

WITH THE HELP OF
UNITED WAY OF BERKS
COUNTY AND PENN
STATE REACH TEAM

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OAKBROOK COMMUNITY NEEDS SURVEY REPORT, 2020

**2020
 REPORT**

THE SURVEY: PURPOSE AND METHOD

The 46-question anonymous survey was designed by a collaborative team of Berks County. Survey respondents could share name, address, and/or telephone number, if interested in being part of a follow-up focus group or being contacted by a partner agency.

The survey, completed by the Head of Household, covered four high-level categories:

- **Demographics** – Questions included highest level of education completed and primary language spoken in the home.
- **Child Focused** – Respondents were asked about the overall number of children, their respective ages, as well as literacy and activity questions.
- **Food, Safety, and Health** – In addition to neighborhood safety questions, respondents were asked to complete a two-question standardized screener about their access to food and ability to purchase food as needed.
- **Transportation, Community, and Technology** – Respondents were asked to share information related to their community network connectedness, as well as internet access and library usage.

COVID-19

During the first Oakbrook Speaks survey in 2017, community volunteers were trained to administer the survey in-person and with Oakbrook residents to conduct the survey in both English and Spanish. With social distancing measures in place to help keep everyone safe and healthy amid the COVID-19 pandemic, new contactless channels were used to administer and promote the survey in 2020.

SURVEY SNAPSHOT

The 10-12 minute survey was available in English and Spanish. Participants completed the survey online, on paper, or over the phone. Contactless, bilingual survey outreach materials included 524 postcards, 4 banners in the Oakbrook Community, posters in 30 neighborhood locations, posts on 2 neighborhood Facebook pages, and text and email to 100+ residents who had opted in to being directly contacted. The survey was available to residents over a 5 ½ -week period, with results recorded electronically.

Heads of households who completed the survey received a \$10 gift card. A total of 55 (10.5%) residents participated in the survey, compared to 201 respondents in 2017. 69% of responses were in English and 31% were in Spanish.

THE REPORT

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic ushered in unprecedented times. Uncertainty around the new virus and living in a remote environment impacted families and communities in many ways. Innovative thinking and flexibility centered this initiative, and we are grateful to the collaborative effort resulting in this report of existing conditions.

The core goals of the survey remain centered on summarizing the count of household responses to many questions as well as presenting a graphical summary. The report aims to contextualize the data results by looking, where possible, at local and national data and information, and comparing, where appropriate, to 2017 baseline survey findings.

This report is continuing efforts to identify and understand opportunities, threats, and needs of Oakbrook residents. Our hope is to continue building a space to provide collective guidance for impact initiatives in Oakbrook. Of those surveyed, 53% indicated that they would be amenable to a partner organization contacting them about the family's identified needs.

This follow-up measure is possible only with a diverse and committed team. We appreciate the Oakbrook residents, trust and time in sharing personal information.

Special thanks to our Resident Ambassadors and Oakbrook Collective Impact Council members for working with the community. We look forward to ongoing collaboration with you.

AREA DEMOGRAPHICS

A similar distribution was seen in age, gender, ethnicity, and employment between the Heads of Households who completed the 2017 & 2020 surveys. Key differences in 2020 include fewer respondents noting Spanish as the primary language spoken at home (61% in 2017, 38% in 2020) and more respondents having obtained a high school diploma/GED (38% in 2017, 53% in 2020). These differences are likely attributed to the digital divide (the gap between those with ready access to computers and the internet) during the COVID-19 pandemic, as the survey was administered electronically this year.

THE SURVEY: BY THE NUMBERS

- 55 Head of Household residents participated in the survey. They had an option to skip questions.
- 96% of respondents were female
- 38% noted Spanish as their primary language in the home

HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD AGE DISTRIBUTION

| | 2017 | 2020 |
|-----------------|------|------|
| 18 to 24 | 3% | 2% |
| 25 to 34 | 28% | 24% |
| 35 to 44 | 25% | 27% |
| 45 to 54 | 20% | 18% |
| 55 to 64 | 10% | 22% |
| 65 + | 14% | 5% |

2019/2020 HISPANIC/LATINO SNAPSHOT

| | 2017 Oakbrook Survey | 2020 Oakbrook Survey | 2019, Berks County | 2019, PA | 2019, U.S. |
|------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------|------------|
| Hispanic/Latino | 91% | 71% | 21% | 7.8% | 18% |

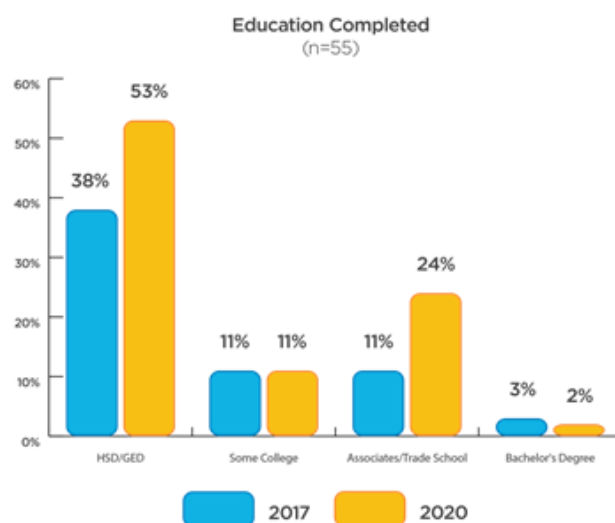
2019 U.S. Census, American Community Survey

The *Reading Eagle* reported on July 5, 2019 that the U.S. Census Bureau estimates that between 2010 and 2018 the Latino population in Berks County increased 42%.

2020 County Health Rankings show that of the 17% of children living in poverty in Berks County, 40% are Hispanic.

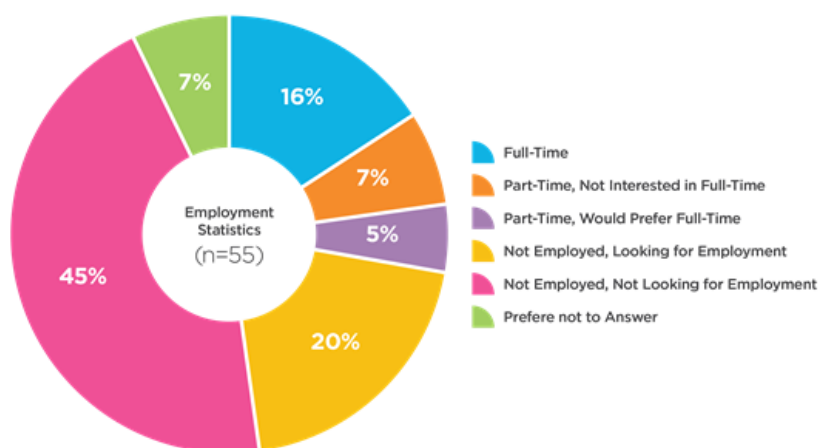
EDUCATION STATISTICS

Half (53%) of the Head of Household respondents attained their High School Diploma or GED, compared to 38% in 2017. A second question was asked to determine if all other adults in the home have their High School Diploma or GED. Of the 55 respondents, 40% responded yes.



EMPLOYMENT STATUS

There was no significant change in employment status between the 2017 & 2020 surveys. One in five (20%) Head of Household respondents are unemployed and looking for work.



| 2020 Education Snapshot | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|
| Indicator | Oakbrook Survey | Berks County | Pennsylvania |
| High School Graduation | 53% | 87% | 87% |
| Some College | 11% | 58% | 65% |
| Unemployment | n/a* | 4.2% | 4.3% |

*Note: Unemployment calculations use data not collected in survey

<https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/pennsylvania/2020/rankings/berks/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot>

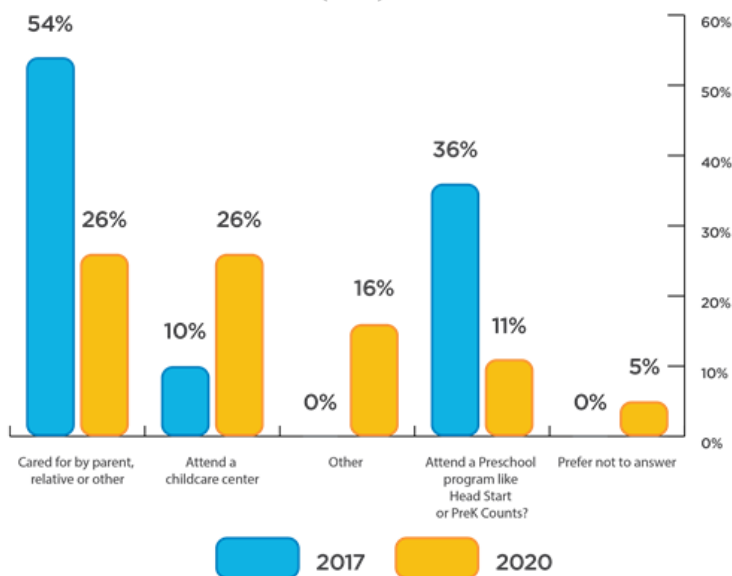
CHILD FOCUSED INFORMATION

At the time of the survey, 800 children across 524 households lived in the Oakbrook community (1.5 children per household). In the survey, 33 of the 55 households reported having children under the age of 18 in the home. The 33 households that responded had a total of 83 children, an average of 2.6 children per household.

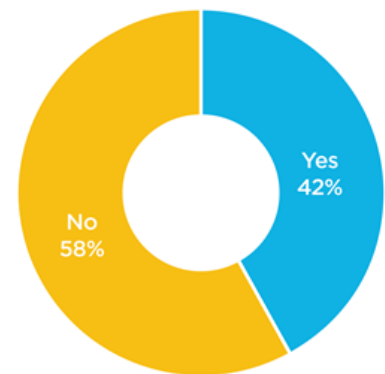
According to the United States Department of Agriculture's Expenditures on Children by Families 2015 Report, annual child-rearing expenses vary by household income level and generally increase with age of the child. For a child in a two-child, married-couple family with before-tax income less than \$59,200, annual expenses ranged from \$9,330 to \$9,980 (depending on the age of the child). Child-rearing expenses of single-parent households were about the same as those of married-couple households in the same income group. The two largest expenses are housing (33%) and food (20%) for a child in the lowest income group.

In addition to asking how many children are in the home, the head of household was asked if the child is a member of the Olivet Boys and Girls Club or if he/she participates in youth programming at the YMCA, Reading Rec, Youth Connect, or Books for Bikes. One-third (36%) had a child(ren) participating in these programs. During the COVID-19 pandemic, most youth programs in the survey were able to continue to provide service in some capacity, and the Berks County Early Intervention (birth to three and three to five) went virtual.

Does your child (0-5)
(n=33)



Are your children receiving any intervention services
(speech or physical therapist / teacher at home, at school, or another location?)
(n=33)

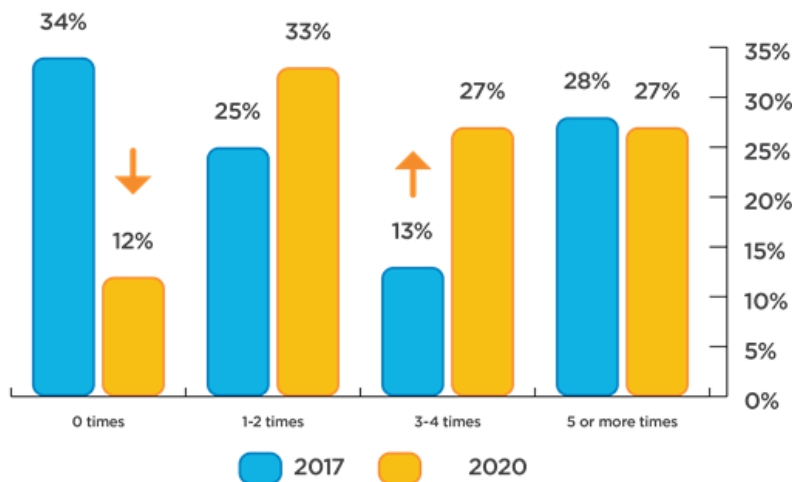


According to The Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL), one way to help children reach their potential and succeed is through quality early care and education. Such opportunities are especially important for children affected by risk factors, such as living in a low-income household or having a mother with less than a high school education. When these children have access to quality early care and education before age five, they can often make up for setbacks in their lives, enabling them to enter kindergarten on par with their peers.

Children who are encouraged and supported through high-quality early care and education demonstrated significant progress in acquiring early learning skills, which can save money in special education and remediation costs. These children are also more likely to graduate from high school, to attend postsecondary education or quality job training programs, and be valuable members of the workforce. The benefits of quality early care and education to children and families translate into a more competitive workforce and greater tax base, while reducing public expenses in special education costs, public assistance, and crime control.

CHILD FOCUSED INFORMATION

In the past week,
how many times did you read to/with your children?
(n=33)



A study by the Annie E. Casey Foundation found children who do not read proficiently by the end of third grade are four times more likely to leave school without a diploma than proficient readers.

Black and Hispanic children who are not reading proficiently in third grade are twice as likely as similar white children to not graduate from high school (about 25% v. 13%). New research continues to quantify and reinforce the correlations between poverty, failure to read proficiently, and failure to graduate from high school.

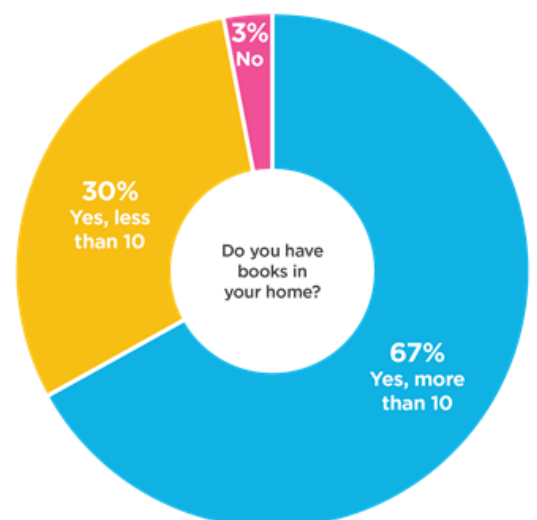
Research shows that children who hear and are exposed to more and richer language are given the best chances to succeed academically and develop better language skills (*Fernald, Marchman, & Weisleder, 2013*).

Sharing books and reading aloud to young children is not only one of the best activities to stimulate language and cognitive skills, it also builds motivation, curiosity, and memory (*Bardige, 2009*).

An area of directional growth in 2020 is children's literacy. The number of households reporting that they had not read to their children during the last week significantly declined, with more households saying that the family reads together 1-2 or 3-4 times a week. Nearly all participating households have books in the home (97%) and are reading to their children weekly (88%).

Another area of development is more families reporting having a child that participated in the Ready.Set.Read! program (18% in 2017, 24% in 2020), and fewer heads of households saying they were unfamiliar with the community initiative (64% in 2017, 55% in 2020). Nearly one-third (30%) of families reported having a child participate in an educational summer program, like Books for Bikes.

With support from our partners, Books for Bikes operated virtually during the summer of 2020 and 17 children earned bikes. Thank you to Berks Community Health Center, Customers Bank, Reading Housing Authority, Reading School District, and Reading Truck Body.



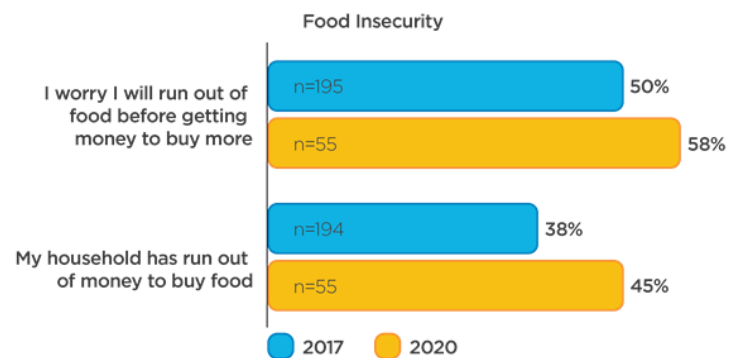
FOOD ISSUES

Food insecurity refers to USDA's measure of lack of access, at times, to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members and limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods. Food-insecure households are not necessarily food insecure all the time, and it may mean that a household needs to make trade-offs between important basic needs, such as medical bills, and purchasing nutritionally adequate foods.

In 2018, 14.3 million U.S. households were food insecure with limited or uncertain access to enough food. Households with children are more likely to experience food insecurity, and before the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 10 million children lived in food-insecure households. Due to the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, more than 50 million people may experience food insecurity, including a potential 17 million children.

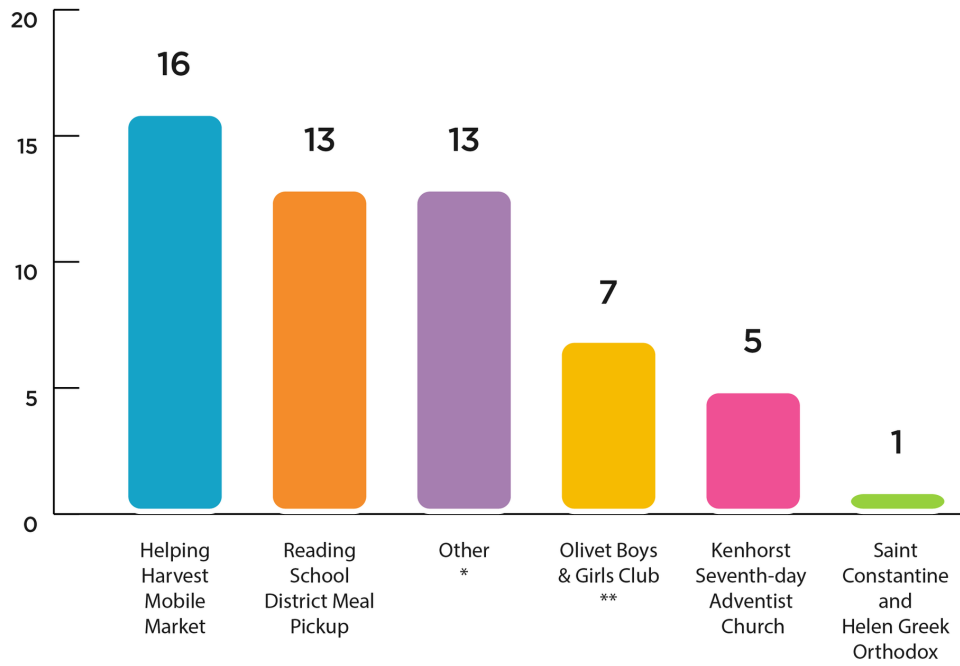
Note: EXCERPT FROM Feeding America, Hunger in America 2021

In 2020, food insecurity metrics showed a directionally higher number of families experiencing food issues. Heads of households identified key barriers that have stopped their family from buying the food they need: cost of food (47%), transportation (36%), distance to store (27%), and rent (22%). A similar number of families are receiving food stamps (88% in 2017, 87% in 2020) and WIC (25% in 2017, 16% in 2020). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Reading School District Meal Pick-Up expanded from a summer meal pick-up program to a year-round program.



FOOD ISSUES

Community Food Resources—Number of Families Who Have Accessed, Last 6 Months



**Note: "Other" resources were a variety of area English and Spanish-speaking churches*

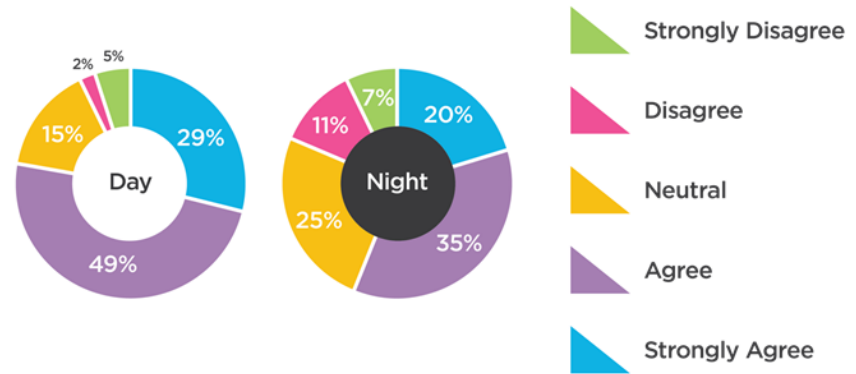
***Note: Due to a survey programming error, "Olivet Boys & Girls Club" was not shown to respondents taking the survey in Spanish*



A trend that continued in 2020 is families indicating they feel less safe at night, an issue identified in the 2017 survey. Overall, 78% reported feeling safe during the day and 55% reported feeling safe at night. Residents were asked to note if there are concerns with 11 different community issues, with the following key areas identified: condition of the houses (20%), speeding (16%), drug sale (15%), drug use (15%), and park safety (15%). "Other" responses included parking and loud music in the community. Outside of home condition, the top concerns mirrored 2017 findings.

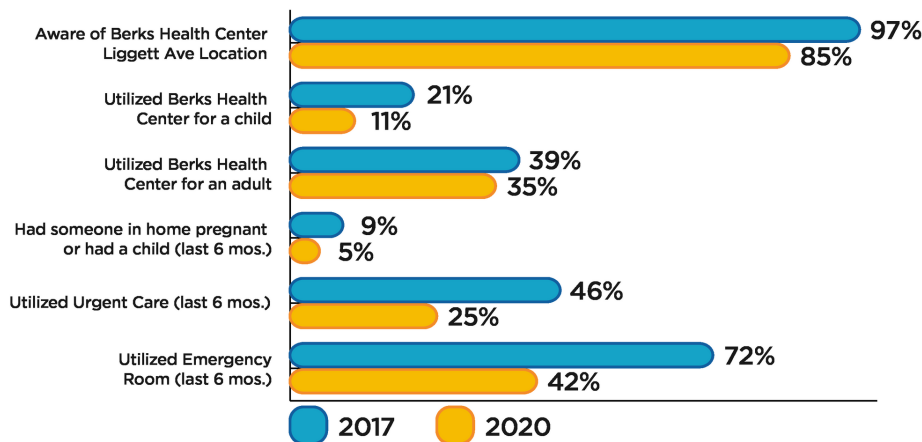
SAFETY ISSUES

"I feel safe in my neighborhood"
(n=55)



HEALTH ISSUES

Health Related Responses at a Glance



84% of respondents report going to the same doctor's office for all their healthcare needs, similar to 2017 (94%).

COVID-19 and Health Care Utilization

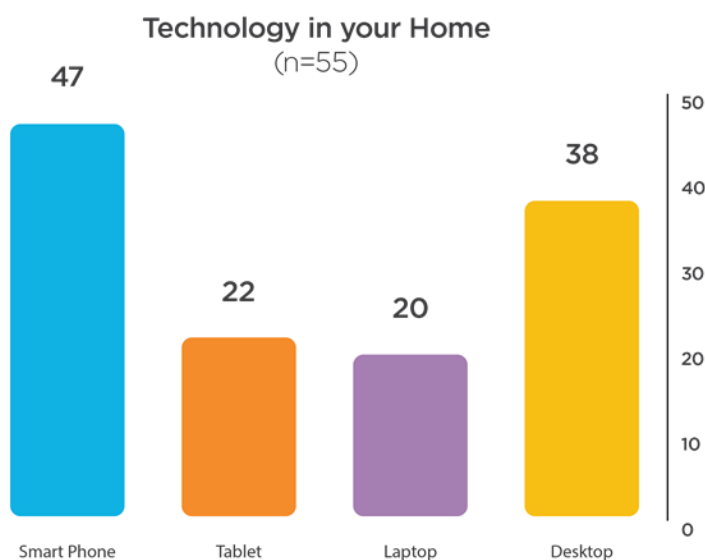
The CDC reported Emergency Room visits declined 42% during the early months (March/April) of the pandemic. By June 30, 2020, the CDC found that due to concerns about COVID-19, 41% of U.S. adults had delayed or avoided medical care, including urgent or emergency care. Avoidance of urgent or emergency care was more prevalent among key groups, including people with underlying conditions, Black and Hispanic adults, and young adults.

June 12, 2020 & September 11, 2020 CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Reports (MMWR)

TECHNOLOGY & COMMUNITY

Respondents were asked about 211 and the BARTA bus system. One-quarter of respondents were familiar with 211, and calling 211 is the most utilized contact method (56%); no respondents reported utilizing the 211 website, and no respondents taking the survey in Spanish indicated awareness of 211. A majority of respondents (76%) reported knowing where the BARTA bus stop was located. Half of respondents (49%) say they access the library to borrow items (35%), use computers (33%), and participate in programs (24%).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, 42% of respondents reported feeling connected to other members of the Oakbrook community, and 53% want to be involved in the decisions of their community. Just under half of respondents (44%) are aware of OCIC and one in five (18%) report attending all the OCIC meetings.



NEXT STEPS

We are thankful and greatly appreciate all the information and input provided by the Oakbrook residents via the 2020 Neighborhood Survey during an extraordinarily difficult year. The input from residents will provide direction and inform our collective next steps as we work to better understand and address issues raised in the quantitative survey.

Following the sharing of the report, OCIC and the Penn State REACH team will:

- Plan community engagement studios to follow-up with residents in a qualitative setting in Summer 2021.
- Engagement studios are virtual focus groups of up to 15 residents. Separate English/Spanish sessions will be held.
- Topics of focus will be the effects of COVID-19 and other community issues.
- Respondents will receive an honoraria for their time.
- The larger, long-term goal is to conduct another in-person, door-to-door, community survey in 2022, pending the status of the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing guidelines.