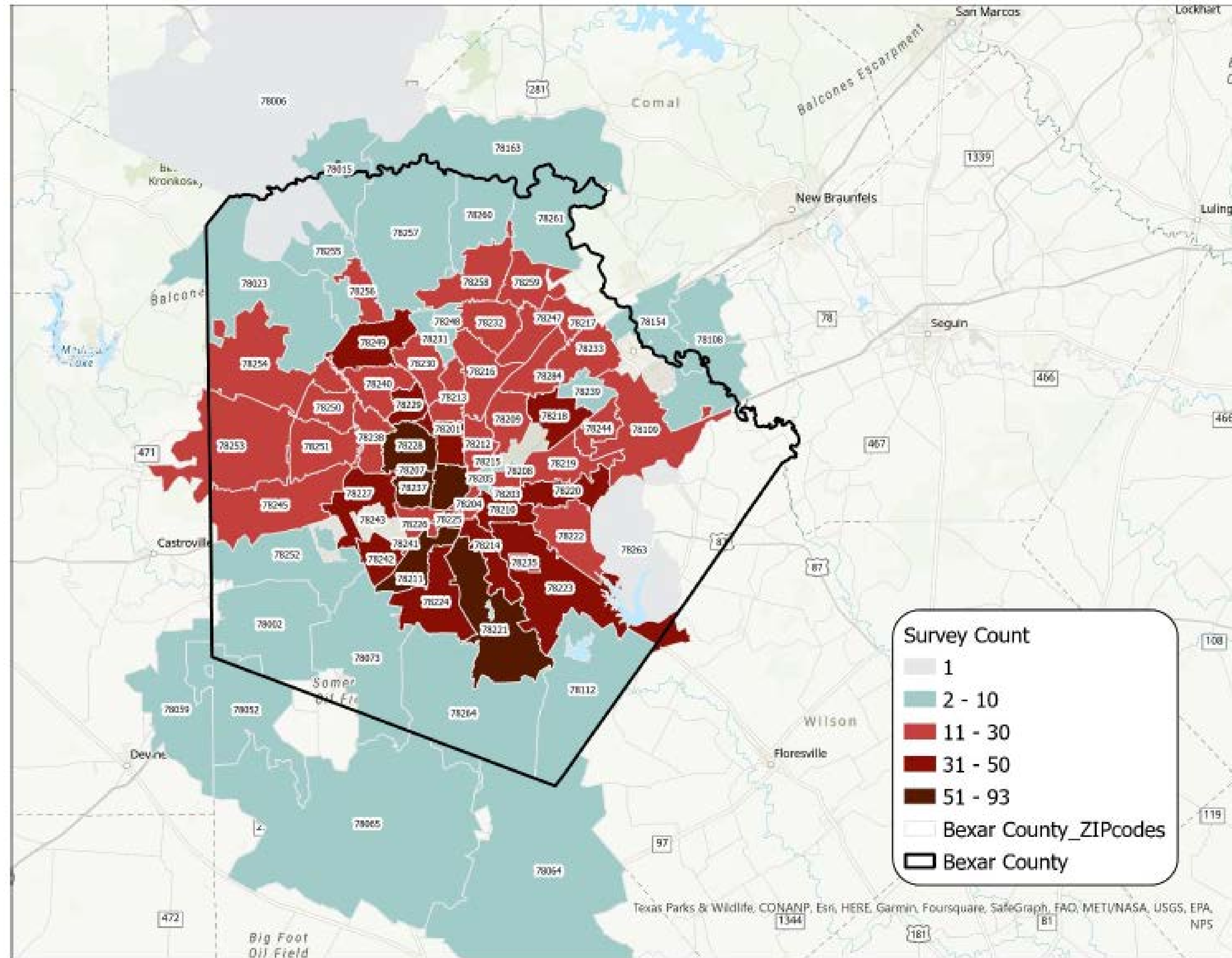
The City of San Antonio Metropolitan Health District partnered with The Health Collaborative and other local organizations to determine how the COVID-19 pandemic and social determinants of health affected access to and use of health care services in San Antonio and Bexar County by data collected through key informant interviews, focus groups, and community wide surveys – the focus of this report.

## METHODS

The Access to Healthcare During COVID-19 survey was developed by The Health Collaborative (THC) and other partners to assess healthcare seeking and healthcare experiences before and during the COVID-19 pandemic in San Antonio and Bexar County. Equity was at the forefront of survey development and distribution. The survey was composed of 30 questions concerning individuals' demographic/socioeconomic characteristics and self-report measures assessing their access to healthcare. It was available in English, Spanish, Pashto, Vietnamese, Chinese (Traditional and Simplified), Arabic and Farsi, and was provided via an online platform (Qualtrics) and printed survey sheets. From January 23, 2023, to March 3, 2023, survey responses were collected virtually and in-person. To address the digital divide, staff attended events and frequented venues such as cultural centers, places of worship, and senior centers. Established community partnerships and community health workers were essential to the success of the survey distribution. THC outreach efforts targeted under-served and Spanish-speaking communities.

## RESULTS

A total of 1,821 surveys were collected, outreach efforts resulted in 910 survey responses in Spanish and 65 in either Chinese, Vietnamese, Arabic or Pashto resulting in a 53.5% non-English response rate. Additionally, the survey sample showed high respondent counts concentrated around communities with higher shares of under-served populations in the county (the central and southern parts), and significantly higher respondents with low income values and without health insurance coverage. Overall, the survey respondents share a similar race/ethnicity composition with Bexar County residents. It should be noted that the report statistics represent the under-served population in Bexar County rather than the general Bexar County residents. The majority of respondents (57%) claimed the COVID-19 pandemic had negative effects on their access to needed healthcare. Reduced healthcare access, including limited staff capacity, shortened hours, and fewer available appointments, was the most cited reason for negative effects on respondents' access. The most frequently reported barrier to obtaining healthcare during the pandemic was "Fear of catching COVID or another illness while visiting doctor's office" by 46.3% of respondents, followed by 36.3% of respondents citing "Difficulty in getting an appointment when care is needed." When asked what was most needed to obtain medical services, 41.6% of respondents indicated, "Financial services or support with medical debt or future medical costs" and 35.8% mentioned "Health insurance services or support."



# Every ZIP code in Bexar County was surveyed and 51% of survey responses were in Spanish



SCAN HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION



## GRAPHICS

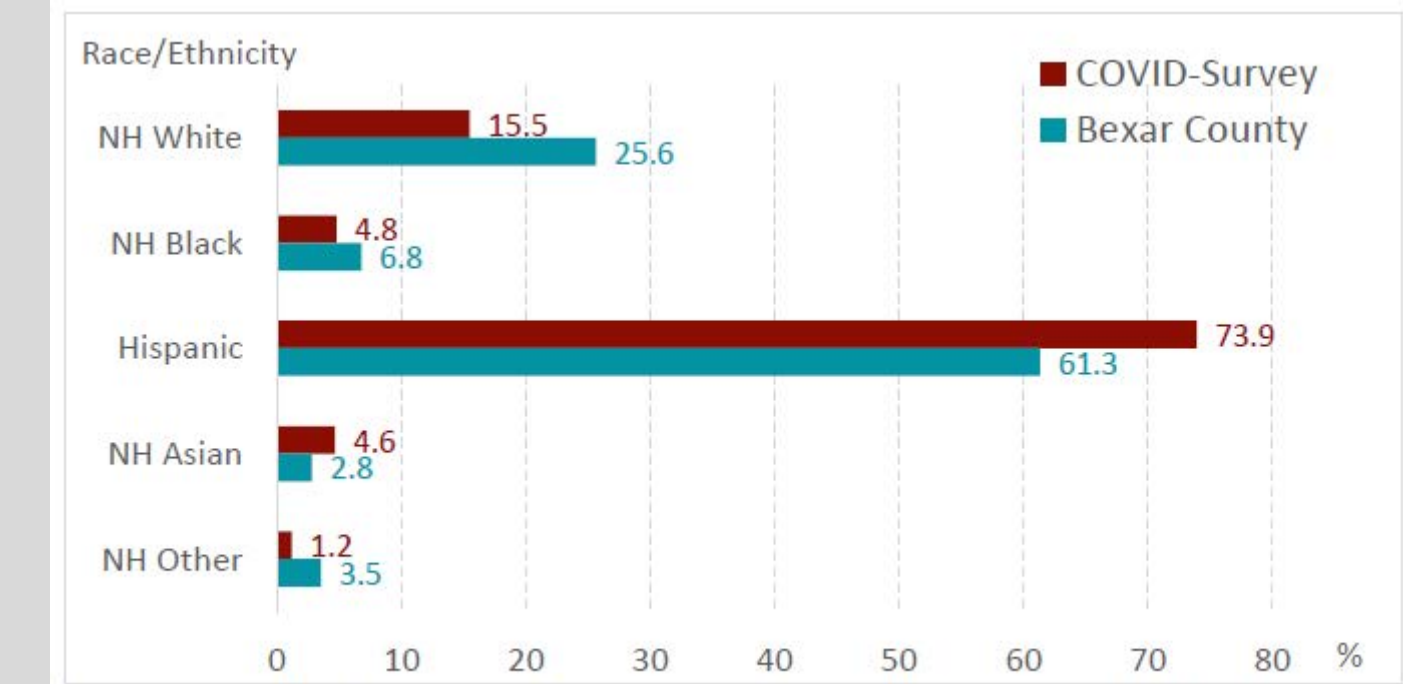


Figure 1. Race/Ethnicity Composition of the Survey Data and Bexar County 2021 ACS 1-Year Data

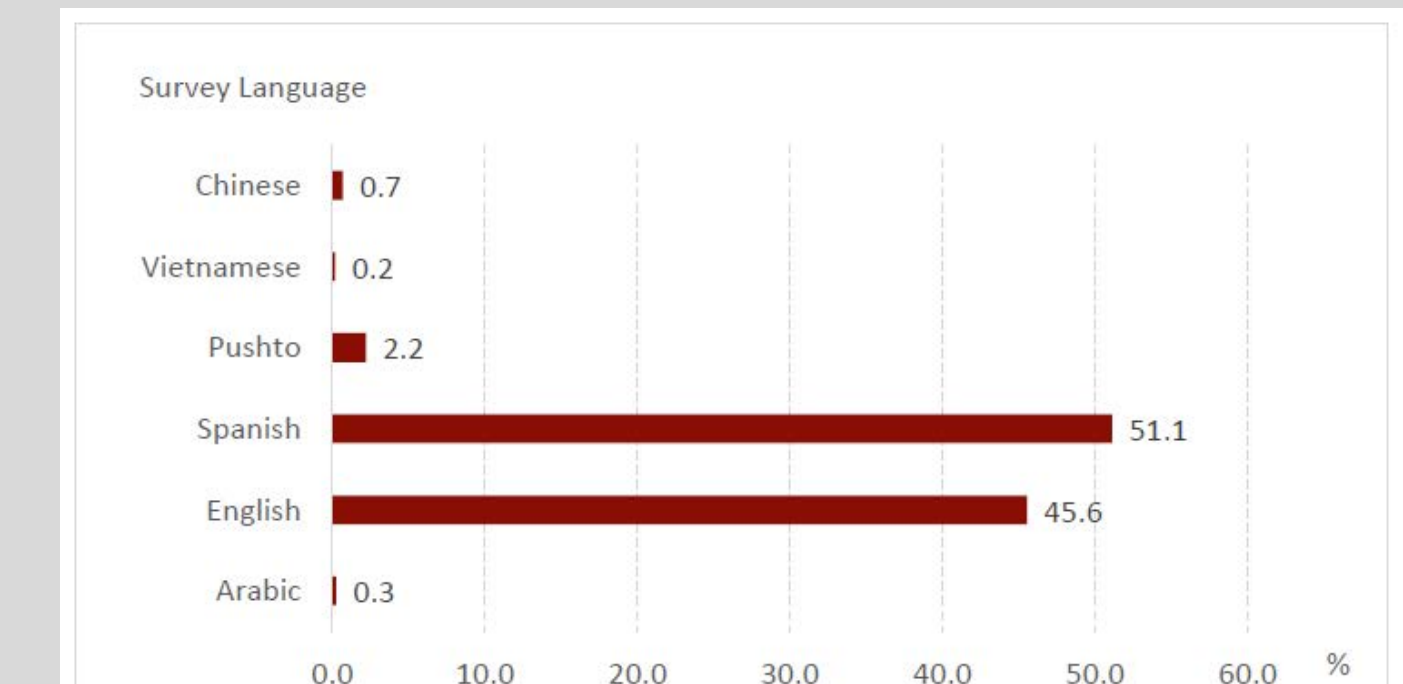


Figure 2. Distribution of Selected Survey Language in the Survey Data

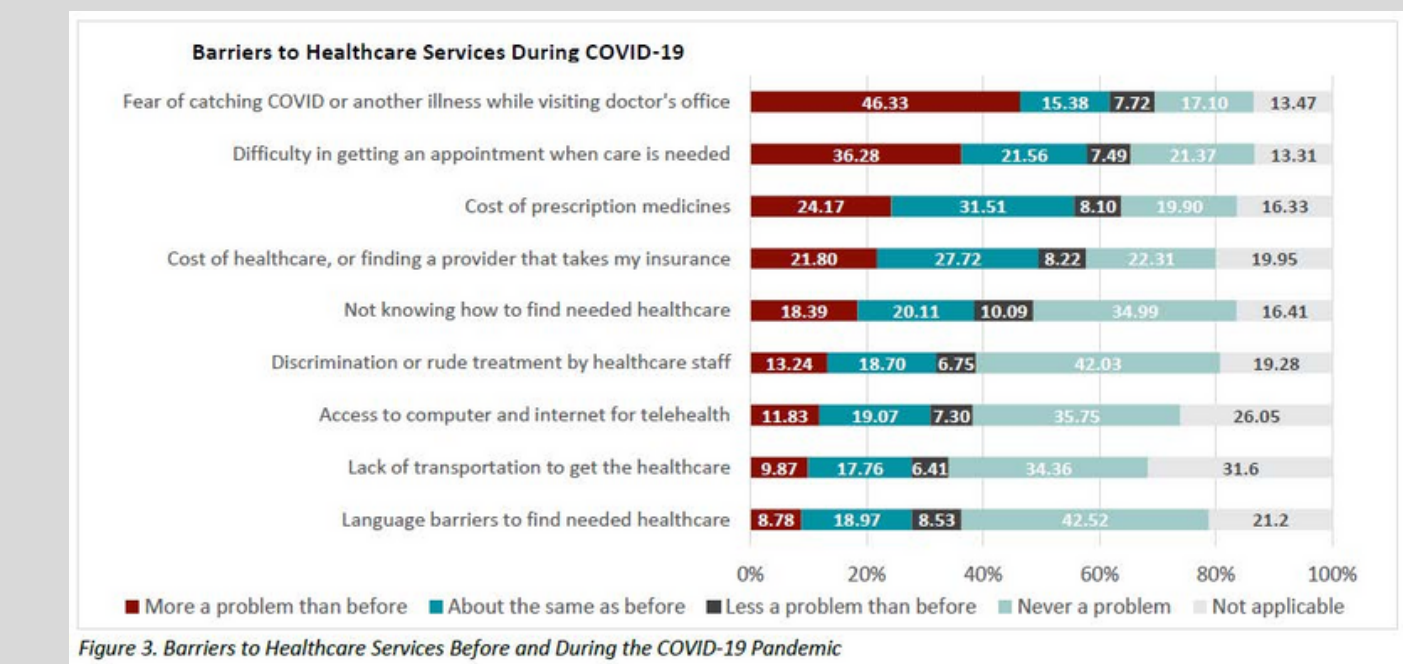


Figure 3. Barriers to Healthcare Services Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic

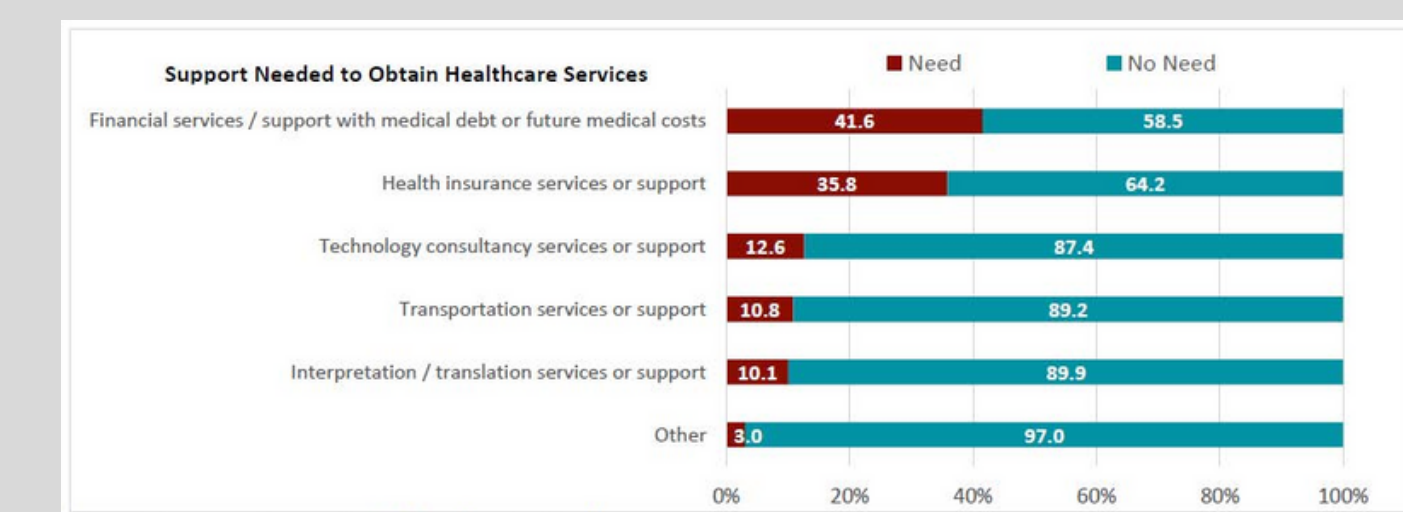


Figure 4. Services or Support Needed for Obtaining Healthcare

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