



Research with Residents in the San Juan and Permian Basin

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Executive Summary

The New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions (DWS) commissioned The University of New Mexico Center for Social Policy (UNM CSP) to conduct a mixed-method research study on workers and residents of the Permian and San Juan Basin areas of the state. We collected survey data of residents in both areas (n=500) and conducted focus groups (n=64) with a particular focus on immigrant oil and gas workers in the region. The study substantively focused on (1) assessing current employment and job satisfaction and conditions and sense of job security, (2) interest in career options, advancement, and re-training, (3) barriers to accessing work, career opportunities, training, and advancement, (4) awareness, use, and future priorities for state resources, (5) interest, need, and priorities for the Office of New Americans, and a brief assessment of (6) housing conditions and challenges in communities.

Our data collection yielded the following findings:

1. Overall, most workers are satisfied with both their employment status and jobs, but actual working conditions could be improved. About two-thirds of employees were offered health insurance at their place of work, and fewer were offered other benefits. Job insecurity is felt by some, particularly oil and gas workers, who, although not worried that oil and gas jobs would go away all together, did express concern about potentially losing their current job.
2. Despite job and employment satisfaction, many people in our study expressed interest in career opportunities, retraining, and advancement. However, many expressed both time and location constraints – although there was some willingness to relocate under the right circumstances, many wish to stay in their communities, meaning training and educational opportunities need to be made available, accessible, and flexible within people’s communities. Many study participants expressed interest and willingness in education and retraining not only in two major growth sectors – health care and clean energy– but also other emerging industries. However, appropriate support (financial, flexible, and easily accessible) needs to be made available to ensure the likelihood of people shifting into these sectors.
3. Current barriers to accessing resources are further illustrative to understand how access to resources can be improved to ensure that more Permian Basin and San Juan area residents take advantage of current and future resources. Barriers include: (1) current availability is insufficient in terms of time and location, (2) language barriers for Spanish and non-English speakers, (3) insufficient and inadequate child care, (4) difficult access to male-dominated industries for women, (5) lacking computer, digital, and professional development skills.
4. For existing state resources, more than half of the sampled populations did not know about current DWS offerings and resources. Even fewer had used existing resources, with many of this smaller group expressing adverse experiences when using resources such as America’s Job Centers. Our findings show that dissemination and messaging of existing resources need to be improved to ensure more people know about current

offerings. Additionally, although there is an expressed need for a one-stop workforce development website, some New Mexicans are still facing computer and technological skill limitations. Gaps need to be addressed to ensure resources are available to all.

5. Our survey and focus groups showed that there is an expressed need and interest for an Office of New Americans. The resources people would like to see offered include not only immigration and language related services, but also employment services.
6. Many community members felt that housing challenges exist in their communities, including issues with the availability of quality, affordable, and safe housing. Over half expressed concern over having to move due to the rising cost of housing. This shows that housing needs and concerns will also have to be addressed.



A Note from The Department of Workforce Solutions

The New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions (DWS), through its recently launched Office of New Americans, is proud to partner with the research team at the University of New Mexico Center for Social Policy to better understand the skills, needs, aspirations and desires of workers in two vitally important regions of the state.

The completed research, presented here, shows a labor force that is eager to meet head-on the challenges and opportunities of New Mexico's economy. Time and again, residents said they just need a chance – in the form of access to training, career guidance, and tailored resources like the Office of New Americans – to be the skilled workforce New Mexico's economy depends on. DWS is committed to giving workers in the state that chance.

We're doing that by leveraging new partnerships and innovative state funding to meet workers where they are, and the economy where it's going. With the Community Benefit Fund, created by the legislature in 2025, DWS is launching an Economic Transition Program that pairs training for in-demand careers with living stipends, so workers don't have to choose between upskilling or their family's economic stability. That program is a direct outgrowth of lessons learned supporting displaced workers following the closure of the San Juan Generating Station and Westmoreland Coal Mine.

Workers said they want access to training close to where they live or at times that work with demanding schedules. DWS is responding by investing in programs like the Northern New Mexico Youth Fund so underserved youth have access to work and training in their communities. The Office of New Americans is preparing to launch a job-specific, all-online English training program to help workers with limited English proficiency develop the vocational language skills they need to take the next step in their career.

And when women have said they want better access to skilled trades, we've listened. In December 2025, DWS graduated its first all-women Commercial Driver's License cohort in eastern New Mexico. DWS has also partnered with the Corrections Department and local workforce boards to train women inmates for careers in the trades, giving them a clear path to success upon reentry.

But the Center for Social Policy, through a blend of qualitative and quantitative tools, also found challenges for DWS to meet. Not everyone that needs our resources has heard of the America's Job Centers (AJCs). And too many of those who have heard of them have faced issues getting the support they need.

Here, too, DWS has already been stepping up to the challenge. We're expanding access to remodeled America's Job Centers throughout the state, launching new net-zero resource rooms with upgraded technology. There, workers can access cutting-edge tools like mock job interviews with AI-powered evaluations and feedback. The Office of New Americans is also working closely with our frontline staff, helping ensure they have the tools they need to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate resources to all clients that walk through the AJCs doors.

We also see in the research that too many workers experience violations of their labor rights and feel like no one is watching. Here again our growing Labor Relations Division is being bolstered by an innovative partnership, coordinated by the Office of New Americans, with the Mexican consulate in Albuquerque focused on worker right enforcement and education. We know that when the most vulnerable workers are protected from labor exploitation, it sets a level playing field for everyone in our workforce.

DWS is tackling an increasingly multifaceted workforce development landscape with an equally comprehensive approach, from tackling lack of affordable housing through the Office of Housing, to innovative earn-as-you-learn apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship opportunities.

The invaluable research conducted by the Center for Social Policy team makes it clear that New Mexico's workers are ready to step into the future of a growing economy. DWS is excited to help them get there.

Sincerely,

Sarita Nair

Cabinet Secretary
New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions

Leonardo Castañeda

Director, Office of New Americans
New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions

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Introduction

The New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions (DWS) commissioned the University of New Mexico Center for Social Policy (UNM CSP) to conduct a study with residents of the Permian and San Juan Basin areas on issues related to workforce development, training and resource needs and barriers, and housing.

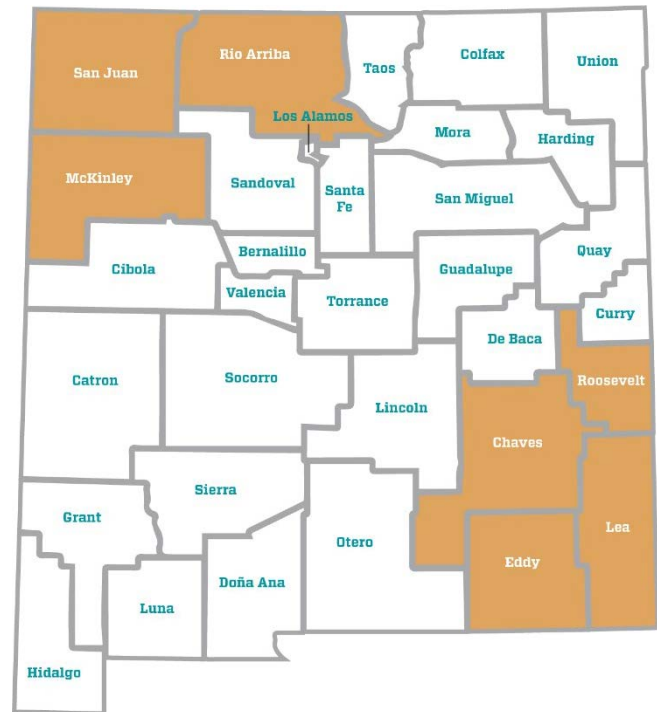
This report summarizes the findings from a mixed-methods project, using both quantitative survey data and qualitative focus group data collected from residents and/or workers in the Permian and San Juan Basin areas, defined as Chaves, Eddy, Lea, McKinley, Rio Arriba, Roosevelt, and San Juan counties in New Mexico. In total, we collected 500 responses through surveys and 64 through focus groups, all collected between November and December 2025.

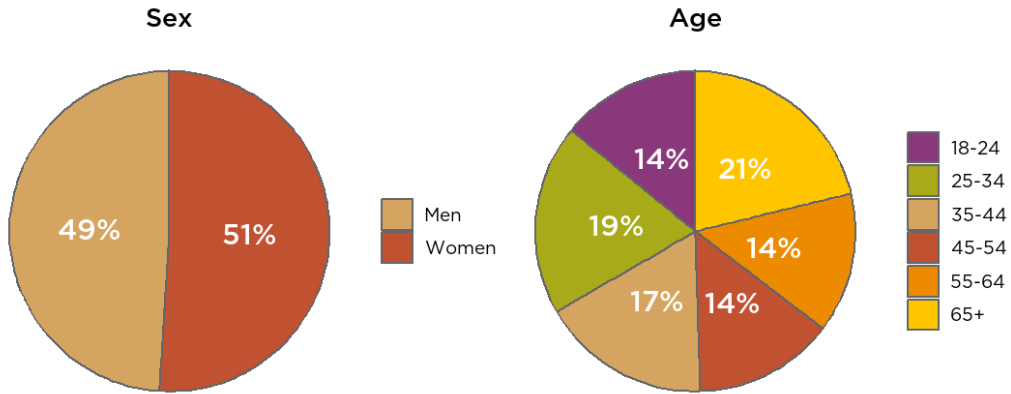
Data and Methodology

Our data consist of quantitative survey data and qualitative focus group data from residents of the San Juan and Permian Basin area collected in November and December 2025. As the map shows, participants had to currently reside or spend an extensive period of time in the following counties that are part of oil and gas reliant communities: Chaves, Eddy, Lea, McKinley, Rio Arriba, Roosevelt, and San Juan.

Survey

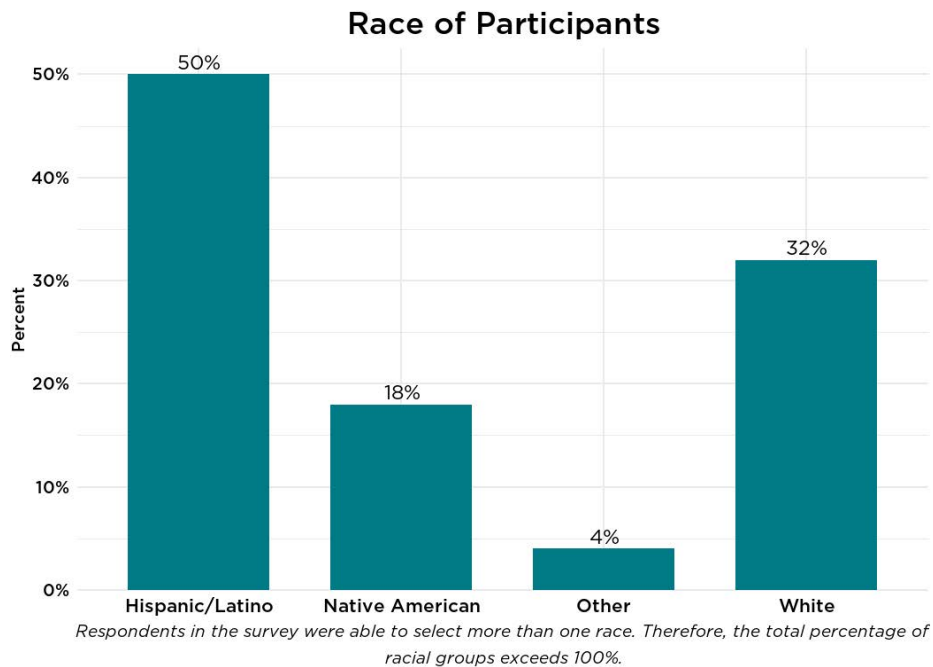
The survey was fielded between November 20 and December 24, 2025 and included samples of people residing or primarily working in the Permian Basin (Chaves, Eddy, Lea, and Roosevelt counties) and San Juan Basin areas (McKinley, Rio Arriba, and San Juan counties) of New Mexico.



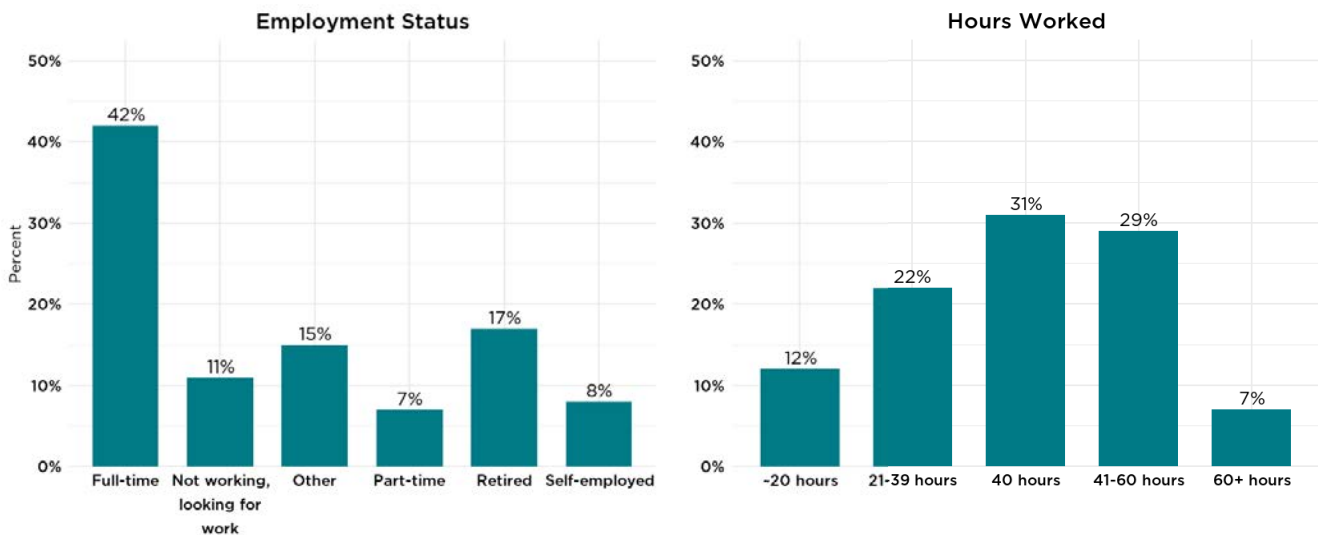


In total, 500 responses were collected. As the pie graphs above show, 51% of respondents identified as women and 49% identified as men. A wide range of age groups were surveyed as well: 14% between 18-24 years old, 19% between 25-34 years old, 17% between 35-44 years old, 14% between 45-54 years old, 14% between 55-64 years old, and 21% older than 65 years old.

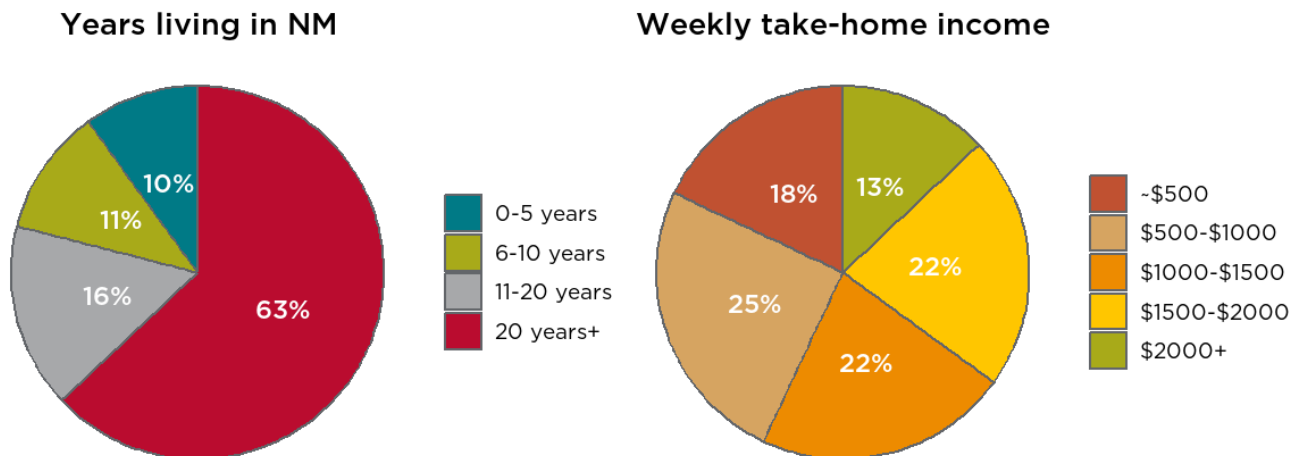
For race and ethnicity, 50% of respondents identified as Hispanic or Latino, 18% identified as Native American, 32% identified as White, and 4% identified as another race or ethnicity.



Of the sample, 42% respondents indicated that they worked full-time and 7% worked part-time. Seventeen percent (17%) were retired, and 11% were currently not working but looking for work. Eight percent (8%) were self-employed, and the remaining 15% had other employment statuses including full- and part-time students that were and were not working, full-time caregivers of family members, or not working due to disabilities. Most respondents that were working full time worked between 40 and 60 hours a week, and a third worked less than 40 hours. Only 7% worked more than 60 hours a week.



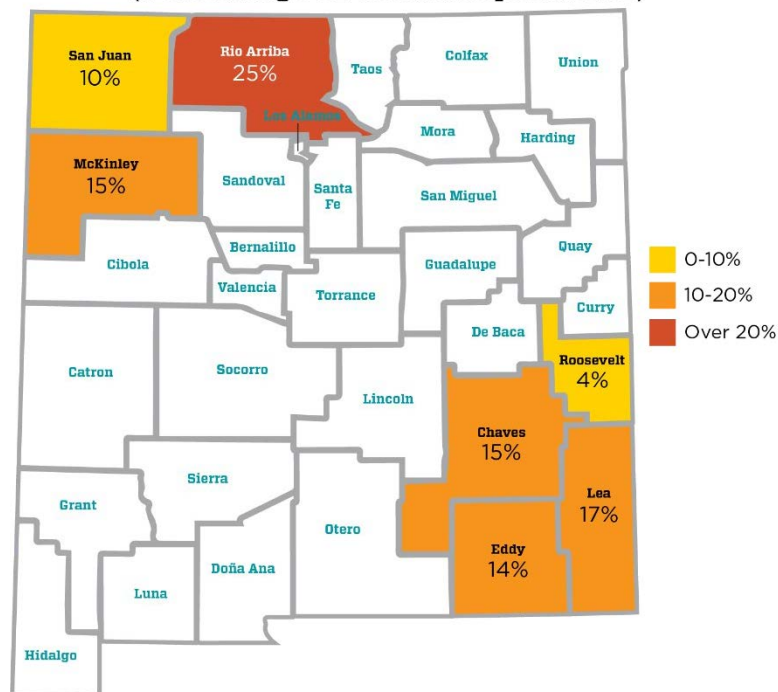
Most respondents were long-time New Mexico residents. 63% of respondents lived in the state for 20 or more years. 16% had resided in the state between 11-20 years and 11% between 6-10 years. Finally, 10% had lived in the state for five years or less.



Weekly take-home income ranged, from 18% who had less than \$500 of weekly take-home pay, 25% who took home between \$500-\$1000, 22% who took home between \$1000-\$1500, another 22% who took home between \$1500-\$2000 and finally, 13% who took home more than \$2000 a week.

The following map shows the distribution of counties that survey respondents indicated they resided in. The largest share of respondents (25%) indicated that they live in Rio Arriba County, followed by 17% who lived in Lea County, 15% each that lived in Chaves and McKinley Counties, 14% that lived in Eddy County, 10% that lived in San Juan County, and 4% that were residents of Roosevelt County.

Survey Respondents' County of Residence
(Percentage of Total Respondents)



Survey respondents were asked questions on the following subjects:

- Educational attainment and credentialing in and outside of the United States
- Additional training and educational interests, needs, and barriers to access
- Utilization, knowledge, and need for existing state resources, particularly from the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions
- Working conditions
- Economic and housing conditions

Focus Groups

We conducted in-person, semi-structured focus groups in early and mid-November 2025 in Farmington (San Juan County), Artesia (Eddy County), Carlsbad (Eddy County), and Hobbs

(Lea County), and spoke to a total of 64 immigrant oil and gas workers and immigrant oil and gas community members across seven focus groups. Somos Un Pueblo Unido, a community-based organization advocating for immigrant and worker rights, recruited the focus group participants. Semilla Project, another nonprofit organization which supports youth leadership development, also helped recruit focus group participants in San Juan County.

The focus groups each lasted around two hours and all but one were facilitated in Spanish (one was facilitated in English). Facilitators followed a script and asked follow-up questions where needed.

The following table provides a breakdown of the number of participants, types of workers, location, and language of facilitation of the focus groups:

Location	Types of Workers	Number of Participants	Language of Facilitation
Artesia	Oil and gas	13	Spanish
Carlsbad	Oil and gas	8	Spanish
Carlsbad	Associates degree students	3	English
Farmington	Students, primary & full-time caretakers, and full-time employees in non-energy industries	12	Spanish
Farmington	Oil and gas, service industry, industrial and maintenance services	12	Spanish
Hobbs	Agriculture, service industry, maintenance, independent contractors, primary & full-time caretakers	7	Spanish
Hobbs	Oil and gas, agriculture, service industry, independent contractors, primary & full-time caretakers	9	Spanish

During the focus group, participants were asked questions on the following topics:

- Employment
- Workforce development and training needs
- Experiences with and need for state resources
- Housing need and perceptions

On employment and workforce development and training needs, participants were asked what type of work they currently do, how they assessed job security in their field, whether they had interest in transitioning to other types of work and what kind of work they would be interested in transitioning to, and what type of support they needed to pursue job training.

Following these questions, participants were asked if they have used existing state resources for workforce development including the America's Job Center, and if so, how helpful these resources were. Additionally, we asked participants about their interest in the Office of New Americans, a new office housed in the Department of Workforce Solutions, that supports immigrants and people that have grown roots in New Mexican communities, and connects them with work-related needs, training, and support. Finally, participants were asked about their interest in a website that contains resources such as education and training opportunities, and job openings to help immigrants, refugees, and anyone else interested in finding employment and training in specific areas such as energy.

Participants were also asked questions on housing and housing needs, specifically whether they felt that there was enough affordable housing in their communities and whether participants knew about any problems related to housing.

All focus groups were audio recorded with summary memos written by designated facilitators, moderators, and notetakers. We used thematic analysis to code the focus groups.

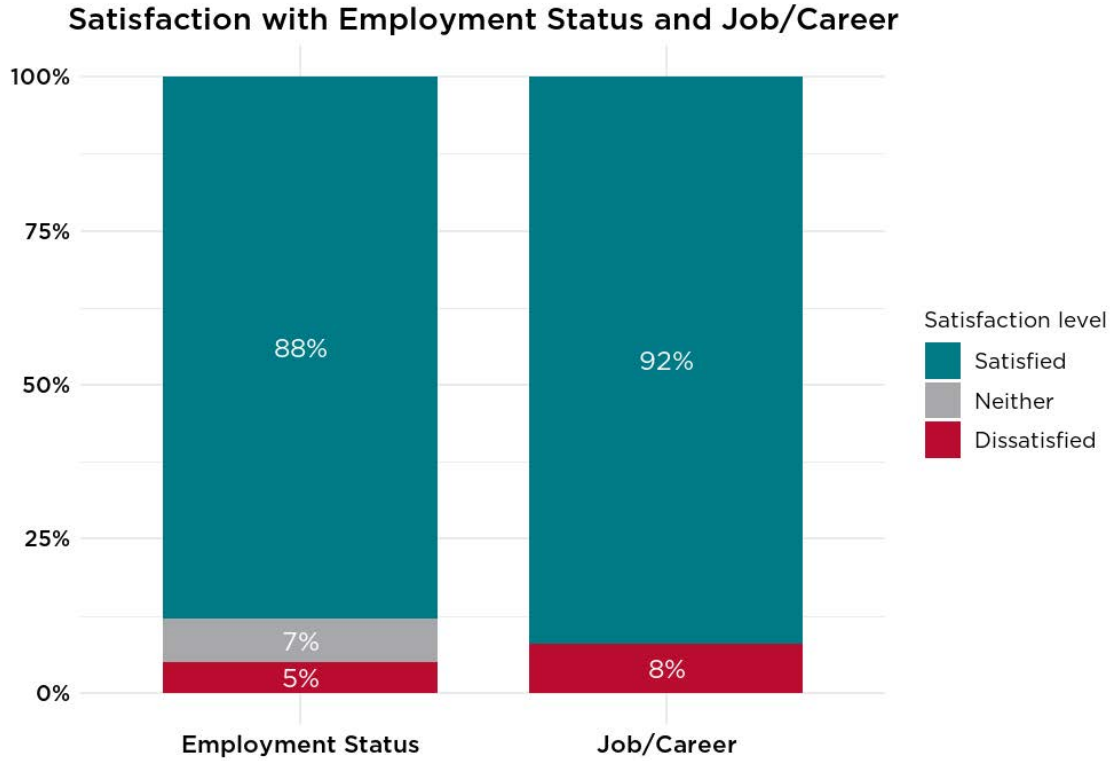
Findings

1. The State of Current Jobs

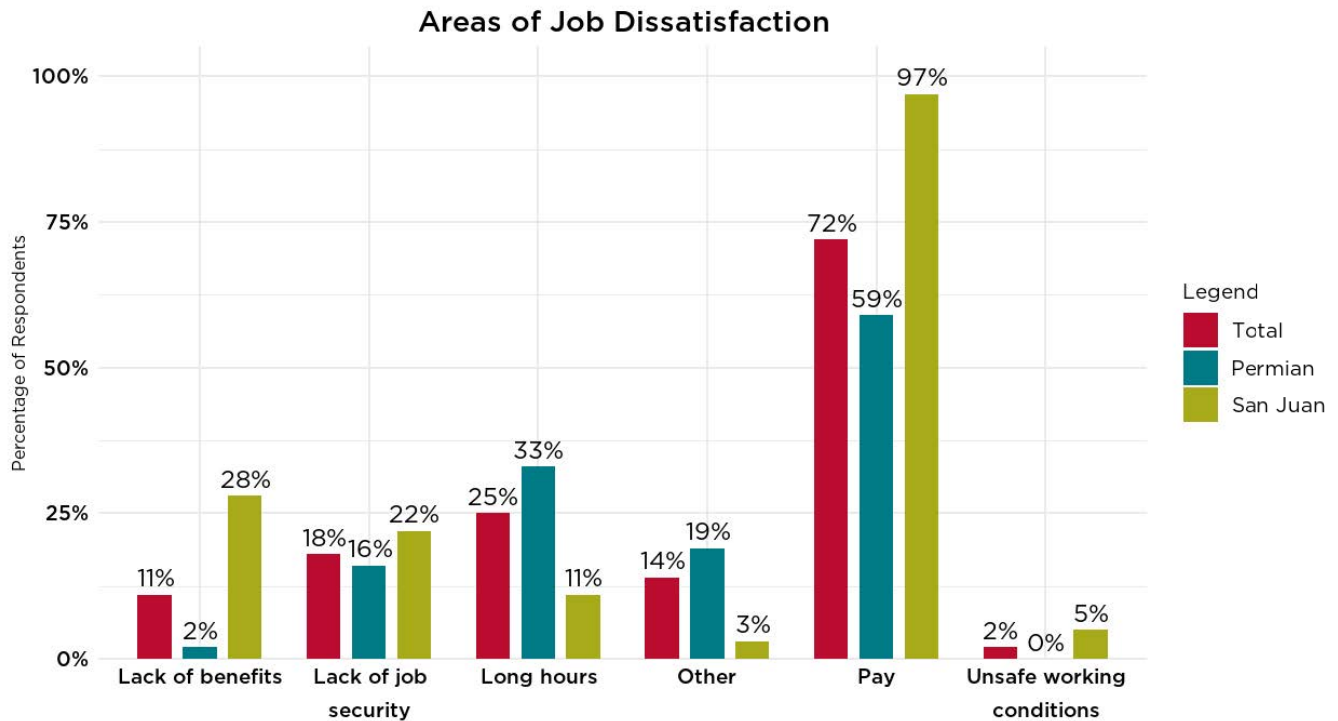
Satisfaction with Employment Status and Career

Overall, most employed survey respondents expressed satisfaction with their current employment status and their jobs. However, some dissatisfaction with both the current employment status and jobs were observable, particularly with women in the focus groups who wished to be employed at least part time but could not find any work. Linked to housing challenges addressed later in this report and the general rising cost of living, many of the people who were dissatisfied were unhappy about their current pay.

Eighty-eight percent (88%) of respondents expressed satisfaction with their employment status (either being very or somewhat satisfied with their employment status) and 5% were dissatisfied. 7% were neither satisfied or dissatisfied. Ninety-two percent (92%) of respondents shared they were satisfied with their current job or career, compared to 8% who were not. Similarly, in the focus groups, many oil and gas workers expressed satisfaction with their employment and confidence that there will be more jobs available in the industry, at least in the near future.



Of the respondents who were dissatisfied, most were dissatisfied with the pay they receive, particularly residents in the San Juan region. To a lesser extent, but more pronounced in the Permian Basin area, workers are dissatisfied by long hours.



However, in the focus groups, it also became clear that many women were not satisfied with their current employment status. Many expressed that they could not work (even though they wanted to), because they do not have childcare. Several women who have children shared that they do occasional or informal jobs like selling flowers or making piñatas, which allows them to earn some money while still being able to manage their primary caregiving and home obligations. Other women with children stated that they cannot find part-time work or employment that they can do in addition to primary caregiving responsibilities.

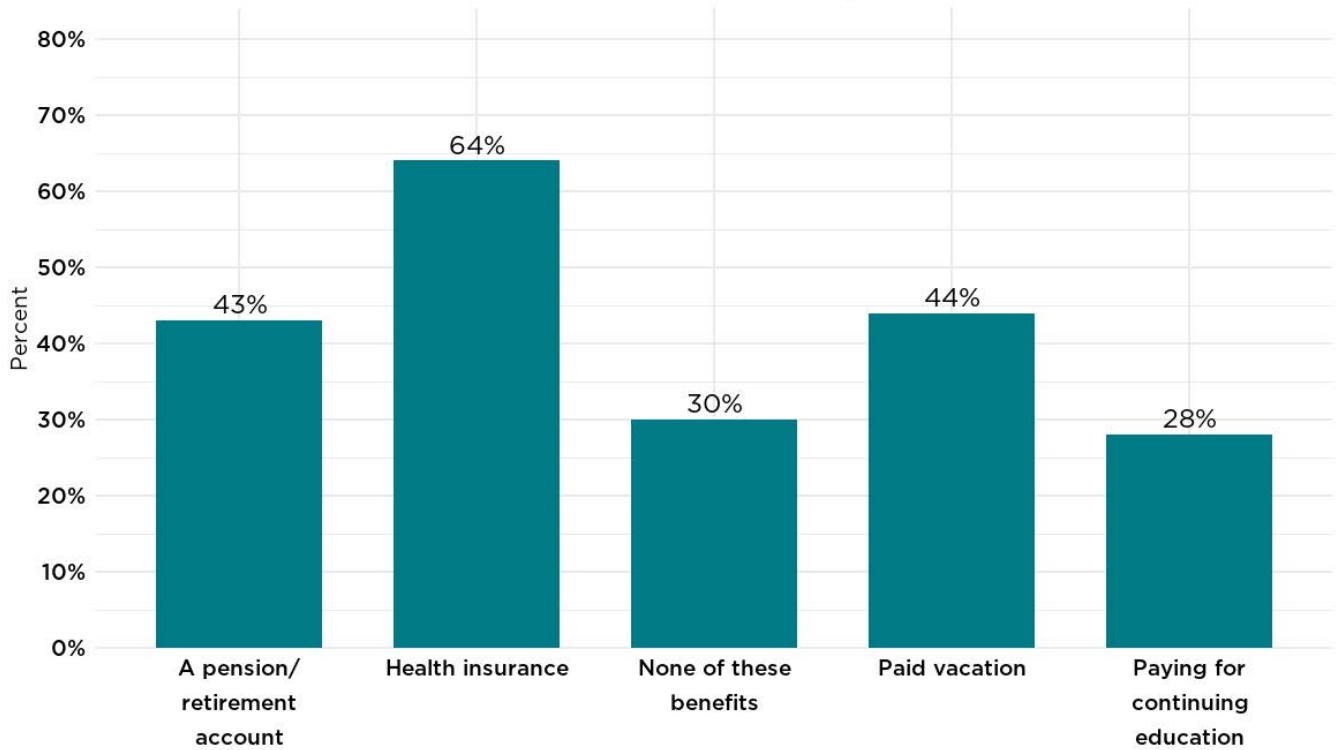
Additionally, some women in the focus groups also shared that they were interested in breaking into the oil and gas industry, but faced resistance because it is considered “men’s work.” Similarly, several men were interested in breaking into this industry but felt it was difficult because they did not know anyone in the industry or because they lacked training to be able to do the work. Oftentimes, getting into oil and gas jobs is dependent on who you know in the industry, and having a personal connection to get your foot in the door. This presents a challenge in particular for women and new immigrants.

Working Conditions

Survey and focus group participants reported mixed working conditions in their current and/or main jobs. This included limited offering of benefits (likely because many workers are contractors) and some observations of illegal conduct from employers or at workplaces, including harassment and non-payment for hours worked. Our focus groups showed that immigrant workers in particular may be prone to enduring worse working conditions and often feel that they are not in a position to voice concerns about adverse experiences due to fear of replacement.

Despite satisfaction with jobs and careers, about one third of employed survey respondents (30%) reported that their current jobs do not provide benefits such as health insurance, paid vacation, a pension or retirement account, or paying for continuing education.

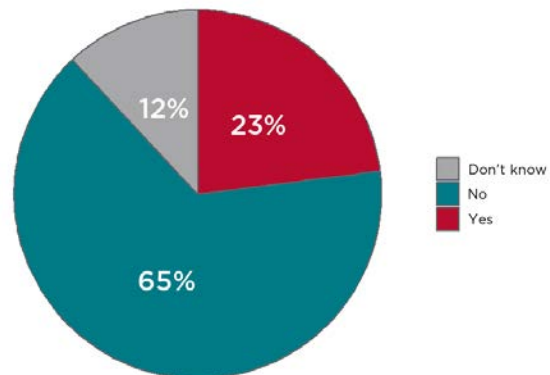
Benefits Offered at Current/Main Job



In fact, less than two-thirds (64%) of the employed residents surveyed reported that their job offered health insurance. 44% reported that their job offered paid vacation and 43% reported that their employer offered pensions or retirement accounts. Only 28% of jobs offered continuing education.

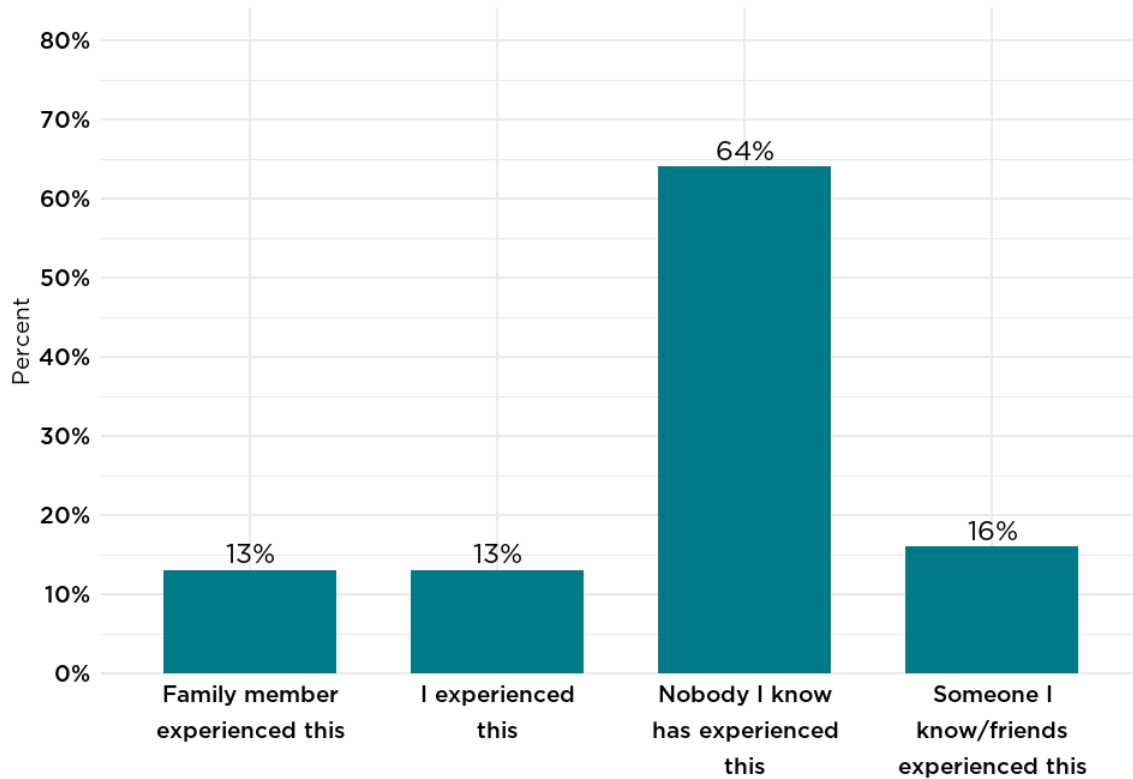
All residents were also asked whether they knew someone who had not been paid or if they themselves had not been paid for all the hours they worked. 23% of all respondents shared that they either knew someone or they themselves had not been paid for all the hours they worked. 65% of respondents did not, while the remaining 12% did not know.

Do you know someone who has not been paid for all their work, or have you ever not been paid for all the hours you worked?



Furthermore, over one third (36%) of the residents surveyed either had personal, familial, or other experience of harassment, bullying, and/or being given worse work assignments or fewer hours because of their race, religion, immigration status, sexual orientation, language, or gender. 13% of all respondents had experienced this personally, 13% had a family member who experienced this, and 16% knew a friend or someone else who experienced this.

Harassment Experience at Work



Working conditions are of particular concern for immigrant and non-English speaking workers. In the focus groups, some workers shared that they are afraid to voice concerns related to safety or worker treatment with their employers, because they fear their employer will simply fire and replace them.

“¿No quieres hacerlo? Okay, vete.”

“You don’t want to do it? Okay, then leave.”

- Woman describing a company’s reaction to an immigrant worker who refuses to perform a difficult or dangerous task, Carlsbad

“¿No quieres hacerlo? Okay, vete.”

“You don’t want to do it? Okay, then leave.”

In Carlsbad, several focus group participants expressed this fear, and discussed how they were unsure what rights they have in the workplace as immigrants. In Hobbs, focus group participants were concerned that there is no oversight of employers in their region to prevent worker abuses, especially for immigrant workers.

“Ahora, ¿que necesito yo para estar seguro? Que hagan una institución ...para defender los derechos de los trabajadores.”

“What do I need now to be safe? I need them to make an institution that defends the rights of workers.” - Service Industry Worker, Hobbs

In the focus groups, numerous workers shared that they work in short-term positions and switch from job to job, location to location, and even between industries like oil and gas and agriculture or construction. Some workers are used to moving between cities and commuting long hours for work. This is the norm for many workers, and while some are confident that they will always be able to find their next job, others are not so sure.

“Aunque a mí me gusta el pueblo chiquito en Bloomfield, casi no hay, no hay nada de trabajo [sic]. Si quieres más pago, debes que irte a Farmington.”

“Although I like living in a small town, in Bloomfield, there are almost no jobs here, nothing. So if you want more pay, you have to go to Farmington.” - Female, Focus Group Participant, Farmington

Many oil and gas workers are worried about losing their jobs or being replaced quickly if they get sick or injured, or need to miss even a day of work for some reason. Focus group participants described experiences where employers withheld wages unfairly, or let workers go without justification. They stated that employers in oil and gas can easily replace workers because there is no shortage of people looking for jobs in the oil fields. They also expressed the belief that because workers are in temporary positions, and in some scenarios getting paid “under the table,” it is easier for employers to fire workers or replace them without any consequences.

“Son trabajos que necesitan hacerse ese mismo día, y si no lo haces tú, hay alguien más lo que va a hacer [sic].”

“They are jobs that need to get done that same day, and if you don't do it, there is someone else who will.”

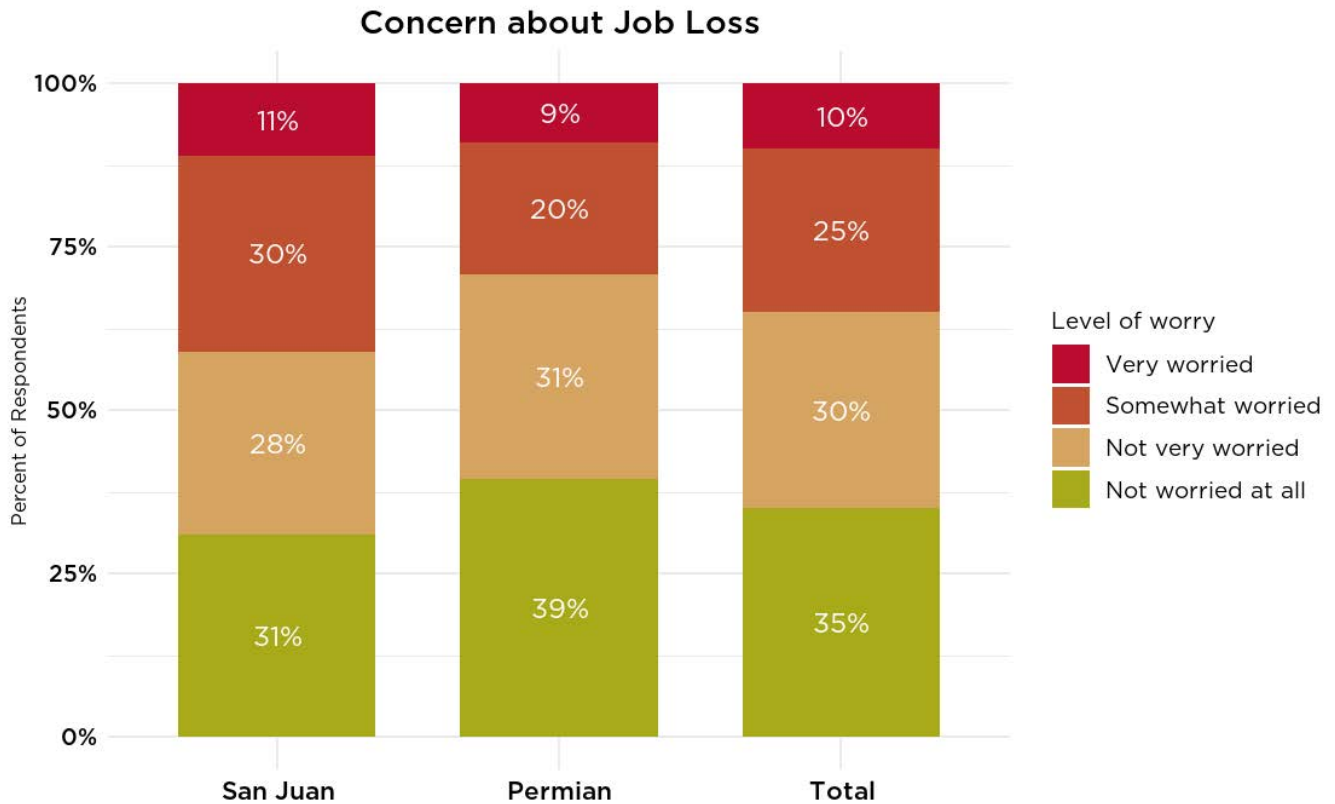
“Son trabajos que necesitan hacerse ese mismo día, y si no lo haces tú, hay alguien más lo que va a hacer [sic].”

“They are jobs that need to get done that same day, and if you don't do it, there is someone else who will.” - Male, Oil and Gas Worker, Artesia

Job Security Concerns are Particularly Felt by Immigrant Workers, Those Reliant on Oil and Gas, and People Living in The San Juan Area of The State

Overall, concerns about job security were mixed. Survey respondents had relatively little concern about job security within their respective counties or industries, while focus group

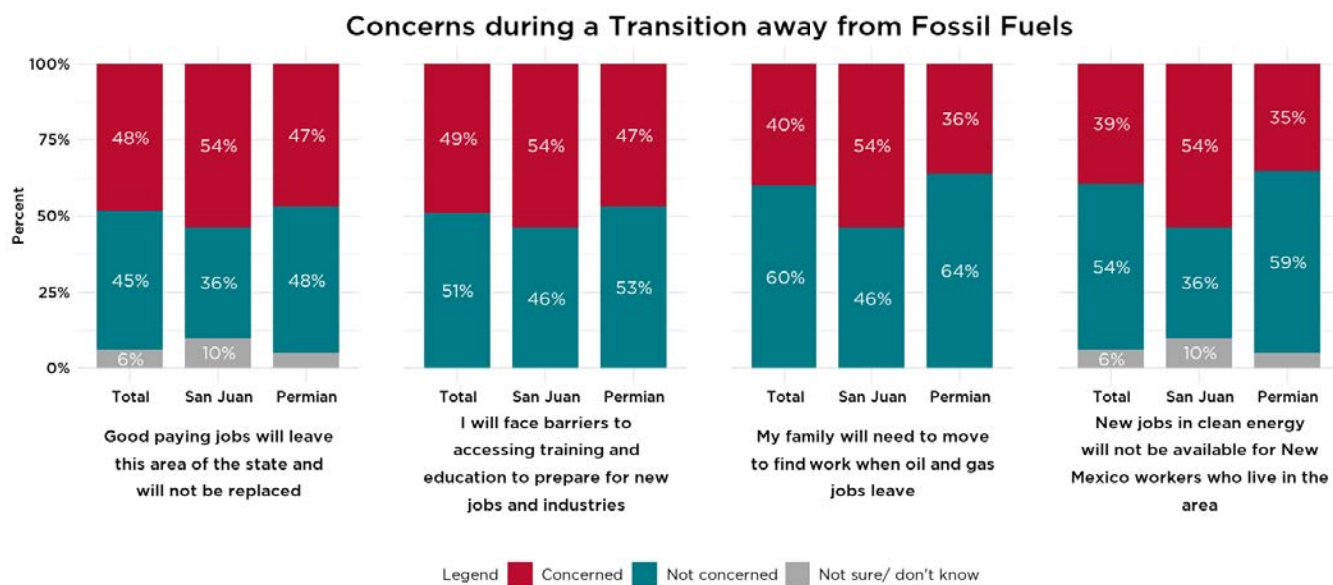
participants, almost all of whom were immigrant workers, were much more concerned about job security and stability.



Of the survey respondents, slightly more than one-third (35%) expressed worry about losing their job in the next twelve months for reasons outside of their control. There was regional variation, with Permian Basin residents (29%) expressing less concern compared to San Juan residents (41%). This echoes other findings in this report – that there is a greater interest in workforce development, training, and support expressed by San Juan region residents compared to Permian Basin region residents. However, it is also important to emphasize that regional variation (and variation in the economic situation within those regions) alone does not explain the concerns about job security and need for workforce development training and support. As the focus group findings throughout this report show, many immigrant workers in both the San Juan and Permian Basin areas of the state are concerned about job loss and are hoping for support.

Interestingly, while a minority of survey respondents were concerned about their own job security within the next twelve months, when prompted about potential job concerns related to reduced production of fossil fuels and a shift towards clean energy, a larger share of survey respondents were concerned. This was of particular concern for residents in the San Juan area, who are experiencing more imminent concerns over closures of fossil fuel power plants. Consistently, over half of San Juan area residents shared that they were concerned that good paying jobs would leave their area of the state and would not be replaced (54%), that they would face barriers when accessing training and education to prepare for new jobs and

industries (54%), that their families would have to move to find work when oil and gas jobs leave (54%), and that new jobs would not be available for New Mexico workers who live in the state (54%).



Concerns over job security are much more pronounced in workers with oil and gas jobs, especially those who are immigrants. Focus group participants consistently vocalized concerns about lack of job security in both the short and long term, due to the temporary nature of many oil and gas jobs and their overall perspectives on the future of the industry.

Oil and gas workers have concerns about long-term job and wage security due to the volatility of the oil market, and some expressed the sentiment that this industry is unsustainable and cannot last forever.

“Cuando el aceite está alto, en el trabajo le dan la oportunidad de subir algunos sueldos, porque donde quiera lo necesitan Pero cuando el trabajo baja, también bajan los salarios. A mí me ya tocaba varias veces que me bajen el salario y tiene uno que pues sí, que tomarlo porque es eso, o la compañía no puede pagar el salario lo que puede pagar cuando hay mucha demanda de trabajadores [sic].” *“When oil prices are high, there is the possibility to increase wages because workers are needed everywhere... but when the amount of work decreases, so do the wages. I have been affected several times, they lower my wage and yes, you have to just take it because that is that, or the company can't pay the salary it could pay when there was a high demand for workers.”* - Male, Oil and Gas Worker, Hobbs

Some oil workers in the focus groups also noted that they will not be able to keep doing the same types of jobs forever due to the intense toll that the work has on their bodies and physical health. For instance, one oil worker from Artesia shared that he is 30 years old and

has been working in the oil industry since he was 16. He said that he did not expect to work more than 10 more years in the industry before he would have to change jobs because of the physical nature of his work, but he did not know what other kinds of work he could do that would offer comparable pay.

“Aquí los trabajos tienen que tener mucho con la habilidad física, y cuando uno prácticamente no es hábil ... no está seguro en ningún trabajo.” *“Here the jobs have a lot to do with physical ability, and when one is not able to do physical work, you don’t have security in any job.”*) – Male, Oil and Gas Worker, Hobbs

Workers outside of the oil and gas industry, and family members of those working in the industry, share concerns about long-term job security as well. In the Permian Basin, even those not in oil and gas jobs believe that when the oil industry begins to decline, their jobs (such as those in the service and hospitality industries) will also be impacted because the oil and gas industry is such an integral part of their towns and local economies. In one of the Hobbs focus groups, a woman stated, “si el petróleo acaba, el pueblo acaba” (“If petroleum ends, the town ends”).

“Si el petróleo acaba, el pueblo acaba”

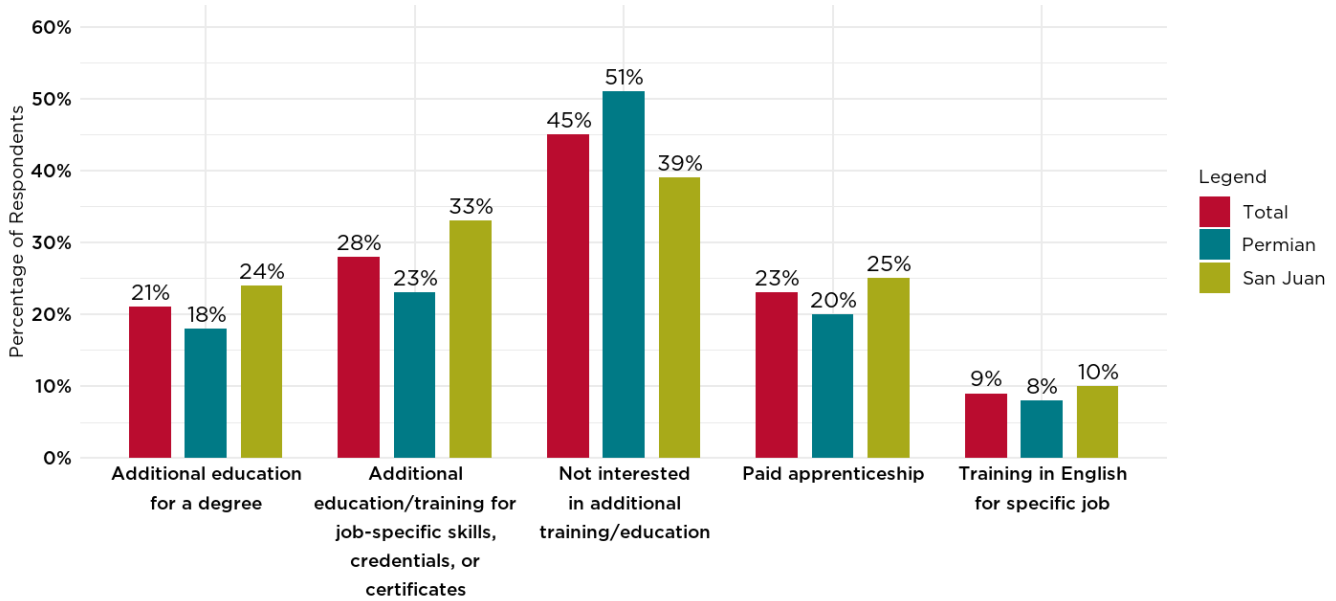
“If petroleum ends, the town ends”.

“Dependemos en el petróleo [sic]. Entonces, si baja el petróleo, se acaban los trabajos, y ahí es cuando la gente pierde su trabajo y tiene que salir del estado a buscar trabajo en otro lugar, eso es lo que pasa . . . Cuando el aceite da su bajón, todos corren.” *“We depend on the petroleum industry. So, if petroleum drops, the work drops, and that is when people lose their jobs and have to leave the state to look for work someplace else, that is what happens... When oil takes a nosedive, everyone runs.”* – Female, Caretaker, Hobbs

2. Interest in Job Changes, Advancement, and Re-Training

Although many workers expressed satisfaction with their current employment status and career, over half of all surveyed residents expressed interest in further education, credentialing, and training. Overall interest in job training and education showed regional variation as well: while 45% of the total surveyed population reported no interest in further training, this was more pronounced in the Permian Basin area, where 51% of workers and residents expressed disinterest compared to 39% of San Juan area residents. Although workforce training and education should be made available everywhere, particular emphasis on the San Juan area may be beneficial to meet the demand from that population.

Training/Upskilling Interests within the Next Two Years



Specific training interests of the survey respondents were mostly in (1) additional education or training for job-specific skills, credentials, or certificates; (2) additional education for a degree; and (3) paid apprenticeships. Some residents also expressed interest in training in English for a specific job.

More than one-quarter (28%) of all surveyed residents were interested in additional education or training for job-specific skills, credentials, or certificates. This interest was more pronounced in the San Juan region, where one third expressed interest (33%) compared to the Permian Basin area (23%). About one quarter of San Juan area residents (24%) expressed interest in additional education for a degree, compared to 18% of Permian Basin area residents and 21% of the total. Finally, one quarter of San Juan residents (25%) were interested in paid apprenticeships (compared to 23% of the total, and 20% of Permian Basin area residents).

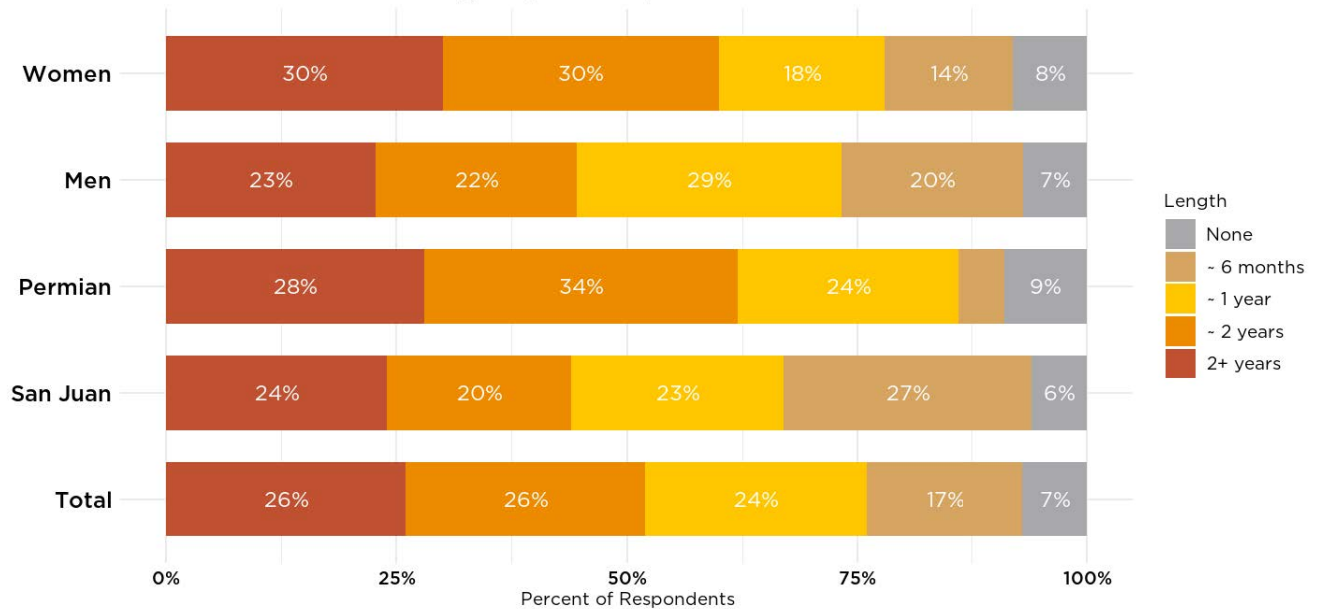
Desired Length of Training and Education Opportunities

When it comes to the maximum length that those interested in additional education or training are willing to invest if the cost of tuition and school materials were free, the data shows that many are willing to invest time into upskilling and retraining. Particularly, the data shows that women and Permian Basin area residents are willing and/or able to invest more time to attend educational programs for a degree or a job-specific skill.

Of the overall sample, 17% shared they would only be willing to attend an educational program for less than six months, 24% shared that they would be willing to get educated for up to a year. Another 26% expressed willingness for up to two years, and over one quarter (26%) were willing to get trained or retrained for more than two years. When it comes to women, over half (60%) shared that they would be willing to spend up to two years for educational programs, with 30% of all surveyed women expressing that they would be willing

or able to attend educational programs for more than two years. Similarly, 24% of Permian Basin area residents expressed ability and willingness to invest more than two years into education, and another 34% shared that they would be willing/able to invest up to two years.

The Longest Willing/Able to Attend an Education Program for Degree/Job-Specific Skills

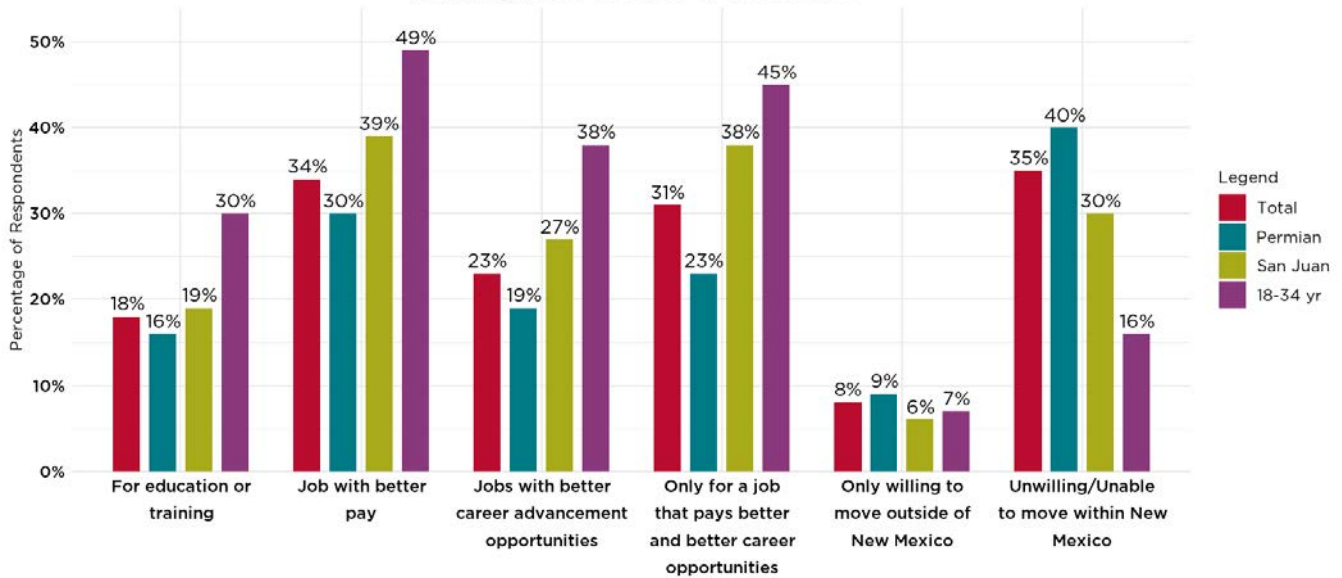


Some Willingness to Move for Economic Opportunities

Many residents are either unable or unwilling to move, helping to preserve the culture and sustain the economic stability of the Northwestern and Southeastern communities in our state. However, our survey also showed that many are willing to move for a job with better pay and/or for career advancement opportunities. This is particularly more pronounced among younger adults (18-34 year olds), nearly half of whom are willing to move for better pay. Moreover, as we learned in our focus groups, many younger adults perceive that moving out of their communities is necessary to achieve financial stability and secure employment.

When asked what, if anything, would make survey participants willing to move or relocate, both “a job with better pay” and “only a job with better pay and a better career opportunity” prompted about one third of the overall sample to state that they would be willing to move. This response was more pronounced among younger adults (ages 18-34), with about half indicating that these factors would make them willing to move out of their community. However, what is perhaps more important to emphasize is that many people are also unwilling or unable to move within New Mexico: 40% of Permian Basin and 30% of San Juan area residents reported that this was the case for them. Younger adults were less likely to report being unwilling or unable to move; only 16% indicated this.

Willingness to Move/Relocate



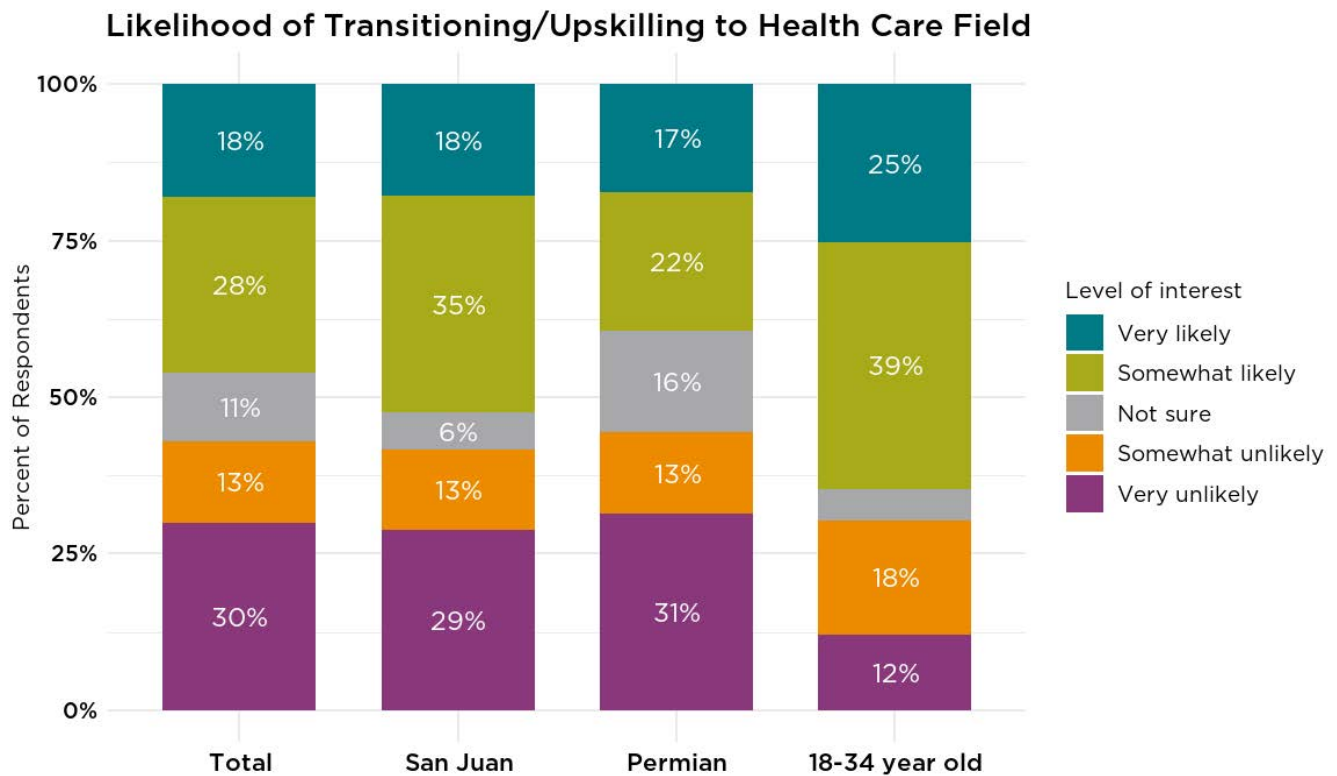
The inability and/or unwillingness to move was more commonly expressed in the focus groups. The focus group participants illuminated the conflict many have about living in their rural communities. Many stated that they prefer to live in small towns, but acknowledge that this results in the tradeoff of limited economic opportunities. Some participants felt that they would need to move to bigger cities like Albuquerque to achieve their ultimate career goals. This belief was most commonly held by young adults and college degree-seeking students.

“[Mis padres] me apoyan mucho, pero no, no quieren que me vaya, porque voy a estar, como, lejos, y no van a estar cercas, pero cierto para crecer [en mi carrera], necesito irme porque no hay tantas oportunidades aquí.” *“My parents support me a lot, but they don’t, they don’t want me to go because I would be, like, far away, they won’t be close to me, but, to be honest, to grow [in my career], I need to leave because there aren’t many opportunities here.”* – Female, Student, Farmington

This shows that although some are willing and able to move for career opportunities, education, and training, many in the Four Corners and the Permian Basin areas of the state are not. Alarmingly, for regional economic and demographic stability, more younger adults (18-34 years old) are willing to move for better pay and jobs. Increasing the amount of employment and educational opportunities that are affordable, geographically close, and otherwise accessible will be critical to ensure that the Permian Basin and San Juan regions do not experience excessive “brain drain” by losing their younger populations to more urban parts of the state and/or neighboring states.

Survey Respondents Expressed Interest in Health Care Careers and Training

Specifically for the question of willingness to be trained or further trained in health care, which is an area where New Mexico is experiencing devastating shortages, almost half of the respondents shared that they would be willing to make a career change (or be further trained if they are already in health care), if the cost of education and supplies was free. Of the total sample, 46% said they would be either very or somewhat likely to make the shift, compared to 43% who said they were somewhat or very unlikely to make the shift. More San Juan area residents expressed likelihood of making the shift (53%) compared to Permian Basin area residents (40%). Additionally, younger adults (ages 18-34 years old) were also more likely to express the likelihood of making the shift, with 64% of people in this age group responding affirmatively.



Focus Group Participants Expressed Interest in Reclamation and Clean Energy Jobs

When asked about jobs in clean energy and reclamation as potential alternatives to jobs in the oil and gas industry, participants said they were interested but did not know of many opportunities in these fields. Many focus group participants were unaware of any reclamation jobs in their area. Those who do know about reclamation work believe that reclamation jobs are safer than jobs in the oil and gas industry.

“Nosotros [en el aceite] tenemos que firmar muchos papeles de que si nos llega pasar algo, un accidente o cualquier cosa incluida la muerte, es nuestra responsabilidad, nosotros estamos aceptando ese riesgo trabajando allí. Pero de volver [para trabajo de reclamación] no hay tantos riesgos.” *“Those of us working in oil have to sign a lot of papers saying that if something happens to us, an accident or whatever, including death, it is our responsibility. We are accepting that risk, working there. But returning [for reclamation work] has a lot less risks.”* - Female, Oil and Gas Worker, Carlsbad

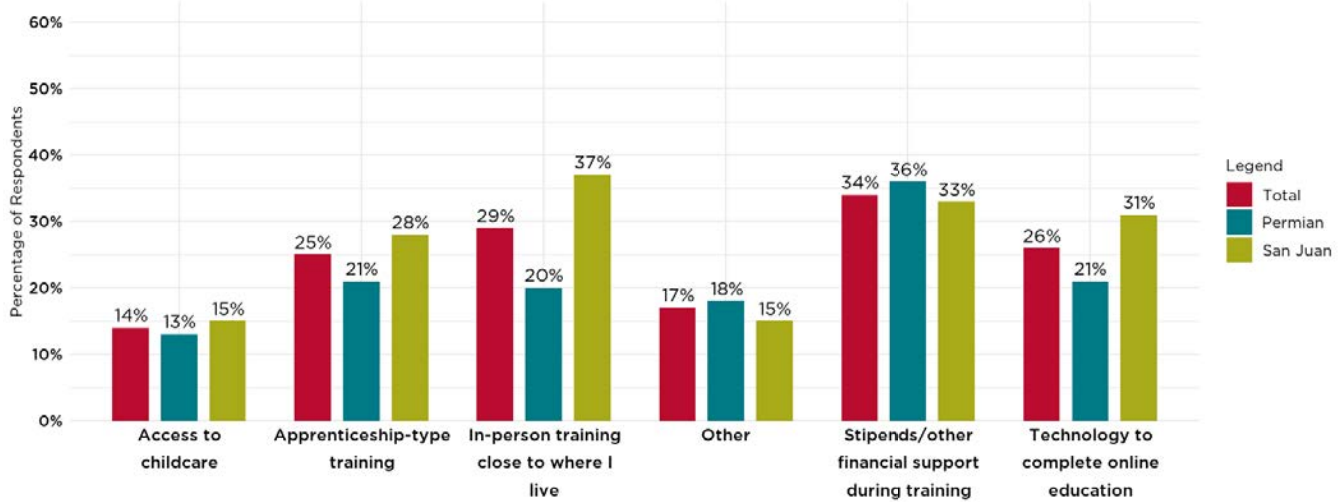
One participant in Carlsbad who works in oil and gas stated that jobs in reclamation and plugging orphan wells will inevitably become more available as the oil and gas industry declines. Another shared that reclamation jobs are usually with the oil and gas companies that drill and manage the wells that eventually need plugging, so those who want to do reclamation jobs might need to be employed by those oil and gas companies already to get into that type of work.

Many focus group participants in both the San Juan and Permian Basin areas are interested in working in other types of energy like solar, but are not aware of any opportunities to do so in their area.

Support and Guidance Needed for Pursuing Job Training and Advancement

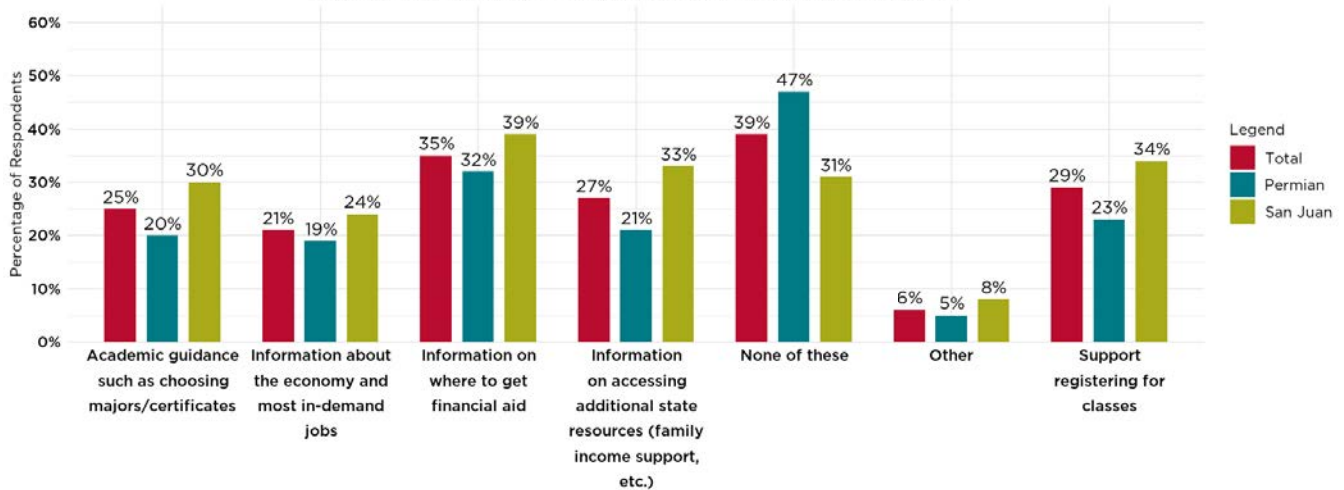
Importantly, when it comes to what types of support people need to pursue and complete job training, responses show that support is needed to ensure that training causes minimal disruptions to people’s quality of life: specifically, over one-third shared that they needed stipends or other financial support during training (34%). This is followed by 29% of respondents who needed in-person training to be close where they currently live. This location of training was particularly important for those living in the San Juan area (37%), more so than for those living in the Permian area (20%). The third most selected support needed was technology to complete an online education (26%), where again, geographic differences show that particularly San Juan area residents may need this support more than Permian area residents. Finally, one quarter of survey respondents shared that they wanted apprenticeship-type training that would lead to a job offer after completing training. More San Juan area residents indicated this as a priority (28%) compared to Permian area residents (21%).

Support Needed to Pursue and Complete Job Training



When it came to guidance or information needed to pursue additional education, again, financial considerations were the most important: 35% of total respondents shared that they needed information on where to get financial aid. This was followed by 29% who shared they needed support when registering for classes, and 27% who needed information on accessing additional state resources like family income support or after school programs. Financial considerations and guidance was particularly pronounced for San Juan area residents again.

Guidance/Information Needed to Pursue Additional Education



3. Barriers to Accessing Work, Career Opportunities, Training, and Advancement

The survey and focus group data show that there is a lot of interest in job training and education opportunities in both the Permian Basin and San Juan area. However, what is also clear is that there are many barriers that make it difficult for people to take advantage of existing resources. As new resources are offered, it is further important to make sure that these barriers are addressed to ensure that as many people as are interested can easily access job training, education, and other advancement opportunities.

Through our data collection efforts, we identified multiple barriers to accessing training, career options, and education. These include:

- Limited options of current offerings in the Permian and San Juan Basin areas, including adult educational opportunities and night or weekend classes
- Language barriers and discrimination experiences
- Insufficient and inadequate childcare options
- Difficulty entering male-dominated fields for women
- Limited digital and computer skills
- Limited professional development skills

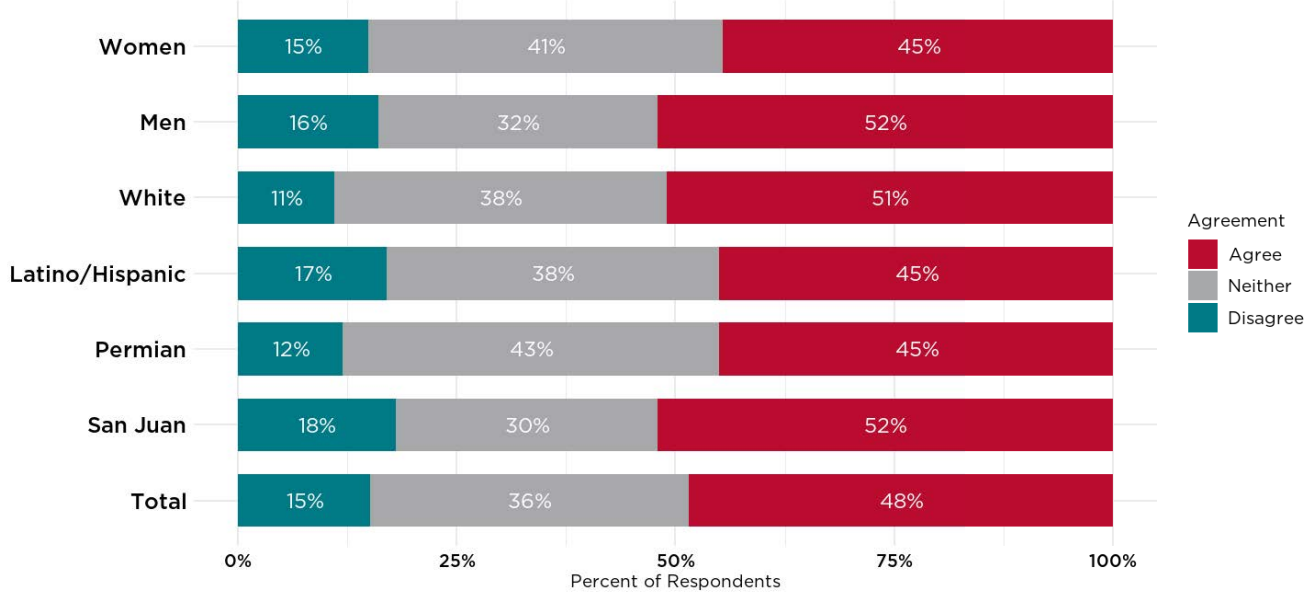
There are multiple ways the state can approach addressing these areas. These are described within each respective subsection and include offering more and flexible classes and expanding childcare options.

Timing and Location Make It Difficult to Take Advantage of Existing Resources

One barrier that makes job training and educational opportunities difficult to access are limited options in terms of location, days of the week, and timing. Survey respondents and focus group participants shared they were constrained in the time they can designate for education and training due to work schedules and commutes, and by extended commutes to get to available training and education opportunities. Current offerings are underutilized because they are difficult to access for people. When more flexibility is introduced, perhaps through weekend/night classes but particularly through online, self-paced classes, more people are able to take advantage of adult education and training programs.

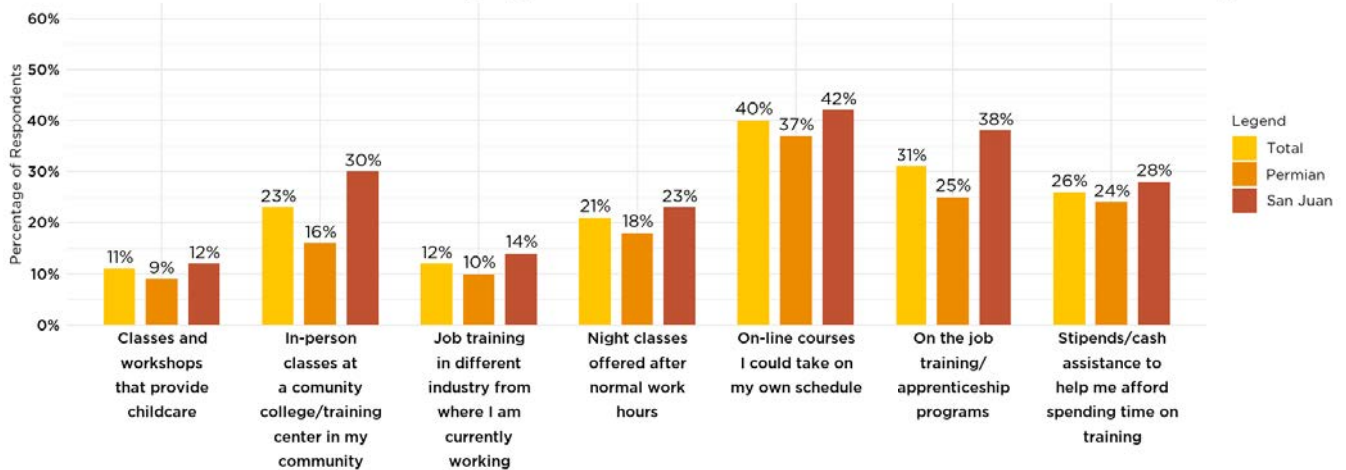
How much did specific timing and location constrain people's ability to take advantage of existing resources? The survey indicates that almost or more than half of respondents (depending on location, gender, and/or other social group) shared that current options make it difficult for them to use existing resources. San Juan region residents particularly felt this way (52% agreed), although many Permian residents agreed with this as well (45%). More men (52%) than women (45%) agreed, as well as more White residents (51%) compared to Latinos.

Time and Options for Education/Training in my Area Makes It Difficult to Use Resources



When asked specifically about what would work best for community members if job training opportunities were made available, the most important aspect identified by respondents of the survey (40%) was online courses they were able to take at their own schedule. This is followed by financial considerations that include on the job training/apprenticeship programs (31%) and students/cash assistance to help afford spending time on training (26%). Particularly San Juan area residents also preferred in-person classes at a community college or training center in their community (30%). Night classes offered after normal work hours were also popular with about 21% of respondents.

What Works Well if Job Training Opportunities Were Made Available in Your Community



Another consideration are the best times that work for classes and training and the time that people are able to commute to training and classes. What the findings show is that classes need to be flexible and easily accessible – almost one third of the sample for example shared that none of the listed times (between 6am and 9pm) worked for them for classes, and another third shared that they were unable to travel for class or training (even as short as 15 minutes each way). Therefore, classes may be best and most accessible when they are online and self-paced, to ensure that people neither have to travel or commute, or designate a specific time frame in advance that they may be unable to commit to.



Language Barriers and Experiences of Workplace Discrimination Drive A Need for Accessible English Language Classes

Workers who do not speak English have difficulty finding work and advancing in the workplace. Some participants attributed difficulties to the language barrier itself, while others perceived more deliberate discrimination against Spanish speakers and immigrants.

“Yo pienso que sí puedo hacer más, pero lo que me detiene más es el idioma. Siento la capacidad para hacer muchas [sic], sé muchas cosas, pero tengo quince años aquí en los Estados Unidos, y pues sí, puedo entender cuando uno platica, pero no puedo hablar mucho, entonces me cierro, me cierro mucho, y no puedo [cambiar de trabajo].” *“I think that yes, I can do more, but what holds me back most is the language. I know I have the ability to do a lot, I know a lot, but I have been in the United States for 15 years and yes, I can understand when someone talks, but I can’t speak much, so I close off, I close off a lot, and so I can’t [change jobs].”* – Female, Custodian, Carlsbad

Several focus group participants described how Spanish-speaking workers are at a disadvantage in the workplace because they depend on other bilingual workers to translate for them. Bilingual workers may be asked or expected to translate for others who do not

speak English. Supervisors tend to speak English and not Spanish, leading to difficulties managing work teams.

“Donde yo trabajo [en una planta de gas] todos hablan inglés. Yo hablo inglés y español, pero cuando agarran a unos trabajadores que no hablan inglés, es una barrera... no puedo hacer mi trabajo porque tengo que estar traduciendo de los operadores o de los encargados de allí.”

“Where I work [in a gas plant], everyone speaks English. I speak English and Spanish, but when they hire workers who don’t speak English, it is a barrier. I can’t do my work because I have to translate for the operators or those in charge there.” – Male, Gas Plant Worker, Artesia

One focus group participant, a Spanish-speaking oil and gas supervisor in Artesia, shared that the language barrier can even put people at risk when working at potentially dangerous sites like gas plants. It becomes especially important to transmit information quickly and effectively in hazardous or emergency situations, which is difficult to do when not all workers speak the same language.

Participants also shared their concerns that employers promote less qualified English-speaking workers over those who only speak Spanish. One oil and gas worker stated that he knows people who have worked years in the industry but have not moved up because they don’t speak English. Another participant in Artesia described how her husband has worked in oil and gas for years, but he still has to do multiple jobs at the same time, and often has to do the hardest manual labor jobs, because it is the people who speak English that can advance into safer or more stable jobs.

“La mayoría de las personas trabajando en el aceite, por ejemplo, en los trabajos más duros en el aceite, ¿quiénes somos? Somos los hispanos.” *“The majority of people working in the oil industry, for example, the most difficult jobs in the oil industry – who are we? Hispanic people.”* – Male, Oil and Gas Worker, Carlsbad

Furthermore, focus group participants stated that there is exploitation of immigrant workers across industries. Participants in the Carlsbad focus group discussed how some oil and gas companies pay immigrant workers less because they think that immigrants are less likely to ask for more pay, or that they need the jobs enough to accept lower wages. A woman from Carlsbad who works in the oil industry stated that while immigrant workers are sometimes paid well, they often do not receive the benefits that other workers do.

For immigrant and other workers who do not speak or write English well, language presents a barrier in the pursuit of job opportunities, workforce training, and educational opportunities. Even with their current or most recent employment, only about 20% of survey respondents shared that they did not need to speak English.

“La mayoría de las personas trabajando en el aceite, por ejemplo, en los trabajos más duros en el aceite, ¿quiénes somos? Somos los hispanos.”

“The majority of people working in the oil industry, for example, the most difficult jobs in the oil industry – who are we? Hispanic people.”

Focus group participants expressed that workers who speak only Spanish are less likely to advance in the workplace; more likely to be let go and replaced by English-speaking workers; and unable to take advantage of many educational opportunities because they are advertised and/or offered in English only. Many participants want to improve their English language skills to be able to take advantage of other educational opportunities in English, but noted that they cannot attend most English classes because they are during work hours, or at a time when participants would need child care. Workers in the oil and gas industry in particular expressed that they work long or irregular hours and have long commutes, so their schedules altogether prevent access to educational opportunities like English classes.

Insufficient and Inadequate Childcare Options

Insufficient and inadequate childcare is another barrier to accessing job training and educational opportunities. In the survey, 14% of the total sample (and 18% of women) shared that they would need access to childcare during specific school or training hours, showing that there is an expressed need for childcare support. However, our focus group data shows that many residents in the San Juan and Permian Basin areas, particularly women who tend to be the primary caregivers of young children, felt that child care options are both insufficient, meaning that there are not enough locations to send children to, and inadequate, meaning that locations that do have openings do not provide high-quality and safe child care.

“Moms can’t work.”

Many female participants stated that lack of childcare prevents them from working or taking advantage of existing state resources like English language classes and other educational and

training opportunities. Female participants expressed that they want or need to work, but cannot find jobs with schedules that can accommodate their childcare responsibilities, or childcare that can accommodate their work schedules. As a result, men in many households work while women care for the home and children, or take small side jobs when they can. One woman from Carlsbad stated simply, “moms can’t work.”

One woman from Carlsbad with a child stated, “we have no childcare here,” and described a distrust of current childcare options in her community. She stated that local daycare centers have many complaints against them related to child abuse, employee drug use, and cleanliness.

None of the participants knew how the Governor’s new free universal childcare program (or the former childcare assistance program with income eligibility limits) worked or how to sign up. Many had never even heard of these childcare assistance programs. Several participants doubted that there is enough safe, high-quality childcare available for everyone in their community who needs it, even if parents were able to enroll in such programs.

One participant spoke about how much harder it is for new immigrants to find childcare. They may not have knowledge of state resources, and they do not have the same network of friends or family to help with childcare.

“Necesitamos una cita [sic] que nos cuiden los niños porque, lamentablemente cuando uno viene, inmigrante, no tienes alguien de confianza con quien dejar a sus niños [mientras trabajas].” *“We need a place that can care for children because, unfortunately, when you are a new immigrant here you don’t have anyone you can trust to leave your kids with [while you work.]”* – Female, Caregiver and Independent Contractor, Hobbs

Women Face Challenges in Male-Dominated Industries

Among the focus group participants, women in both the San Juan Basin region and especially the Permian Basin region expressed difficulty entering male-dominated workplaces and professions.

“I wouldn’t even do an office job, because most of the people that I see in the oil field are . . . how do I put this . . . I feel like it would be a very unsafe environment.”

The oil and gas workforce is predominantly men, and women expressed challenges entering and remaining in this workforce. First, women described how difficult it is to break into this industry. Many focus group participants stated that oil and gas jobs are often shared only through personal connections, and women perceive discrimination from men who view oil and gas as “trabajo de hombres” (“men’s work”).

Once women break into oil and gas work, the male-dominated culture can prove challenging and even deter women from staying in their positions or in the field generally. For example, one woman in the Carlsbad focus group described how she has difficulty asking for help and cannot voice concerns about heavy lifting or physical labor without facing criticism based on the perception that she is not as strong as male workers.

Other women in the focus groups also expressed safety concerns working in a predominantly male work environment where workers are often not local, and the perception is that they are paid under the table and working without background checks or formal vetting processes. Some brought up experiences of sexual harassment from male oil and gas workers.

“I wouldn’t even do an office job, because most of the people that I see in the oil field are . . . how do I put this . . . I feel like it would be a very unsafe environment.” - Focus Group Participant, when asked whether she had worked in oil and gas industry, Carlsbad

Similarly, several women expressed an interest in learning welding and working as welders, but faced challenges breaking into this type of work. One focus group participant described how some companies will let workers bring others into the workplace to learn welding prior to being hired, but many will not let their workers bring in women such as their spouses to learn. Several participants shared the belief that they would not be taken seriously as welders because they are women.

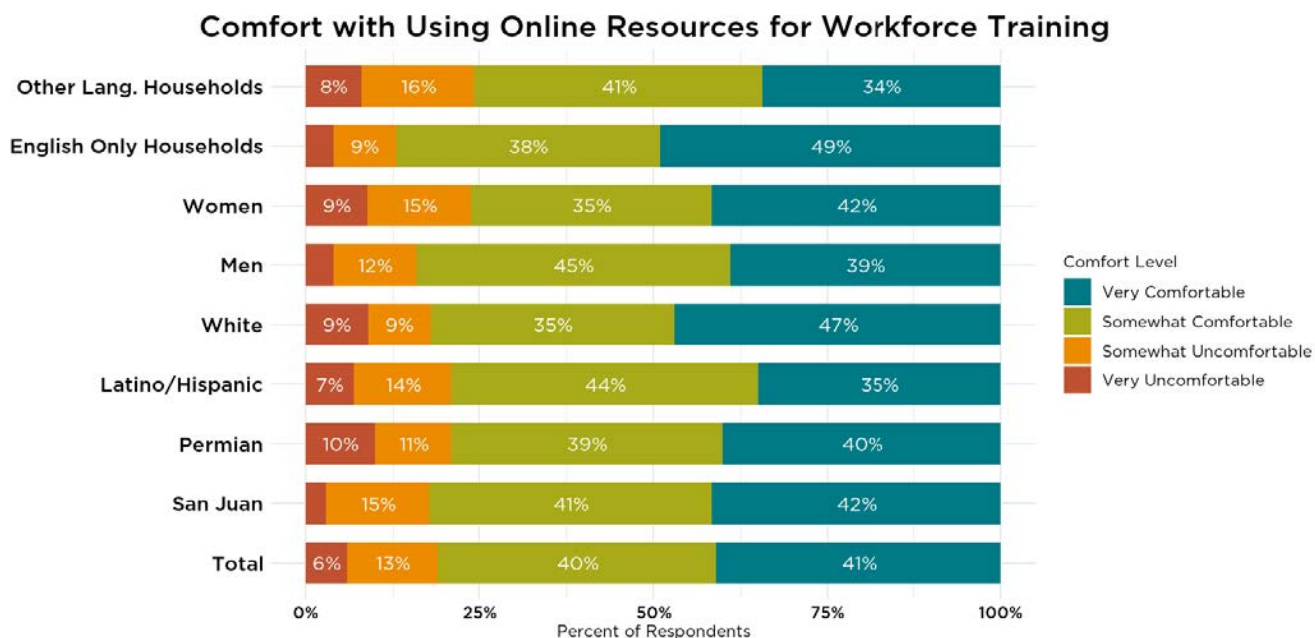
Women re-entering the workforce after having children are one of the categories of workers that were identified as “difficult-to-reach” in the New Mexico Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Historically and comparatively, women in New Mexico have had relatively low labor force participation rates. Our finding, although not novel, shows that some industries and sectors are difficult to break into for women interested in working in our state. Decreasing the barriers to entering a field that women are interested in may be a good way to reach the goal of increasing female labor force participation rates. Although this is beyond the scope of this study, there are multiple steps the state could take to address this, including doing more research into assessing workforce equity and making this data publicly available and tying workforce development funds to goals that include increasing job placement for women in traditionally male-dominated fields and improving reporting structures for sexual harassment and other workplace-based complaints.

Many Workers Cannot Access Computers or Have Limited Digital Skills

Although issues with digital skills and access to computers have decreased over the years, these continue to be a problem in our state that are more pronounced in some social groups.

The survey shows that overall, comfort of using online resources is relatively high – 81% of the survey respondents shared that they were either very or somewhat comfortable using online resources for workforce training. Some regional differences were observable, although they were not very pronounced: Permian Basin area residents were less comfortable (21%

compared to 18% in the San Juan region) using online resources. Latinos in our survey sample also had a higher share of respondents who indicated they did not feel comfortable (21%) compared to White residents (18%). Women felt less comfortable with these resources (24%) compared to men (16%). Interestingly (and not pictured in the graph), the difference between more formally educated New Mexicans and those without much formal education in terms of digital skills was relatively minimal. More pronounced differences were observable for people living in English-only households, where 13% indicated discomfort with using online resources compared to those living in households that (also) speak a different language, where 24% shared discomfort with using resources.



Furthermore, the focus groups, which included mostly immigrant and Spanish-speaking workers, demonstrated that this gap is more pronounced among immigrant workers and that state efforts may be most utilized and needed in this area.

Many focus group participants identified the need for computer and digital literacy assistance and training. They discussed how family and community members who lack digital literacy might struggle to navigate online job listings or other state services. Many workers, particularly new immigrants and older workers, do not know how to create and save a resume or fill out an online job application, limiting the pool of jobs they can even apply for, let alone what they can qualify for without basic computer skills.

For example, when discussing how to find and change jobs, participants in a Carlsbad focus group highlighted challenges related to using online job portals when you do not know how online application forms work, or do not have access to a computer. Many participants only have cell phones, which may not be as functional for filling out online job applications.

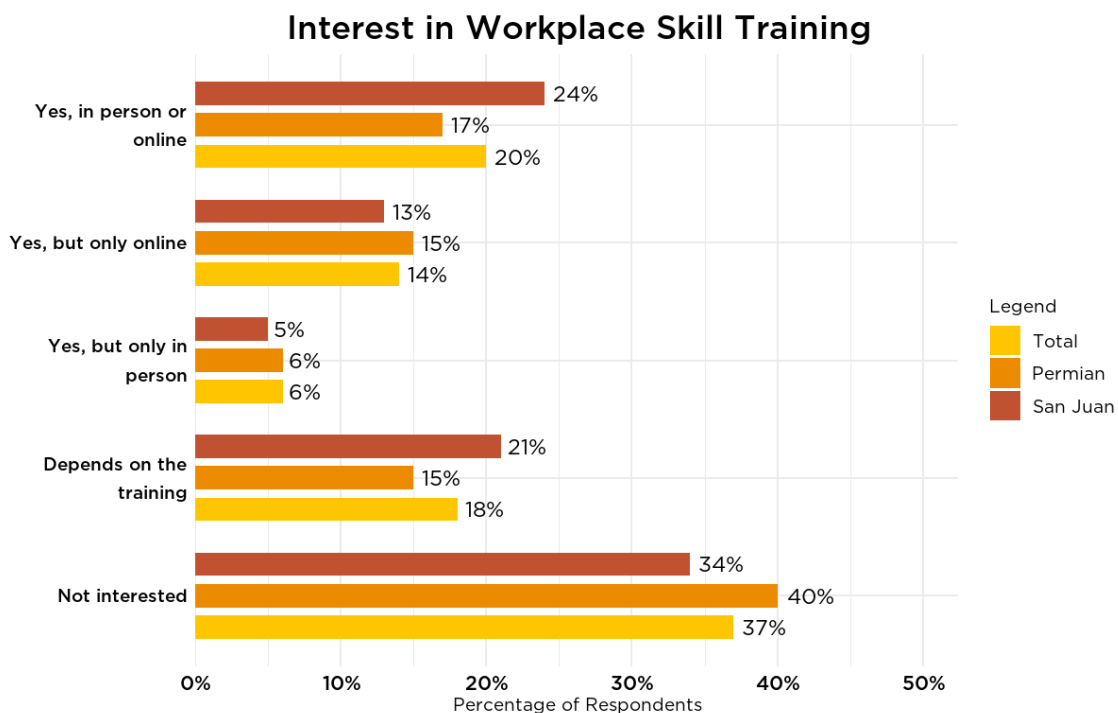
“Yo quisiera hacer una aplicación en otro trabajo, y pues no sabía que existía eso, y no he podido hacerlo porque, en mi teléfono por ejemplo, se me ha complicado hacerlo.” *“I wanted to do a job application for a different job, and I didn’t know that that even existed, and I couldn’t do it because, with my cell phone for example, it made it more complicated to fill out.”* – Female, Custodian, Carlsbad

Support for Career Readiness and Professional Development Skills Needed

Many study participants expressed interest and need in general workplace skills training, such as writing resumes or practicing for job interviews. This is an area of support the state could provide, to ensure that people willing to work get the best support needed to ensure that they can secure employment.

When asked in the survey, participants were asked if they were interested in this type of skill training, and if so, what format preference they had. The survey findings show that training will likely be most used if it is offered both in person and online.

Of the total, 20% of survey respondents said that they would be interested in person or online, 14% were only interested in online training while only 6% were interested in person only. 18% indicated that they may be interested but it would depend on the specific training. 37% of survey respondents were not interested in this training. Similarly to other questions, some regional variation can be observed, with more San Juan region residents showing interest (24% of survey respondents interested in in person or online training compared to 17% of Permian Basin residents).



4. Awareness, Use, and Future Priorities for State Resources

The previous sections addressed both the interests in and barriers to accessing existing and potential future training, education, and other resources. What is less clear, however, is whether people are familiar with existing state resources for employment opportunities (particularly those offered by the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions), and what other resources people would like to access.

One resource that research participants were asked about is their local America's Job Center office. America's Job Center offices are local, one-stop offices that connect job seekers with employment opportunities, career counseling, training programs, and support services. They also work with employers to provide hiring assistance, workforce development resources, and connections to qualified candidates.

Our data collection shows that more than half of New Mexicans residing in the Permian and San Juan Basin area are not aware that DWS offers training and education. Even fewer have taken advantage of their local America's Job Center office or other DWS resources.¹ Our data further shows that there is an interest in a comprehensive workforce development website that DWS is considering offering that includes job postings, resources for training courses and workshops, and information about growth industries and jobs.

One important consideration of these findings is that messaging and dissemination of information about existing resources is not reaching the intended audiences. Too many people were not even aware that many resources exist, which consequently means that they are underutilized. Additionally, digital and computer skills may present a barrier for some segments of the population to utilize resources. Providing web-based and non-web based resources as well as computer and digital literacy classes may be a good avenue to ensure that the reach of resources can be broadened.

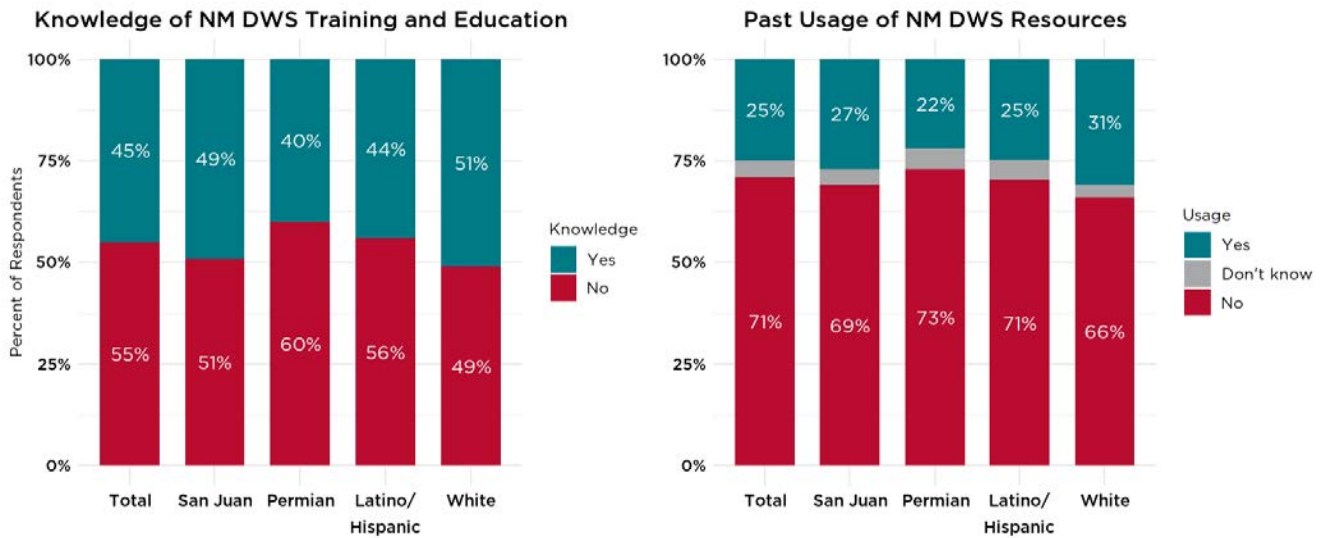
Many Do Not Know About and Have Never Used State Resources

One important consideration is that many people are unaware of the state's offerings of resources. When asked in the survey whether people knew about the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions training and education offerings to state residents, more than half of all respondents answered "no." Particularly, Permian Basin area residents were more unaware of these resources than San Juan area residents, as are Latinos (compared to White residents).

Consistently, across both survey and focus group participants, most participants expressed never having used existing state resources from the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions.

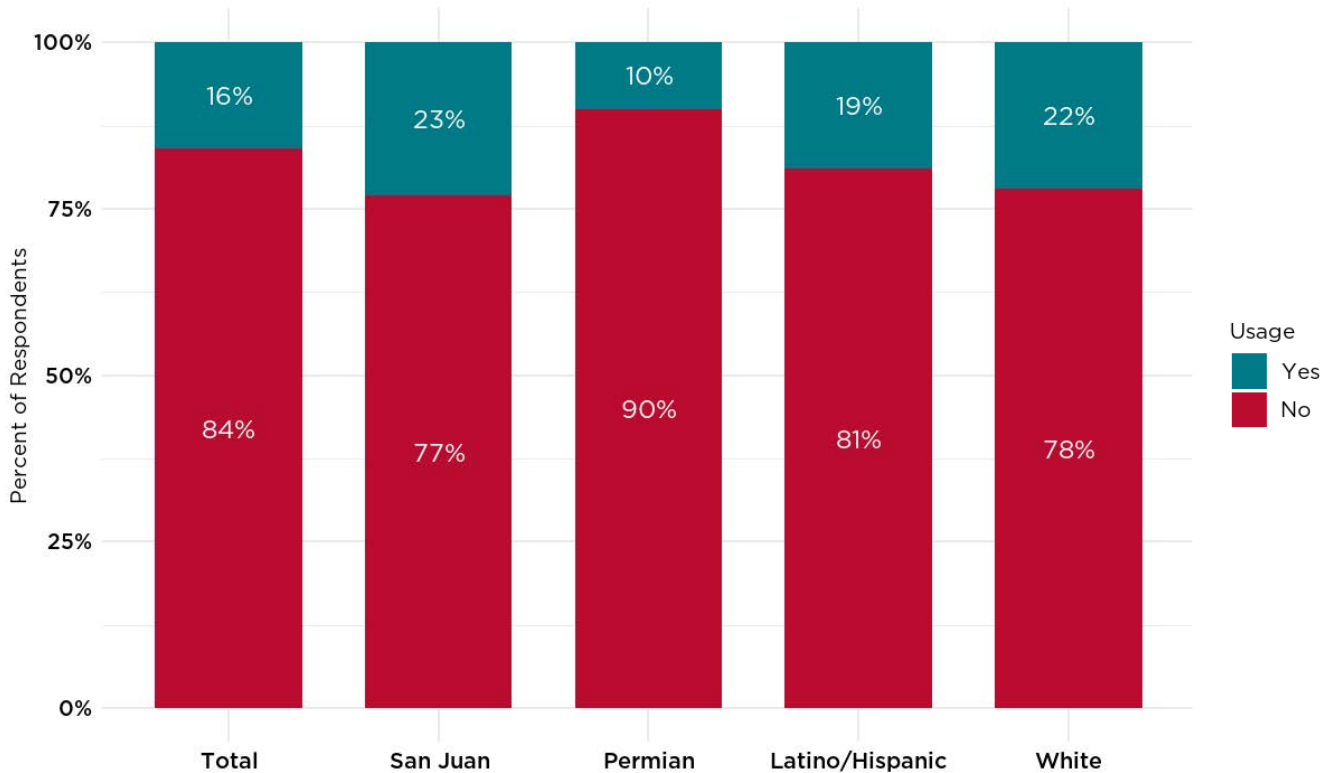
¹ In our survey and focus group findings, participants who have utilized state resources described their experiences and some were dissatisfied or had suggestions for improving on the services provided. There will be a separate short report outlining these adverse experiences and the issues raised by people who have used resources like the AJC offices.

The survey shows that 71% had not used any resources from DWS. Particularly, fewer residents from the Permian Basin had used these resources compared to San Juan residents (22% Permian compared to 27% San Juan). Some variation was observable for different groups as well, with particularly white New Mexicans using resources more than Latino and all other racial and ethnic groups. Fewer women had used these resources as well compared to men (21% of women compared to 29% of men).



When asked particularly about America's Jobs Center (AJCs), this percentage dropped even further - only 16% of survey respondents responded that they had used this resource before, compared to 84% who have not. Similarly, to the question on whether they had used any resources from DWS, a larger share of San Juan region respondents had used this resource before compared to Permian Basin area residents (23% compared to 10%). White New Mexicans also had used this resource more (22%) compared to Latinos (19%) and other racial and ethnic groups (5%). Finally, fewer women had used America's Jobs Center compared to men (13% compared to 20%).

Have You Ever Used the America's Job Center?



Focus group data showed similar patterns – many focus group participants had never heard of America's Jobs Center, even though there are offices located in Farmington, Artesia, Carlsbad, and Hobbs.

Information on Existing State Resources Needs to be Disseminated More, With Some Consideration for People Who Have Limited Computer/Technological Skills

The data shows that although there is interest in utilizing and expanding resources, current efforts in disseminating information have not been successful in reaching a wide audience. Most residents do not know about the existence of resources and supports, and subsequently have never used them.

First, one issue may be an overreliance on web-based approaches and products. Although, as the next section will show that there is indeed an interest in a comprehensive website that offers multiple resources and products, segments of the population expressed concerns with existing computer skills or access to computers generally.

For example, focus group participants described having difficulties navigating the existing DWS website to find assistance. They also emphasized that many workers need help simply learning how to fill out and submit online job applications. Many adults, especially immigrants,

are unaware that online job applications even exist and would not understand how to use a job search portal online.

“[Necesitamos] talleres como de asesorar la gente, enseñarle cómo usar la computadora, como entrar a la página, porque yo oigo que hay muchas cosas que a una no tiene acceso a que todo es online, y pues sí, hay muchas ayudas, pero uno no sabe, no las ve, a lo mejor, quisiera como, más acceso a la información.” (*“We need workshops to advise people, to show them how to use the computer, how to enter the website, because I hear there are a lot of things that people don’t know how to access since everything is online. So yes, there are a lot of supports, but people don’t know, don’t see them, so maybe I would want more access to information.”* - Female, Focus Group Participant, Hobbs.

Given technological skill limitations, this shows that people may benefit from both: (1) more and flexible computer-based skills training (to ensure that basic computer and digital skills can be gained), and (2) dissemination of information and resources that are not solely web-based.

Second, the way information and resources are currently shared may not be in places where people receive information. In the focus group, where many participants were unfamiliar with current DWS offerings, participants made various suggestions as to how DWS could best disseminate information, including through radio announcements and social media. Some shared that local WhatsApp groups are one source where they receive and learn about resources in their communities. Others shared that they mostly learn about resources through word of mouth and other community members, making hands-on and people-based dissemination of information important. What is clear, however, is that overall, more needs to be invested to ensure that information about available resources is shared widely, to ensure that people know where to look for them.

Third, although it is not discussed in depth here and will be discussed further in a follow-up report, of the few who have used DWS state resources (including AJCs), many reported adverse experiences. Such experiences may lead to these resources developing a negative reputation and being further underutilized. We therefore also recommend that existing resources offer better language services to ensure equitable access, provide better training of staff to ensure that those utilizing resources are given appropriate information, and that funding sources to support these resources are more flexible to ensure that people without social security numbers can utilize them.

There is an Interest in a Comprehensive Workforce Development Website, Although Some Expressed Concern About Computer Skills Needed to Access These Resources

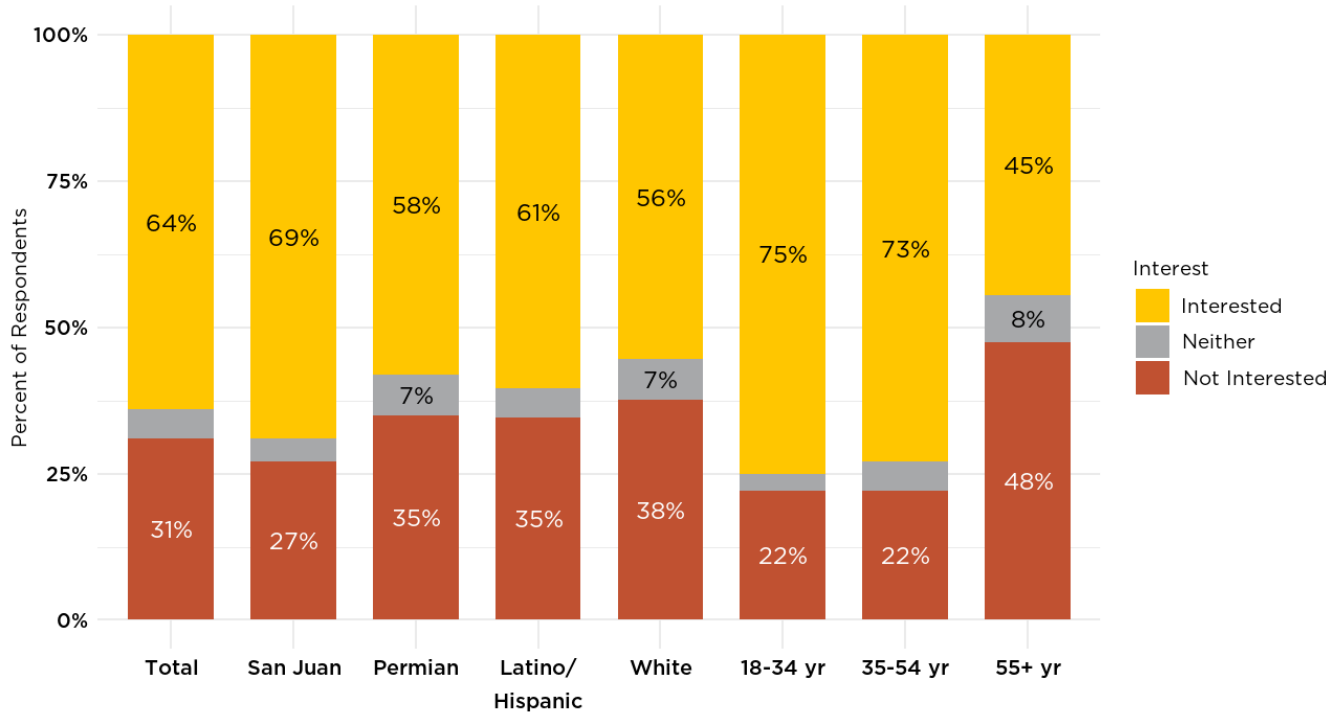
One goal of this research was to assess interest and need in a one-stop shop webpage, which the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions is considering developing to house

workforce development infrastructure for employment needs. This webpage, similar to the “My Colorado Journey” webpage, would include information on current job openings and different professions and industries, professional development training, and other resources for people looking for employment opportunities.

To gauge interest and need for such a website, we asked study participants whether they would be interested in such a webpage and what type of content they would like to see on such a webpage. The findings show that there is an expressed interest and need for a workforce development website that includes a myriad of job and financial support resources, job openings, and resources for training courses and workshops.

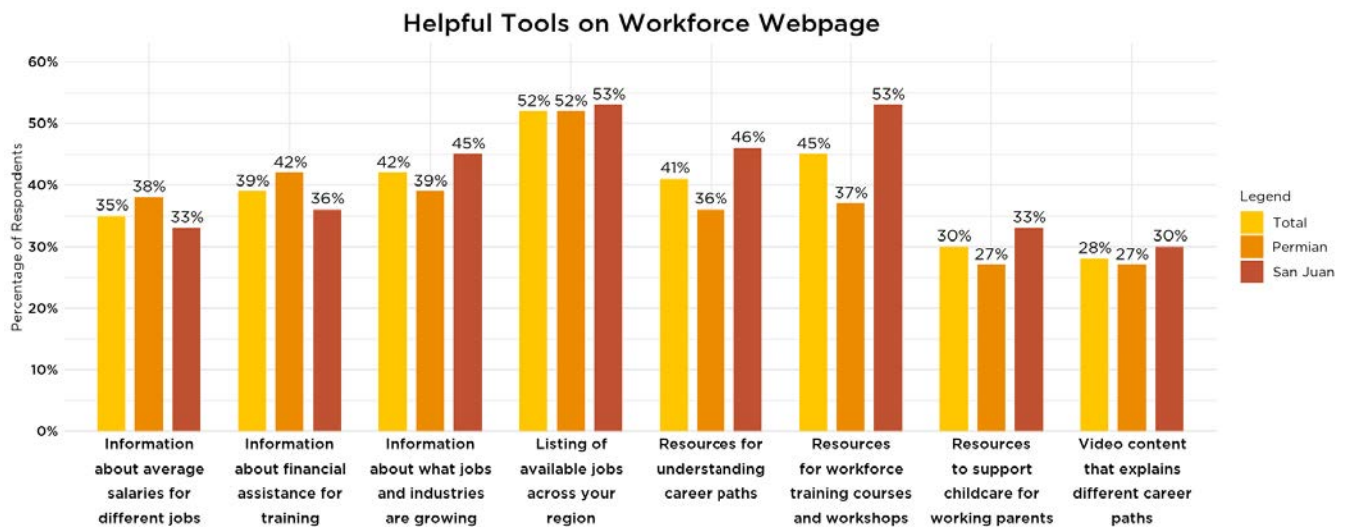
The survey results show that overall, New Mexico residents in the Permian and San Juan areas are interested in this type of resource. Almost two-thirds (64%) of respondents indicated that they were either very or somewhat interested in a website. More residents in the San Juan area shared interest (69%) compared to residents in the Permian area (58%). More Latinos were interested (61%) than White residents (56%). Unsurprisingly, there was more pronounced interest for the prime working ages (18-54 years old) compared to older New Mexicans.

Interest in State Website for Employment/Training Resources



Our focus group data similarly showed that people find a one-stop shop webpage from the state that offers assistance with job search helpful. Many participants expressed interest in these resources, with much of this interest driven by the younger, more technologically savvy participants.

In addition to gauging interest, we also asked study participants what type of content they would like to see in a workforce development website. Our findings show that people are hoping that a website such as this is comprehensive. The survey shows particularly that people want information on available jobs (52%), resources for workforce training courses and workshops (45%), information about what jobs and industries are growing (42%), and resources for understanding career paths (41%). In the focus groups, some participants shared that they needed more basic support with things such as resume writing instead of a one-stop webpage. However, this is one thing that the website can also offer.



As mentioned, one issue that came up with the workforce development webpage, however, are technological barriers. In the focus groups in particular, many expressed concern for those who have limited computer skills or access to computers. Technological proficiency continues to be a real barrier for slightly older and older workers trying to get access to resources and support.

5. Office of New Americans

The Office of New Americans (ONA) was started in late 2024 at the intersection of workforce and immigration, to better understand, support and engage New Mexico’s nearly 131,000 foreign-born workers. Since then, the ONA has conducted trainings for almost 500 businesses on federal immigration policy changes, created a training program for immigration legal service providers, and coordinated a partnership agreement with the Mexican Consulate in Albuquerque to improve enforcement of rights for all workers. The ONA is a member of the Office of New Americans network of 23 participating states, convened by the American Immigration Council and the World Education Service.

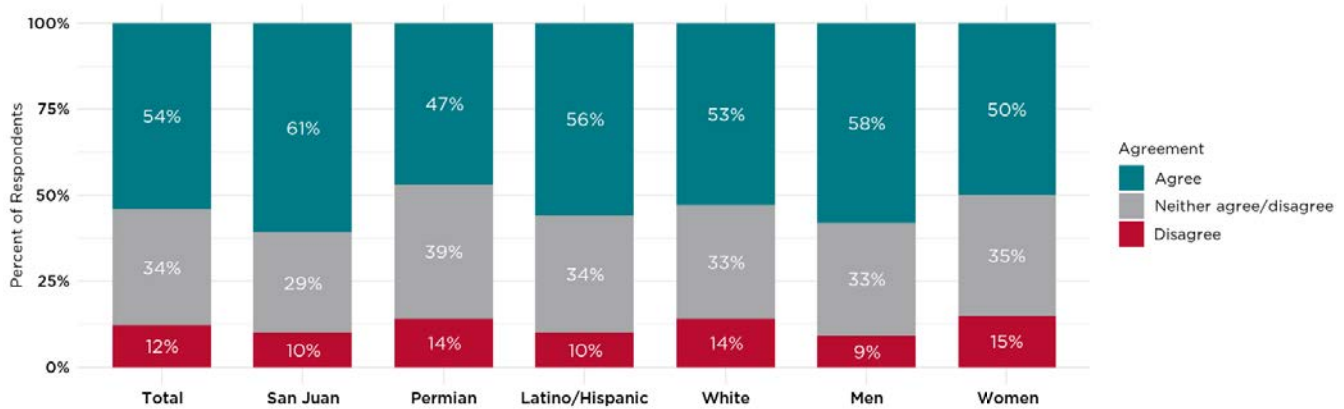
One of our areas of interest in this report was to assess sentiment, need, and interest in such an office in our state. Both focus groups and surveys asked residents of the Northwestern and Southeastern quadrants of our state on these, and the data shows: First, there is an expressed need and interest in this office. This interest and need is expressed not only by immigrants but across different geographic and social groups. Second, those surveyed are hoping that

this office serves multiple purposes including help navigating state programs and benefits including employment services, increasing access to training and education opportunities for immigrants and refugees, and language access support. Finally, the focus groups also showed that findings about other state resources still hold true – there is some interest in making sure online resources are available and accessible, but some people find these difficult to access. This shows that a variety of resources, modes of contact, and offerings will be important to ensure that the Office of New Americans has the reach it intends.

Respondents Expressed Interest and Need for The Office Of New Americans

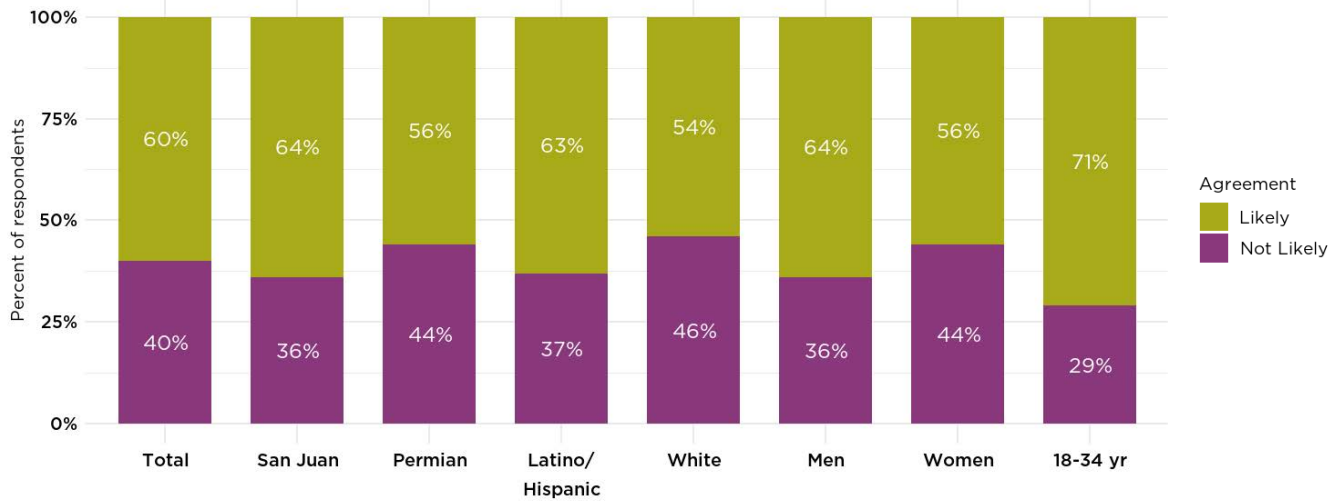
Across both the survey and focus groups, respondents expressed an interest in this office and a need for support for immigrants living in New Mexico. Among survey respondents, 54% agreed that this office would bring personal and community benefits, with a slightly higher percentage of respondents agreeing in the San Juan Basin (61%) than in the Permian Basin (47%). Among the focus groups, nearly every participant who responded to the question of whether their community could benefit from this office responded positively.

Personal and Community Benefit of Government Office for Integrating New Residents to Local Workforce



The majority of survey respondents (60%) expressed that they were likely to use the Office of New Americans. A higher percentage of Latino/Hispanic respondents were likely to use the Office of New Americans (63%), although 54% of white respondents also stated they were likely to use it. More men stated they were likely to use the office than women did (64% of men compared to 56% of women).

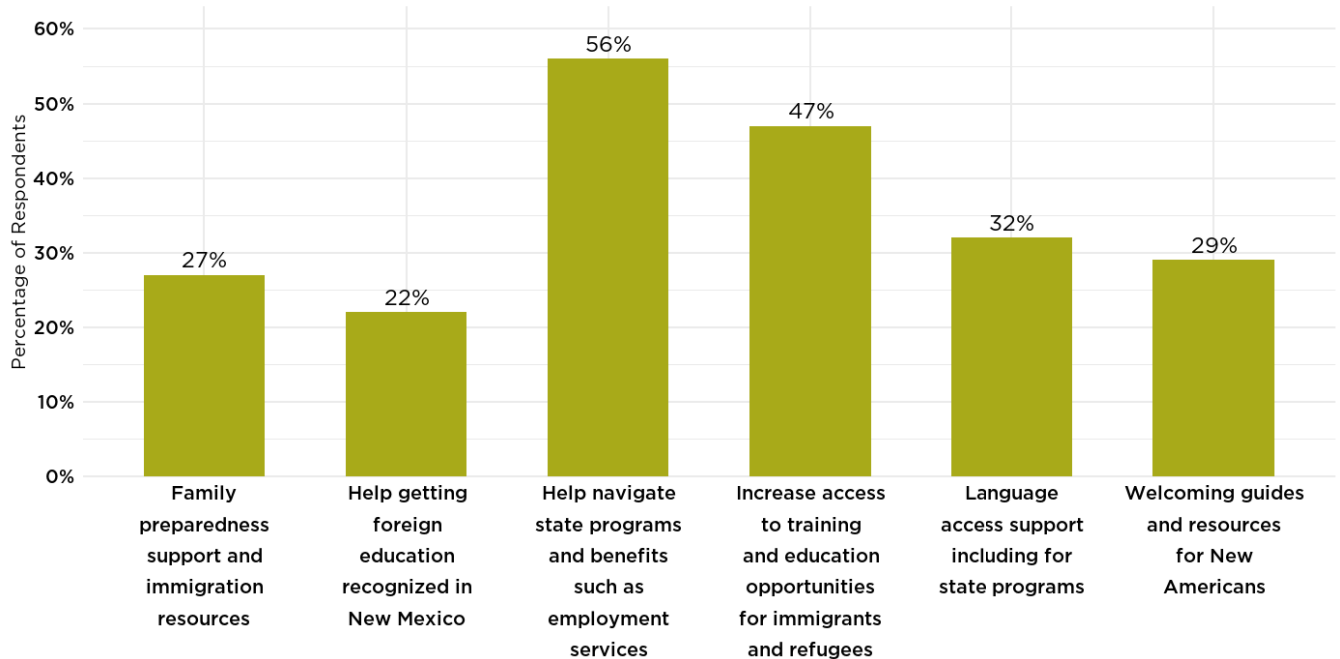
Likelihood of Using Office of New Americans



Areas of Focus for the Office of New Americans

As depicted in the graph below, there are many areas of focus that would benefit New Mexicans in the San Juan and Permian Basin areas. 56% of survey respondents preferred that the office focus on helping people navigate state programs and benefits, including employment services. 47% of respondents stated a preference that the office focus on increasing access to training and educational opportunities for immigrants and refugees. About a third of respondents exhibited a preference for language access support (32%) and for welcome guides and other resources for New Americans (29%).

Preferred Areas of Focus of Office of New Americans



Despite only 27% of survey respondents selecting family preparedness and immigration resources as a preferred area of focus for the Office of New Americans, one of the most urgent needs discussed in the focus groups was the need for information related to naturalization and other immigration processes. Many people expressed that they do not understand the pathways to citizenship available to them and they are not able to afford legal assistance. Some also said that they cannot access information or legal assistance in their preferred language. Across the focus groups, numerous participants who are immigrants expressed either a need for assistance with their ongoing immigration processes, or an interest in starting the naturalization process. Many said that they would attend workshops on these topics, or have friends and family who would benefit from them.

Focus group participants also expressed the need for training in financial tools to help with retirement planning, credit scores, and home buying. Participants expressed that these topics can be new to or particularly challenging for immigrants, and information in languages other than English can be difficult to find, so this may be a need that the Office for New Americans is well suited to address.

In particular, many of the focus group participants shared that they have not planned for retirement at all, and most said they do not expect that they will ever be able to retire. Several workers were aware that they had some retirement savings through past employers but did not know whether or how it could be transferred after changing jobs.

Some participants also expressed that they do not understand how credit works and do not know whether they can qualify for credit cards or other loans. This was noted by several as a barrier to homebuying.

Concerns and Barriers That Need to Be Considered When Serving Workers Through This Office

Many participants thought that in-person offices with employees would be most helpful for workers who have limited computer access or do not have basic computer skills. Participants stressed that the office should use diverse communication and outreach strategies to reach workers in need. Otherwise, people will not know that the office exists or what resources it makes available to them.

While younger focus group participants were enthusiastic about online tools like a website with job listings or other state services, older workers may not have the digital literacy skills to use such tools. Additionally, participants were concerned that the website would not be useful if it is only in English, or if the Spanish translation was not accurate.

“Tendría que ser no tan complicada porque hay algunas páginas gubernamentales que sí son muy complicadas.” *“The website should not be too complicated, because there are some government web pages that are really complicated.”* – Male, Oil and Gas Worker, Carlsbad

Another concern that focus participants highlighted is that immigrant workers may be apprehensive about using state resources, or contacting a state office, if they are undocumented. They expressed that the office should be safe and useful for undocumented immigrants and immigrants who speak languages other than English. The office should communicate clearly that it will be of service to all immigrants.

6. Housing

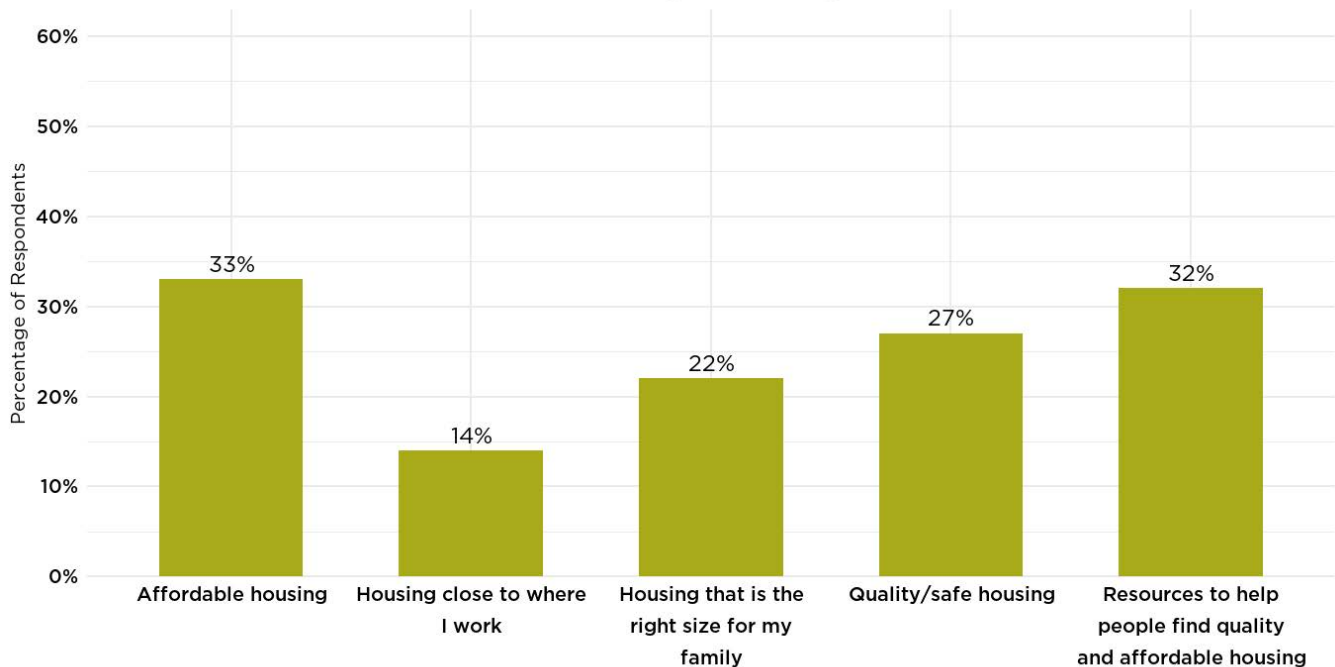
Housing Is Limited, Low-Quality, and Costly

Housing challenges, including finding quality, safe, and affordable housing that is within commuting distance of one's work, are a concern for many in the Permian and San Juan Basin areas.

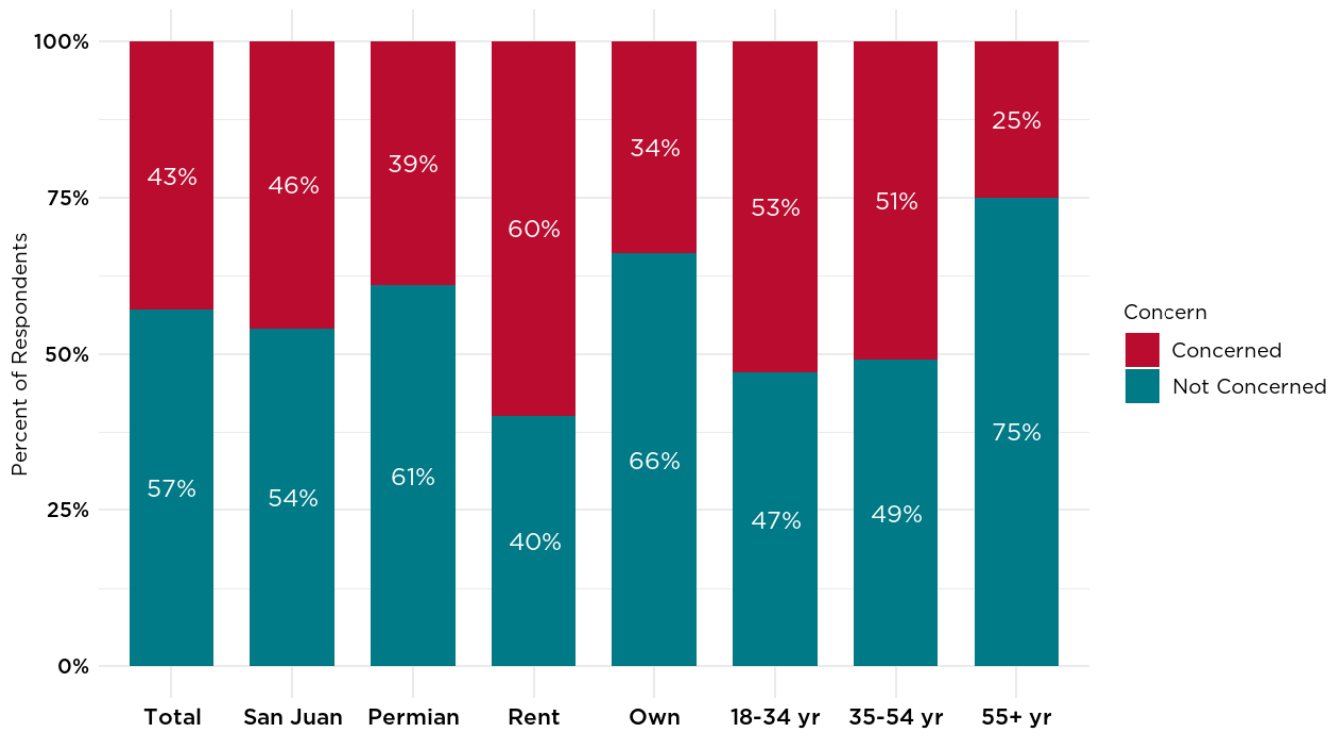
To assess housing challenges that exist within communities, the survey asked what housing challenges the survey respondent's community was facing. One that was identified by one-third (33%) is that affordable housing is a concern. Many also shared that resources to help people find quality and affordable housing (32%) were a challenge.

What is more, when asked about if people were concerned about having to move because of the rising cost of housing, it is clear that this concern is particularly pronounced for younger people (people under the age of 55), and renters.

Housing Challenges



Concern about Having to Move due to Cost of Housing



Focus group participants in both the San Juan Basin and the Permian Basin described the local housing situation as challenging to navigate, with most housing options being expensive and low quality. There is competition for limited rental housing and participants in the Permian Basin in particular emphasized that most rental housing is difficult to afford if you do not work in the oil and gas industry, where jobs tend to be well-paid.

“Si no genera el dinero que está generando ahorita [en trabajo de aceite], no puede vivir, porque hay rentas de más de mil dólares, gasolina diesel, pagos de la comida son trescientos, cuatrocientos dólares a la semana, pagos de carros, todo eso. Si no trabajamos donde trabajamos en las horas que hacemos, no se puede pagar.”

“If you can't make the amount of money that you make [working in the oil industry], then you can't live, because there are rents over a thousand dollars, diesel fuel, food costs over three hundred, four hundred dollars per week, car payments, all of that. If we don't work where we work, for the hours we do, then we can't pay.” – Male, Oil and Gas Worker, Artesia focus group

“La realidad es que lo que yo puedo portar con mi madre, soltera, pues a rentar un apartamento, un cuarto, es de mil dólares a mil doscientos. Si yo quiero algo más al centro de la ciudad, sigue más de mi cheque [sic].” *“The reality is that what I can rent shared with my mother, or alone, to rent an apartment or a room, is \$1,000 to \$1,200. If I*

want something closer to the center of the city, it would cost more than my paycheck.” – Female, Focus Group Participant, Farmington Focus Group

Focus group participants in Carlsbad discussed how, compared to nearby regions like Lubbock, Texas, their town offers significantly lower quality housing, or houses that need a lot of renovations and improvements, at much higher prices. They reported that most homes in Carlsbad are rented or controlled by a small number of property owners, which they believe hinders both affordability and new development.

A participant living in Artesia shared that years ago, there was a lot more oil and gas work in Texas, but as work has moved more towards Carlsbad, many people moved to the area and prices went up. Some workers live in RVs because they cannot afford to rent housing, and because they move within the area for jobs. Other focus group participants in the Permian Basin described how work in the oil and gas industry moves from one location to another every few days, and so they frequently must commute between Artesia, Roswell, Carlsbad, and other locations. Oil and gas workers reported driving 1-4 hours per day for jobs.

The cost of living more broadly is also of huge concern to workers across all areas. In addition to rising housing costs, many participants noted that food and other necessities are also more expensive, and salaries are not sufficient to meet such costs.

“[Necesitamos] la ley de la canasta básica, porque aquí todo sube, y la salaria baja – la renta sube, y la salaria baja [*sic*]. La comida, la venta. Entonces, allí hay un vacío político.” *“We need a basic food basket law, because everything is going up here, and wages are going down. Rent is going up, and wages are going down. Food, sales. So, there is a policy need there.”* – Male, Service Industry Worker, Hobbs Focus Group

Recommendations and Conclusion

Our survey and focus groups focused on assessing knowledge, interest, needs, and barriers to existing and potential resources that the state can offer for employment services and workforce development. Based on our findings, we recommend the following steps:

1. Improved messaging and dissemination of existing resources

Our data collection showed that not enough people in both the Permian and San Juan Basin areas of the state are aware of the resources that do exist, despite interests in utilizing said resources. This shows that existing messaging and advertisements, if any, have not been sufficiently successful in informing current and potential workers on the offerings that are available. Although most people in the areas surveyed were technologically savvy and possessed digital skills, dissemination of information may be more successful when information is available in both digital and non-digital formats. Traditional news sources, word of mouth, and social media platforms (which participants did not necessarily consider as difficult as navigating a web page) may be important platforms to share information about existing resources and to share information about new resources.

2. Expansion of Resources

Although many people were unaware of existing resources, what also became clear through our data collection is that current resources are not enough and make it difficult for people to utilize them. Below, we list some recommendations that may help improve access to services and resources.

a. Expansion of locally-based or available, flexible and self-paced classes

Both survey and focus group participants shared that they were interested in classes and training, with many even expressing interest and willingness to retrain or upskill to enter the health care field. Many participants shared that they would even be both willing and able to invest multiple years into this endeavor, if education and associated materials were free. This may be an important area for the state to address existing health care worker shortages. However, to ensure that people in the Permian and San Juan Basin area actually do pursue training in health care associated fields, classes and training would have to also be both locally-based, flexible, and self-paced. Financial considerations are a serious concern for many and many shared that they were also interested in stipends, financial assistance, and paid apprenticeships. People may be more likely to pursue an education in the health care field, if education is free and locally accessible, and stipends are provided to ensure people can continue to live and support their families while pursuing their education.

b. English classes, financial literacy classes, computer/digital literacy classes that are flexible and self-paced

Aside from job-based training and retraining for career changes, multiple people in the surveys and particularly the focus groups shared that there is an interest in courses that are not directly linked to workforce development, but are critical skills to work. This includes English language, financial literacy, professional development, and computer and digital literacy classes.

Particularly on the issue of digital literacy and computer classes, multiple people we spoke with shared that being able to navigate web-based resources is challenging for them, meaning that existing resources are not utilized. This includes, for example, people who shared difficulty in enrolling in universal childcare.

An important consideration for these classes, as mentioned in the section prior, is that more people will be able to utilize the resources if classes are flexible and self-paced. Work and caregiving constraints may be making it difficult for people to allocate specific days and times for classes or commit to long commutes to access resources.

c. Expansions of resources and services offered at the Office of New Americans

Our data collection further showed that many Permian and San Juan area residents are interested in the Office of New Americans and using its services. Hopes for the work this office can accomplish is multifold, with people hoping not only for immigration and language related support but also work-related support. In terms of immigration-related support, the focus group participants expressed interest in more information about naturalization and other immigration processes.

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Acknowledgements

The authors thank the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions for providing thoughtful feedback on our survey and focus group instruments, and Somos Un Pueblo Unido for their leadership in the recruitment of focus group participants in both the Permian and San Juan Basin areas. We are also grateful to EmPowerNM for their feedback and help in recruitment efforts. Finally, the authors would like to thank Lia Abeita-Sanchez for her work designing, formatting, and copyediting this report.