



NEEDS ASSESSMENT

**RAP ARRIVALS
JAN 2019 – MAR 2020**

ISSofBC



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INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 has brought considerable changes to immigrant and refugee services, resulting in increased potential for vulnerable clients to fall through the cracks. Government Assisted Refugees within their first year in Canada are a group of significant concern.

The temporary suspension of arrivals allowed ISSofBC Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) staff to reach out to clients who had arrived in the last 15 months in order to:

- Identify any outstanding needs,
- Ensure clients have received all identification and supports applied for in the first year,
- Assess access to technology that may be required with the shift to remote services,
- Determine if clients have completed – or require help in completing – 2019 tax returns,
- Explore which social media – if any – are used to keep in contact with friends and family during social distancing,
- Ascertain extent to which households are familiar with different aspects of COVID-19 and public health response,
- Understand settlement, language, or community supports currently being accessed or needed by clients,
- Identify most pressing concern, as well as concerns about other family, and
- Enquire if clients are interested in receiving informational updates through newcomer.info text messaging system.

Clients were contacted between March 25, 2020 to May 28, 2020. Although the majority of individuals were reached by phone (94%), email (4%), text (2%), WhatsApp (1%) were other means of communication.

1. CLIENT PROFILE

ISSofBC welcomed 447 family units / 1020 individual government assisted refugees from January 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020 through direct destining and self-transfers.

ISSofBC RAP staff have conducted needs assessments with 420 family units, encompassing 949 individuals. This represents 94% of the family units and 93% of the individuals who arrived from January 2019 – March 2020. The remaining GARs have either self-transferred out of the province (5% family units, 7% individuals) or were unable / unwilling to complete the survey. Respondents include both those destined directly to ISSofBC or its sub-contractors, as well as those who self-transferred to Vancouver.

- **Country of origin:**

- 5 of the 22 countries of origin accounted for 82% of respondents – Syria (33%), Iran (17%), Iraq (13%), Somalia (12%), and Sudan (7%).

- **Languages spoken:**

- Of the 19 mother tongues identified, 5 languages accounted for 89% – Arabic (54%), Farsi (17%), Somali (12%), Dari and Tigrinya (3% each).
- 15 households indicated English, French, or a combination thereof are languages spoken in their homes as either a primary or secondary language

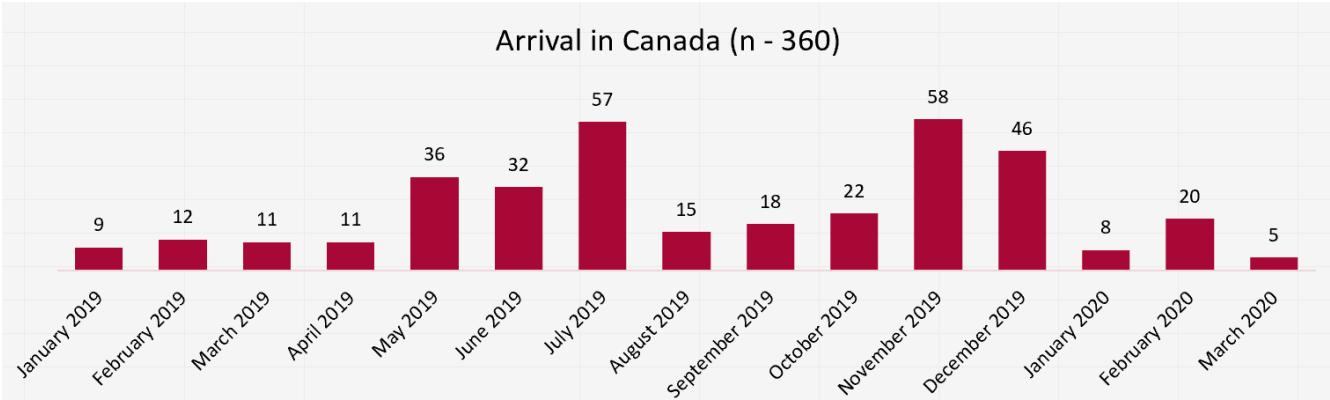
- **Household sizes**

- In some cases, responses encompassed multiple IRCC family units (e.g., adult children)
- Household sizes of individual responses ranged from single individuals to 10 people. Over half were completed on an individual basis (52%); 90% were households of 1 – 5 people.

Needs Assessment – RAP Arrivals (Jan 2019 – Mar 2020)

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- **Arrival in Canada¹**



¹ In some cases, individual responses encompassed multiple family units. The number of responses to each question is shown in brackets (n -).

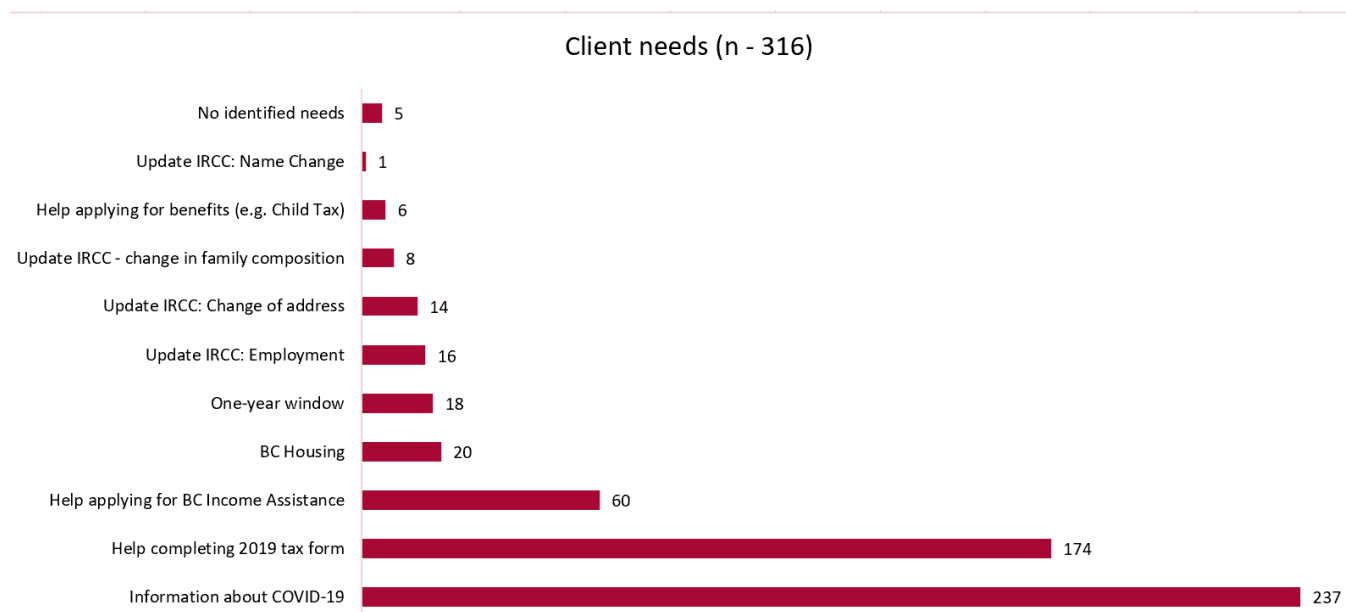
2. NEEDS AND SERVICES ACCESSED

Respondents were asked a series of questions to better understand their current situation, as well as what services have been required or are needed. Questions centred upon:

- current needs,
- identification and benefits,
- if they have filed their 2019 income tax return, and
- current supports and services being accessed

• Current needs

- Information about COVID-19 (237), help completing the 2019 income tax form (174), and help applying for BC Income Assistance (60) were the top three needs identified (n – 316, multiple responses possible).
- It is important to note staff report that while information about COVID-19 was the most frequently cited need, respondents demonstrated a high level of information about COVID-19. In many cases, the desire was for **more** information, particularly regarding **when** things may return to normal, as well as what supports are available.

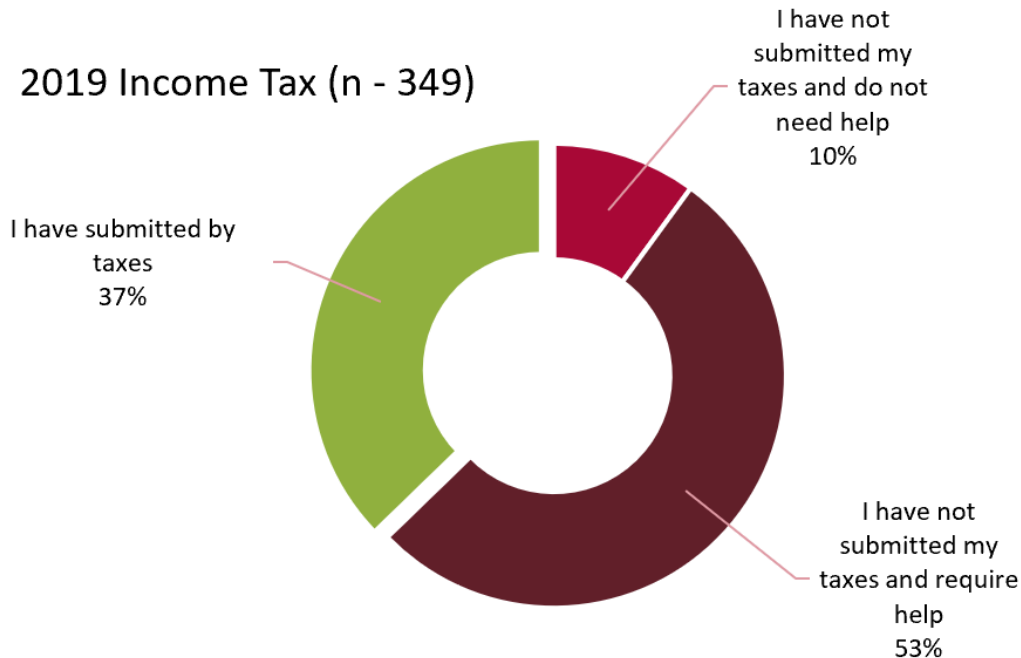


- **Identification and benefits**

- Most respondents have received the identification (e.g., Social Insurance, Permanent Resident, BC Medical Cards), benefits (e.g., GST Rebate, Child Tax Benefit, Leisure Access Card) and T5 form for which they are eligible. Case Managers followed up either with their settlement worker or the appropriate agency where gaps were identified.

- **2019 Income Taxes**

- Eligibility for many government benefits (e.g., GST Rebate, Child Tax Benefits) is dependent on information submitted as part of the annual income tax return. At the time of the assessment, almost two-thirds of respondents had not yet filed their 2019 income taxes.
- Over half of all respondents indicated they will need assistance to file their taxes.
- In response, ISSofBC is expanding our community based income tax clinics targeting government assisted refugees in order to ensure they do not miss out on key supports outlined above, as well as targeted COVID-19 resources for which they may be eligible.
- In some communities, individuals have accessed low- cost tax services through individuals or free clinics offered by agencies in the local area.

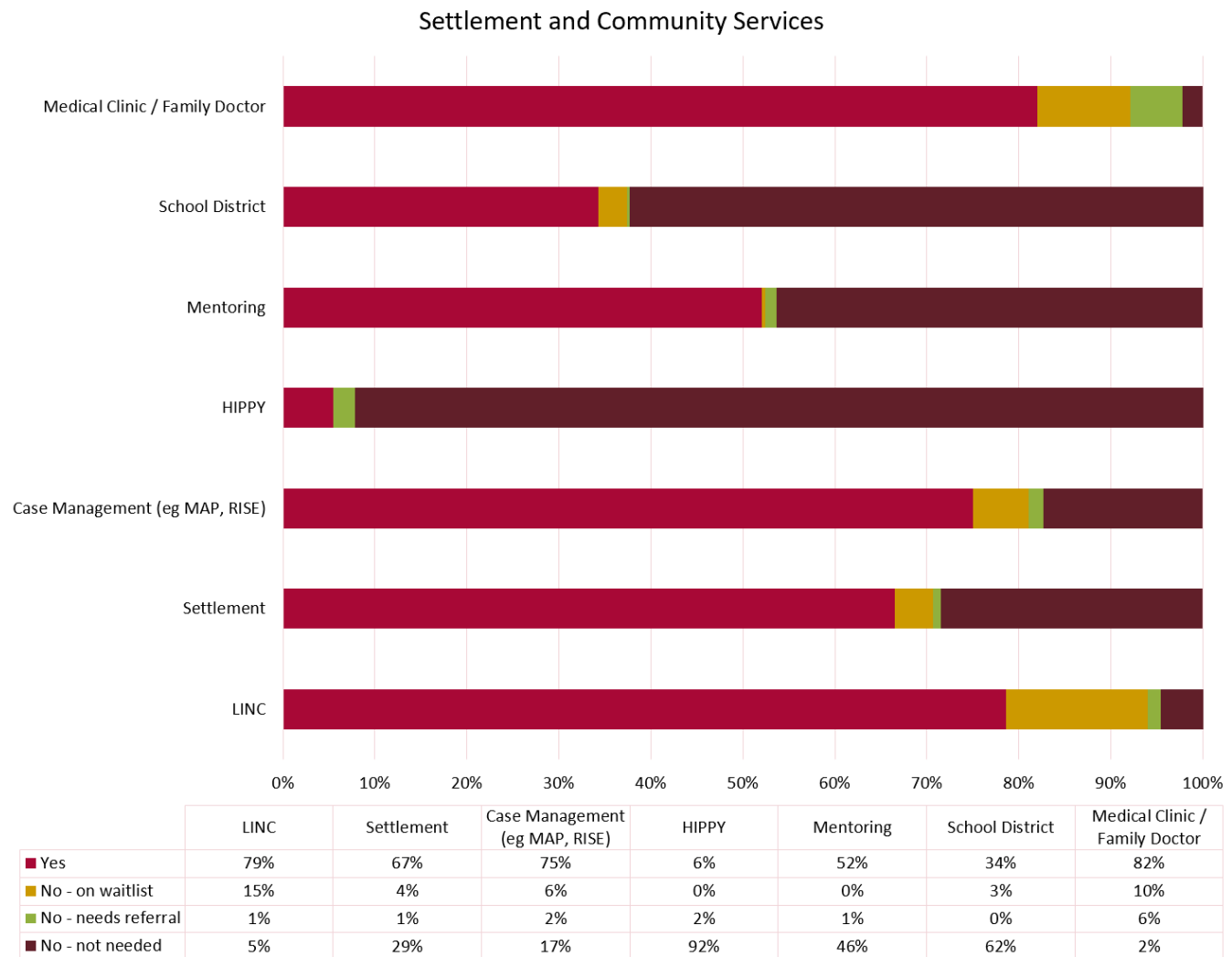


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• Settlement and Community Services

- Overall, clients report having been able to access the services required. LINC (15%) and medical services (10%) have the highest percentage of clients on waitlists. Where a need for referrals has been identified, appropriate actions have been taken.



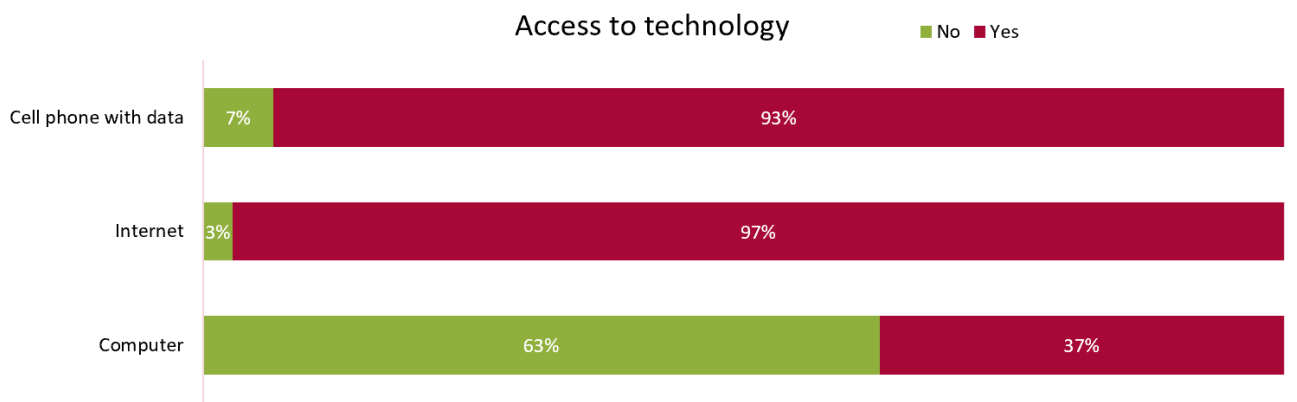
- Respondents are currently being case managed or supported by over 15 immigrant and settlement serving agencies, including ISSofBC (48%), Options Community Resources Society (28%), DIVERSEcity Community Resources Society (12%), SUCCESS (5%), and MOSAIC (2%).

3. TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL MEDIA

The temporary suspension of office-based services owing to COVID-19 has made access to technology more important than ever. In the absence of technology clients' ability to access services may be greatly constrained.

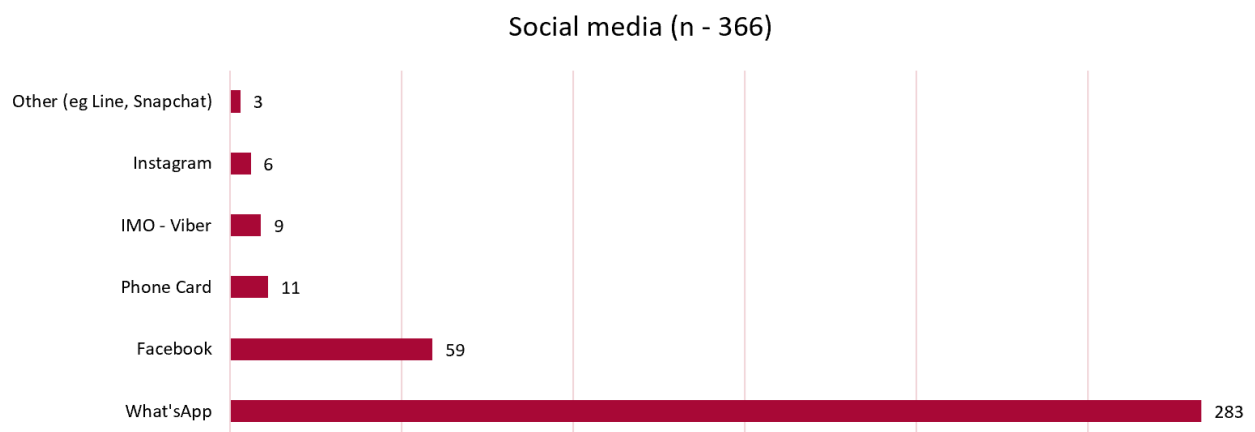
- **Technology**

- Although 93% of respondents have access to a cell phone with data and 97% have internet, only 37% have a computer at home. The lack of computer access is concerning given remote service delivery in education and settlement services.



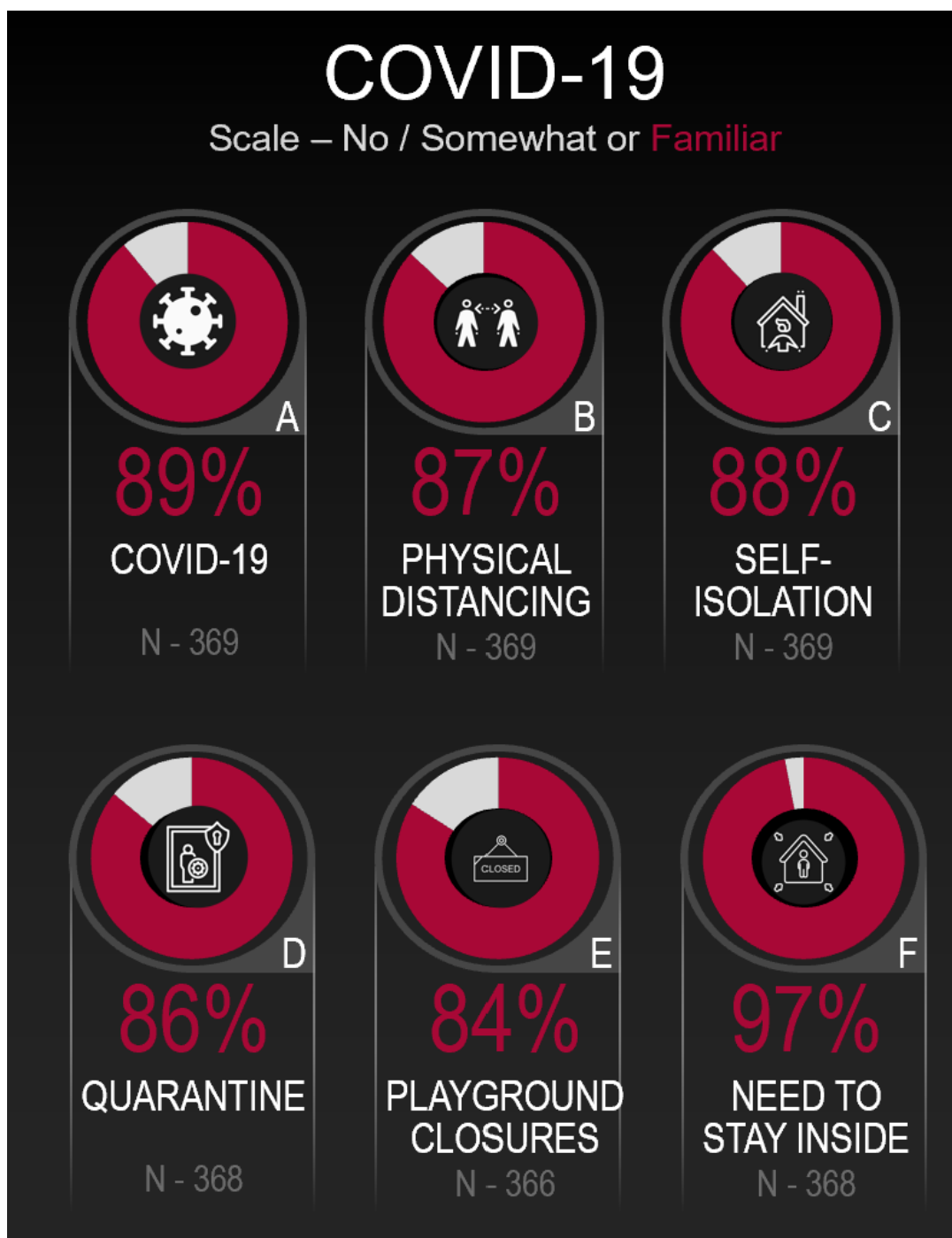
- **Social media**

- WhatsApp (n - 283) is by far the most popular social media used in maintaining contact with friends and family in Canada and abroad.



4. COVID-19

Respondents were asked a series of questions to ascertain their level of awareness related to COVID-19. Overall, clients demonstrated a very high-level degree of familiarity with issues related to COVID-19.



5. MOST PRESSING CONCERNS

Respondents were asked to identify their most pressing concerns using an open-ended format. Answers were analyzed and coded into 14 categories. Given the approach it was possible for individuals to identify multiple pressing needs. Forty-three percent of respondents indicated they do not have any pressing concerns at this time.

Key concerns identified included:

- **COVID-19**
 - General anxiety about the spread of COVID-19, as well as the long-term impact (94) was the most frequently identified concern overall.
 - Other COVID-19 related concerns were associated with challenges in obtaining / maintaining employment (25), service closures (e.g., LINC, Settlement, Medical services, and schools) (23), isolation (5), and lack of technology necessary to access remote services (5).
 - Concerns about the closure of critical supports including local food banks, as well as lack of knowledge to support children in using loaned computers for school provide insights on additional challenges.
- **Employment, housing, and income security**
 - High rents and low levels of income were of concern (42), as was housing search and access to subsidized housing (15), and employment (13). In some cases, people related English language proficiency (15) concerns to economic situation.
- **Other**
 - Health concerns and chronic health issues (17) were cited, as was concerns related to family breakdown and reunification (15).
 - 5 individuals indicated missing ID (e.g., Social Insurance, Permanent Resident, and BC Medical Cards) as their most pressing concern at this time.

Sixty-three respondents identified concerns related to other family members. The health / safety of family inside Canada (31) and outside Canada (20) were by far the most frequently cited concerns. Others related to the impact of COVID-19 (7), income security, lack of technology, and family separation. Government office closures create additional concerns for families awaiting reunification through one-year window.