

Experiencias de Vida y Salud Mental: A Campaign to Increase Mental Health Awareness, Connection, and Support for the Latinx Community in Dutchess County, NY

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Background

- In 2021, Latino/a/x individuals comprised 13.8% of the population in Dutchess County and 20.8% in the City of Poughkeepsie
- Compared to non-Hispanic whites, Latinxs experience similar or greater rates of mental health conditions but are less likely to receive treatment
- Structural barriers (racism, immigration policies), shortages of linguistically and culturally appropriate care, and stigma contribute to Latinx mental health disparities
- Understanding community members' experiences is a first step to identifying and addressing unmet needs

Objectives

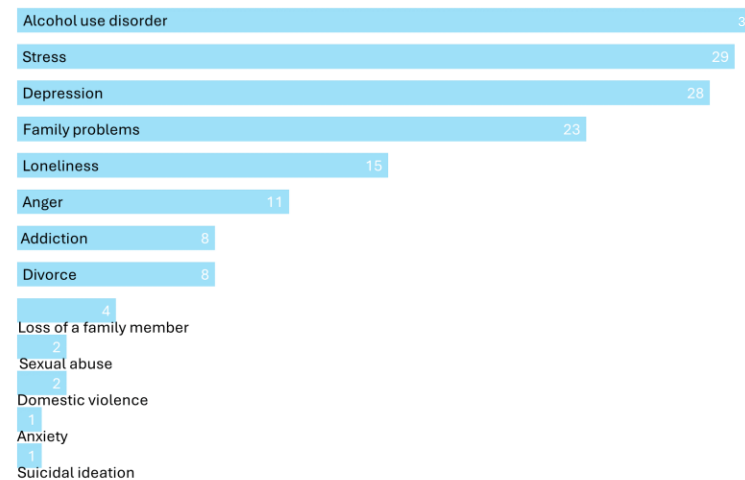
- Understand perceptions of and barriers to mental health among the Latinx community in Dutchess County
- Increase mental health literacy by providing education
- Encourage community members to seek support when needed and provide linkage to local resources

Age in years (median)	37.5
Sex (n, %)	
Female	72 (62.6%)
Male	35 (30.4%)
Prefer not to say	8 (7%)
Education level (n, %)	
Less than high school	82 (71.3%)
High school diploma	9 (7.8%)
University degree	23 (20%)
Primary language (n, %)*	
Spanish	89 (80.9%)
English/Spanish	18 (16.4%)
Q'eqchi'	2 (1.8%)
Otomi	1 (0.9%)
Country of birth (n, %)*	
Mexico	61 (57%)
Guatemala	12 (11.2%)
Ecuador	12 (11.2%)
Honduras	6 (5.6%)
El Salvador	4 (3.7%)
Dominican Republic	4 (3.7%)
Other Latin countries	4 (3.7%)
United States	4 (3.7%)
Location in Dutchess County*	
City of Poughkeepsie	11 (52.4%)
Eastern Dutchess	7 (33.3%)
Other (includes Northern and Southern Dutchess)	3 (14.3%)
Household size (median)	4

Methods

- Partnerships with various stakeholders (Figure 1) were instrumental in executing this project
- 11-question survey assessing demographics, perceptions of mental health, and mental health concerns conducted to gauge the community's baseline knowledge of mental health and interest in educational workshops
- Content for an initial workshop developed in collaboration with a neuropsychologist; focus on education and activities to help participants recognize their own emotional states and identify obstacles and manifestations of stress
- Using a thematic analysis approach, we analyzed written survey responses for codes and themes

Fig. 2 Mental health concerns reported by participants (N = 70)*



* Not all 115 survey respondents answered this question.

Table 2. Results of thematic analysis of survey question "Para usted, ¿Qué significa salud mental?" / "What does mental health mean to you?" (Responses translated)

Theme	Subthemes	Illustrative Quotes
Concept of mental health as a problem, disorder, or illness		"Problema de salud que afecta el cerebro" / "A health problem that affects the brain" "Es importante consultar al medico si existe algun trastorno mental" / "It's important to consult a doctor if there is any mental disorder"
Concept of mental health as overall state of mind, mood, or emotion	A state of wellbeing or positive emotion	"Cuando hablamos de Salud mental estamos en presencia de [algo] complejo, que abarca varias áreas de nuestra vida cotidiana y de nuestro cuerpo, así como el bienestar y equilibrio que debe tener una persona en su psíquico." / "When we talk about mental health, we're in the presence of something complex which encompasses various areas of our daily life and our body, such as the wellbeing and balance that someone must have in their psyche."
Lack of conceptual knowledge or understanding	Unfamiliarity with concept Inaccurate understanding	"Estado de animo, y bien estar emocional" / "State of mind and emotional wellbeing" "No estoy segura" / "I'm not sure" "No se" / "I don't know" "Estar bien de los cinco sentidos" / "To be well in the five senses"

Results

- We achieved active community participation and engagement on multiple topics
- 139 people attended the 5 pilot workshops and 115 filled out the survey
- Survey respondents' demographic characteristics are shown in **Table 1**
- Figure 2** displays mental health concerns
- Table 2** summarizes themes related to perceptions of mental health. Of note, many community members did not have a solid understanding of what mental health is
- A final focus group with 15 participants from Northeast Dutchess County confirmed survey findings; underscored that lack of knowledge of where participants could find bilingual services presented an obstacle to access

Takeaways

- Based on preliminary results and the community's response to pilot workshops, there is a great need for and interest in mental health resources that can serve individuals in their own language
- Incomplete conceptual knowledge of mental health may underly stigma, presenting another obstacle to seeking and receiving support beyond language barriers
- We aim to hold additional workshops to increase knowledge of self-management strategies and resources and combat stigma

References: Espinoza-Kulick MAV, Cordero JA. "We Need Health for All": Mental Health and Barriers to Care among Latinxs in California and Connecticut. Int J Environ Res Public Health. 2022;19(19):12817. Published 2022 Oct 6. doi:10.3390/ijerph191912817. U.S. Census Bureau. (2021). 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Retrieved from https://data.census.gov



▲ Fig. 1. Flyer for the pilot workshops