

# THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**We would like to express our immense gratitude to the research team who worked tirelessly on this project:**

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The Project Partners would also like to thank the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for its investment in funding the Indigenous Futures research and to the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and Casey Family Programs for their support for the project.

# INTRODUCTION

Native peoples have burst into the consciousness of many Americans in the last few years due to historic victories at the ballot box, in the courts, and in popular culture. This momentum helps us continue to build power for Indian Country and create the future we want and need.

In order to get a more nuanced understanding of how we think about ourselves, what we find important, and what motivates us to make change, we launched the Indigenous Futures Survey. The Indigenous Futures Survey is the first ever study conducted for Indigenous Peoples and led by Indigenous Peoples, aimed at understanding the priorities and needs of Indigenous individuals and communities in the United States. This survey is the first step in a years-long process to shed light on the motivations, priorities, and changing demographics and beliefs of our community.

One of the most pressing contemporary issues facing all communities of color, including Native peoples, is the COVID-19 pandemic. We have known that COVID-19 is exacerbating existing inequalities across the country—the Indigenous Futures Survey has revealed just how devastating the pandemic has been for Indigenous communities.

The results of the survey revealed that Indigenous households earning less than \$45,000 a year were hardest hit by the pandemic. In addition to negative health-related outcomes, they were more likely to report inadequate access to PPE and adverse impacts on financial situation, employment, and wellbeing compared to participants with higher household incomes. Individuals living in rural areas and those identifying as transgender or gender nonconforming are also reeling from the impact of the pandemic, reporting high rates of job loss, worsening financial circumstances and high levels of stress and depression.

It is our hope that the alarming data in this report serves as a call to policymakers, leaders in public health, philanthropy, the media and other sectors to wait no longer to provide real and lasting solutions to the serious pre-existing inequalities that the COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare and exacerbated.

## Study Summary

The first annual Indigenous Futures Survey was conducted by researchers at the University of Michigan and the University of California, Berkeley in partnership with the Center for Native American Youth, IllumiNative, and Native Organizers Alliance. From June 23rd to August 15th, Indigenous Peoples over the age of 18, across the U.S. took the survey online in exchange for the chance to be entered into a raffle for various prizes. Overall, 6,460 Indigenous People, living in all 50 states, as well as the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and Guam, and representing more than 400 federally- and state-recognized tribes, completed the study. The first annual Indigenous Futures Survey includes sub-populations of Indigenous Peoples that are almost never discussed, such as urban, college educated, LGBTQ2S+, and Republican or conservative people.

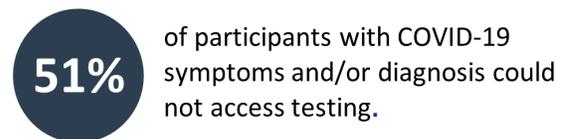
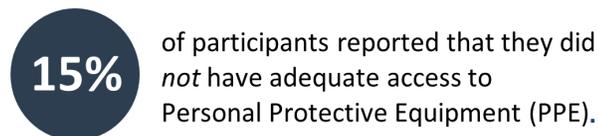
We look forward to further amplifying Indigenous voices in the future.

# THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

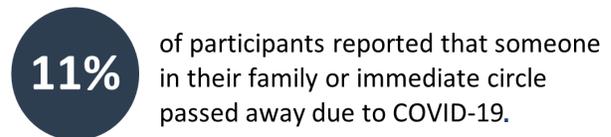
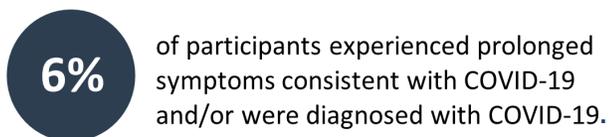
## 81% OF PARTICIPANTS BELIEVE NATIVE PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCE WITH COVID-19 ARE OVERLOOKED IN MAINSTREAM MEDIA.

Indigenous Peoples are often rendered invisible in mainstream contexts. The same is true for the COVID-19 pandemic. To combat the systematic omission of Indigenous people's lived experiences, we report the ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic has adversely impacted Indigenous communities across the country. Furthermore, we highlight Indigenous subpopulations that were disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically low-income peoples, reservation and rural communities, those who identify outside of the gender binary and college students. Our results draw on survey responses from 6,460 Indigenous people, collected from June 20, 2020 to August 16, 2020. Please note that these findings may have altered as the pandemic continued.

### Access to PPE and COVID-19 testing



### COVID-19 Symptoms, Diagnoses and Deaths



## Finances and Employment

45%

of participants reported that their household's financial situation worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic.

36%

of participants that were employed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, reported having their work hours cut or being laid off as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Wellbeing

Percent of participants who reported that, in the last month, they experienced negative feelings fairly often or very often

31% feel Depressed

54% feel Frustrated

63% feel Stressed

# INCOME INEQUALITIES

## 39% OF PARTICIPANTS REPORTED THAT THEIR ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME IS LESS THAN \$44,999.

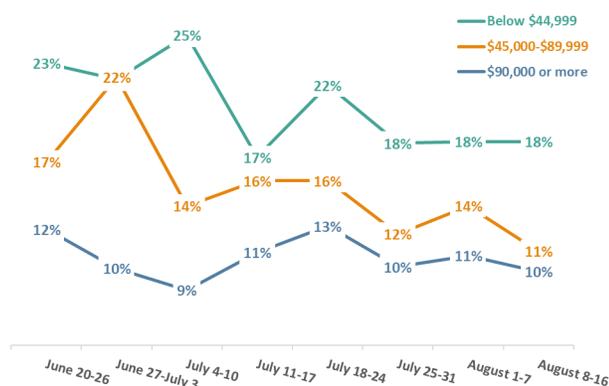
It is well documented that the pandemic exacerbated deeply ingrained inequalities already existing within the United States. Our findings converge with this narrative. Low-income Indigenous participants (household income less than \$44,999 per year) were hardest hit by the pandemic. They were more likely to report inadequate access to PPE, and adverse impacts on financial situation, employment, and wellbeing compared to participants with household incomes above \$44,999.

### Access to PPE & COVID-19 testing

**19%** of participants whose household income is <\$44,999 reported that they did *not* have adequate access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

**47%** of participants whose household income is <\$44,999 with COVID-19 symptoms and/or diagnosis could not access testing.

### Access to PPE over time



The extent to which participants whose household income is <\$44,999 reported that they did not have access to PPE decreased over time. However, compared to all other income groups, participants whose household income is <\$44,999 were more likely to report that they did not have access to PPE.

### COVID-19 symptoms, diagnoses, and death

**7%** of participants whose household income is <\$44,999 experienced prolonged symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and/or were diagnosed with COVID-19.

**12%** of participants whose household income is <\$44,999 reported that someone in their family or immediate circle passed away due to COVID-19.

## Finances and Employment

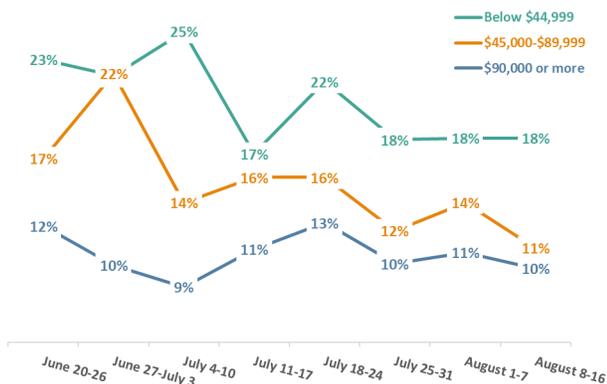
60%

of participants whose household income is <\$44,999 reported that their household's financial situation worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic.

52%

of participants whose household income is <\$44,999 and were employed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, reported having their work hours cut or being laid off as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Financial Impact over time



The extent to which participants whose household income is <\$44,999, reported that their financial situation worsened due to the COVID-19 pandemic increased over time. Specifically, in June, 50% of these participants reported that their financial situation worsened, with a peak in July at 63%. Additionally, compared to all other income groups, participants whose household income is <\$44,999 were more likely to report that their household's financial situation worsened.

## Wellbeing

Percent of participants whose household income is <\$44,999 reported that, in the last month, they experienced negative feelings fairly often or very often.

39% feel Depressed

57% feel Frustrated

65% feel Stressed

# RESERVATIONS

## 23% OF PARTICIPANTS LIVE ON RESERVATIONS

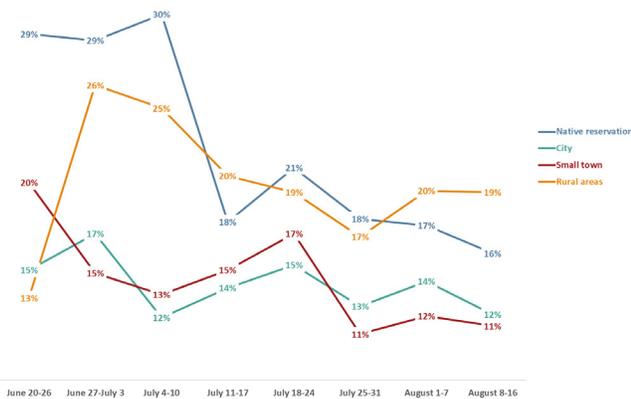
Reservation communities are another population that were subject to adversity prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as facing a lack of basic needs like running water or electricity. Thus, it is not surprising that Indigenous people living on reservations were negatively impacted by COVID-19. Reservation communities were more likely to report that they did not have adequate access to PPE and that they knew someone who passed away due to COVID-19.

### Access to PPE & COVID-19 testing

**19%** of participants living on reservations reported that they did *not* have adequate access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

**31%** of participants living on reservations with COVID-19 symptoms and/or diagnosis could not access testing.

### Access to PPE over time



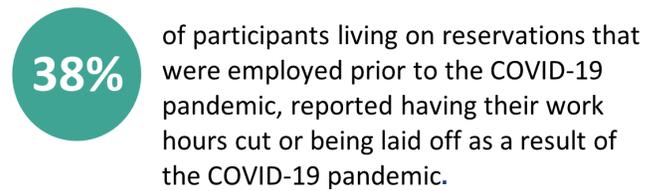
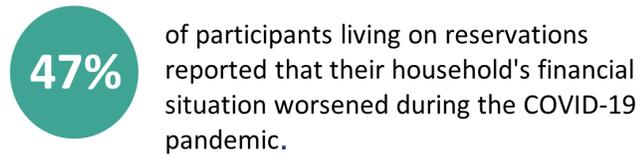
Prior to receiving CARES Act funding, 30% of people living on reservations did not have adequate access to PPE. In early July the trend began to decrease, suggesting that people living in reservation communities had better access to PPE once CARES Act funding became available. Despite this downward trend, overall, reservation communities were more likely to report that they did not have access to PPE.

## COVID-19 Symptoms, Diagnoses and Deaths

**4%** of participants living on reservations experienced prolonged symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and/or were diagnosed with COVID-19.

**15%** of participants living on reservations reported that someone in their family or immediate circle passed away due to COVID-19.

## Finances and Employment



## Wellbeing

Percent of participants living on reservations who reported that, in the last month, they experienced negative feelings fairly often or very often



# RURAL AREAS

## 9% OF PARTICIPANTS LIVE IN RURAL AREAS

Similar to reservation communities, rural communities were also negatively affected throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Rural communities were more likely to report that they did not have adequate access to PPE. Additionally, participants living in rural communities with COVID-19 symptoms or diagnosis were more likely to report that they could not access COVID-19 testing.

### Access to PPE & COVID-19 testing

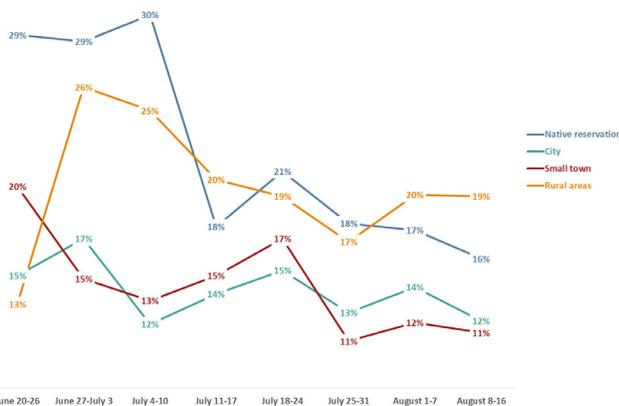
19%

of participants living in rural areas reported that they did *not* have adequate access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

71%

of participants living in rural areas with COVID-19 symptoms and/or diagnosis could not access testing.

### Access to PPE over time



The extent to which participants living in rural areas reported that they did not have access to PPE decreased over time. Specifically, after reaching a peak in early July at 26%, the trend began to decrease. However, the trend slightly increased again at the beginning of August. In addition, compared to those living in cities and small towns, participants living in rural areas were more likely to report that they did not have adequate access to PPE.

## COVID-19 Symptoms, Diagnoses and Deaths

8%

of participants living in rural areas experienced prolonged symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and/or were diagnosed with COVID-19.

9%

of participants living in rural areas reported that someone in their family or immediate circle passed away due to COVID-19.

## Finances and Employment

**47%** of participants living in rural areas reported that their household's financial situation worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**40%** of participants living in rural areas that were employed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, reported having their work hours cut or being laid off as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Wellbeing

Percent of participants who live in rural areas reported that, in the last month, they experienced negative feelings fairly often or very often

**25% feel Depressed**

**45% feel Frustrated**

**55% feel Stressed**

# GENDER DIFFERENCES

## 4% OF PARTICIPANTS IDENTIFIED AS TRANSGENDER, NON-BINARY, GENDERQUEER OR GENDER NON-CONFORMING

The majority of participants identified as women or men, and 4% identified with another gender identity. In this section we will zoom in on the experiences of people who identify with another gender identity. Of the 4% that identified with another gender identity, there were people who identified as Transgender, Non-Binary, Genderqueer, Gender non-conforming, Two Spirit or with more than one gender identity.

### Access to PPE & COVID-19 testing

20%

of participants who identify as Trans, Non-Binary, Genderqueer or Gender non-conforming reported that they did *not* have adequate access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

82%

of participants who identify as Trans, Non-Binary, Genderqueer or Gender non-conforming with COVID-19 symptoms and/or diagnosis could not access testing.

### COVID-19 Symptoms, Diagnoses and Deaths

10%

of participants who identify as Trans, Non-Binary, Genderqueer or Gender non-conforming experienced prolonged symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and/or were diagnosed with COVID-19.

13%

of participants who identify as Trans, Non-Binary, Genderqueer or Gender non-conforming reported that someone in their family or immediate circle passed away due to COVID-19.

## Finances and Employment

**60%** of participants who identify as Trans, Non-Binary, Genderqueer or Gender non-conforming reported that their household's financial situation worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**50%** of participants who identify as Trans, Non-Binary, Genderqueer or Gender non-conforming that were employed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, reported having their work hours cut or being laid off as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Wellbeing

Percent of participants who live in rural areas reported that, in the last month, they experienced negative feelings fairly often or very often

**57% feel Depressed**

**78% feel Frustrated**

**81% feel Stressed**

# COLLEGE STUDENTS

## 21% OF PARTICIPANTS WERE IN COLLEGE AT THE TIME OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Indigenous college students are in a unique position as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of our study reveal similar outcomes for college students' access to PPE and testing, as well as COVID-19 symptoms, diagnoses, and deaths compared to the overall sample. Indigenous youth employment has been significantly, negatively impacted by the pandemic, and they are reporting high rates of negative psychological outcomes.

### Access to PPE & COVID-19 testing

15%

of college students reported that they did *not* have adequate access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

40%

of college students with COVID-19 symptoms and/or diagnosis could not access testing .

### COVID-19 Symptoms, Diagnoses and Deaths

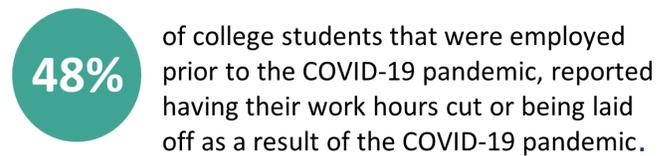
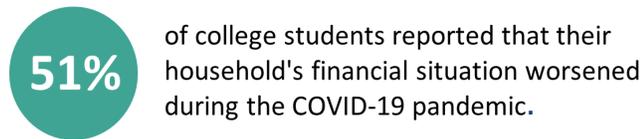
6%

of college students experienced prolonged symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and/or were diagnosed with COVID-19.

13%

of college students reported that someone in their family or immediate circle passed away due to COVID-19.

## Finances and Employment



## Wellbeing

Percent of participants who live in rural areas reported that, in the last month, they experienced negative feelings fairly often or very often

**40% feel Depressed**

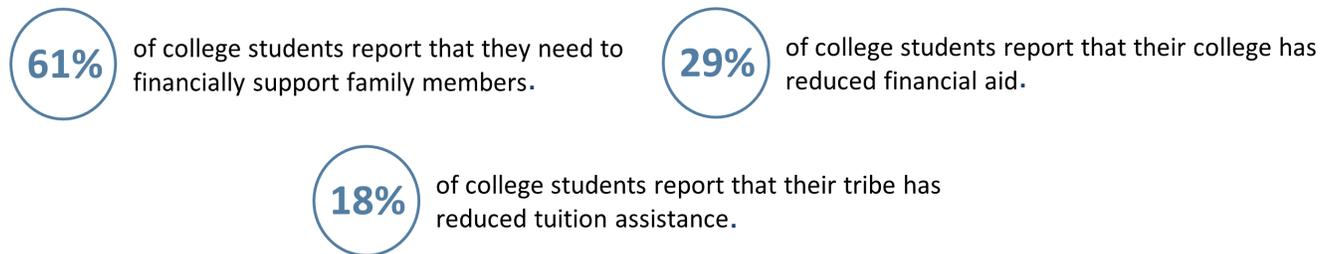
**64% feel Frustrated**

**74% feel Stressed**

# COVID-19 IMPACT ON FALL 2020 COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

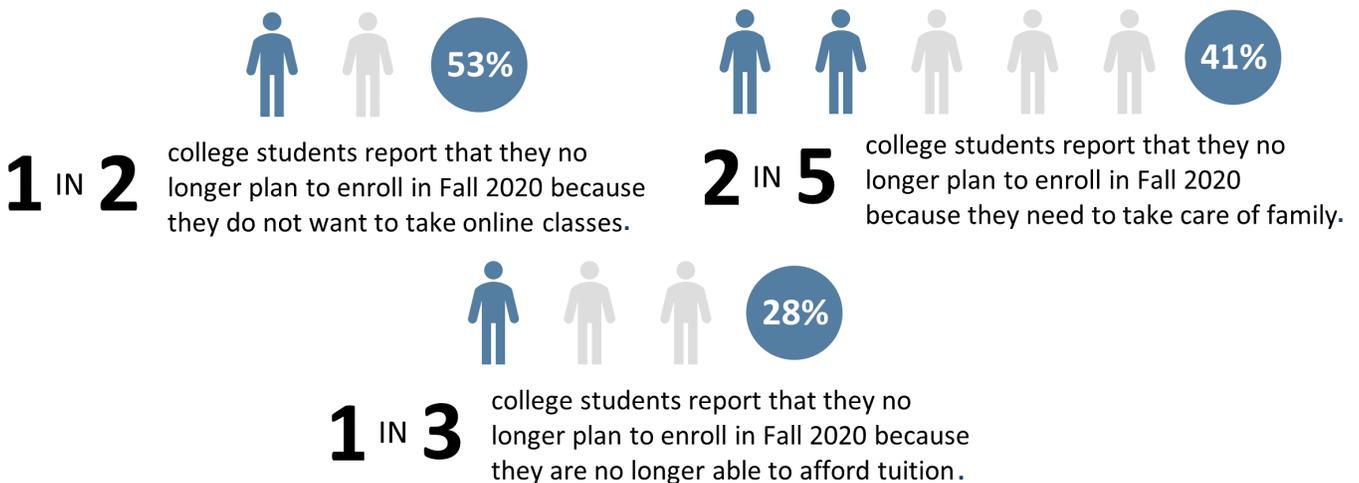
**70% OF PARTICIPANTS WERE IN COLLEGE REPORTED THEY STILL PLAN TO ENROLL IN COLLEGE IN FALL 2020 DESPITE COVID-19**

## Top 3 issues affecting Indigenous college students



**12% OF PARTICIPANTS IN COLLEGE REPORTED THAT THEY NO LONGER PLAN TO ENROLL IN FALL 2020**

## Top 3 reasons for not enrolling in Fall 2020





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