

2020 SNAPSHOT



# A LOOK AT LINN COUNTY'S HISPANIC COMMUNITY

Shedding light on a vital population

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**PREPARED BY**

Rural Development Initiatives

**WITH GENEROUS SUPPORT FROM**

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## Introduction

As RDI continues its mission to create vital rural communities for the people who live within them, the organization has found common challenges across the Pacific Northwest. Broad economic and societal trends have created additional economic and ecological stress, and many communities are poorly equipped to deal with these challenges. Low population and geographic isolation make dealing with these problems even more difficult. However, unlike other rural parts of the country, few communities in Oregon have experienced significant population decline. In large part, the stability and growth of these communities is due to the influx of new residents, particularly those of Hispanic ethnicity.

The Hispanic population continues to grow in Oregon at above the national rate, and has grown by 72% since 2000. Without any recruitment efforts or incentives, many Hispanic people are choosing to live in rural communities. This is a trajectory shift that reverses decades of rural flight, defined by the persistent loss of rural population, rural talent, and rural families. This shift provides a viable opportunity to resuscitate economies in many of Oregon's rural communities, but that is dependent upon robust and inclusive efforts to build socially and culturally responsive supports.

This report seeks to highlight the Hispanic population of Linn County, its presence across every community in the County, as well as the impact of Hispanic residents on the local economy. This report addresses the challenges that this community faces, as well as the services that are available to Hispanic residents. Our hope is that with this report, the leadership of communities in Linn County will be able to more clearly understand the gaps in resources available to the Hispanic population. We are striving to begin a conversation about how community leaders can engage with the Hispanic community and existing resource providers to create a better integrated and supported community at large.

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***“More equitable opportunities are needed, be more culturally sensitive and aware. Leaders and those of power listen but more action is needed to make changes that are needed for all our communities to thrive and grow.” ~ Survey Respondent Jaime Sarabia***

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### Approximately 1 in 10 Linn County Residents Are Hispanic




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***“Latino parents are connected to their children’s schools; these are places where they feel safe and welcome.” ~ Interviewee Maria Morales***

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## Linn County's Largest Minority Group

**Hispanics form the largest minority group in Linn County, representing 9.3% of the population and 11,842 residents.** From Census data, we know that the number of Hispanic<sup>1</sup> residents in Linn County is growing. This growth is not confined to the larger cities, instead, communities across Linn County are experiencing this growth. Albany, the county's urban center, is the center of this growth and has the largest sized community of Hispanic residents, with over 5,300 Hispanic residents. However, Albany does not have the largest proportion of Hispanic residents amongst Linn County communities. That title is held by Mill City, with 12.5% of the population identifying as Hispanic.

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**ALTHOUGH OFTEN UNSEEN,  
THIS POPULATION REPRESENTS:**




**COMMUNITY MEMBERS**

Hispanic residents of Linn County are a growing part of the community. However, living and working in Linn County as a Hispanic resident is not without its challenges.


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**FAMILIES**

Every city in Linn County contains families of Hispanic residents; currently these people are not represented in local leadership, and often lack proper support.



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**HOUSEHOLDS**

Some resources to assist the Hispanic population are available in Linn and Benton Counties, with services including housing assistance. However, most services are located in Corvallis and Albany and nearly non-existent in rural areas.

<sup>1</sup> RDI is aware that Spanish-speaking populations are often referred to as either Latinx or Hispanic, which defines two different groups with significant overlap. We are using the term Hispanic in this report because the data collected from the U.S. Census Bureau and other sources reference that population.



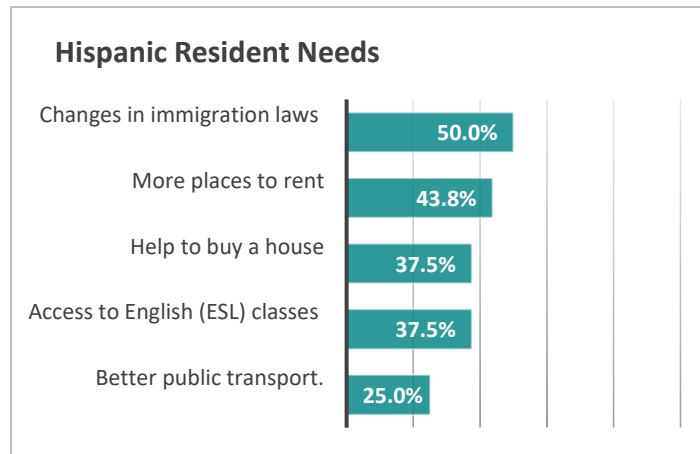
**According to the census, even small towns like Sodaville, Scio, and Waterloo have a community of Hispanic residents.** The table below shows the numbers and proportions of Hispanic residents in each Linn County community. Almost all municipalities are experiencing growth in their Hispanic communities, and while these towns are experiencing population growth as a whole, the Hispanic population is growing faster than overall population. This rate of growth shows that not only are these Hispanic communities a significant part of each town, but their presence will likely be increasing in the future.

Community	2010 Population	2018 Population	% Hispanic 2010	% Hispanic 2018	# Hispanic 2010	# Hispanic 2018
Linn County	116,910	127,335	7.90%	9.30%	9,236	11,842
Rural Linn County	35,663	38,652	6.30%	7.92%	2,247	3,060
Albany	48,560	52,736	11.06%	12.26%	5,373	6,464
Millersburg	1,323	1,646	5.67%	8.81%	75	145
Lebanon	15,072	16,599	6.06%	8.13%	914	1,350
Sweet Home	8,769	9,435	2.60%	4.10%	228	387
Waterloo	235	265	5.53%	5.66%	13	15
Scio	563	766	2.49%	1.31%	14	10
Sodaville	435	481	2.76%	0.42%	12	2
Brownsville	1,789	1,867	3.58%	4.45%	64	83
Tangent	1,091	1,137	7.24%	3.61%	79	41
Halsey	911	919	0.55%	6.20%	5	57
Mill City	1,457	1,691	10.84%	12.54%	158	212
Lyons	1,042	1,141	5.18%	1.40%	54	16

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

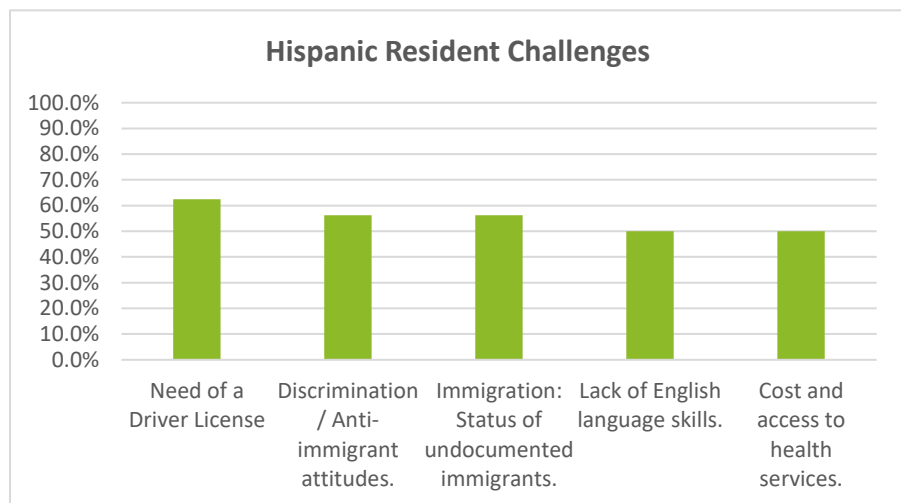


**Hispanic residents of Linn County are a growing part of the community as well as a vital part of the economy.** However, living and working in Linn County as a Hispanic resident is not



without its challenges. Hispanic residents of Linn County were asked about some of the greatest needs of Hispanics in the county. (See graph on left). Over half of all respondents mentioned a need for bilingual and culturally sensitive services, accessible medical services in their language, and the need for more employment opportunities.

These needs match with the challenges that Linn County Hispanic residents mentioned they had experienced living and working in the County. Language challenges, as well as challenges with discrimination and anti-immigrant attitudes were near the top of the list. However, the top challenge was associated with the need for a driver's license.



Rural Hispanics face complex social, economic, and environmental challenges, but do so in geographic isolation; with limited financial, political, and economic resources; fewer people to do the work; rarer models designed to fit their situation; and more confusing or less trusted information sources.



Need for a  
Driver's License



Access to Bilingual and  
Culturally Sensitive  
Services



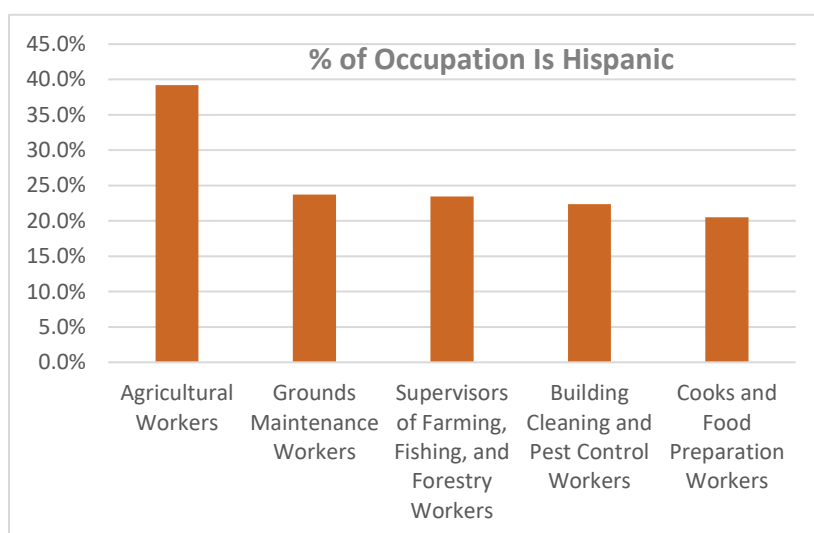
Lack of  
Childcare



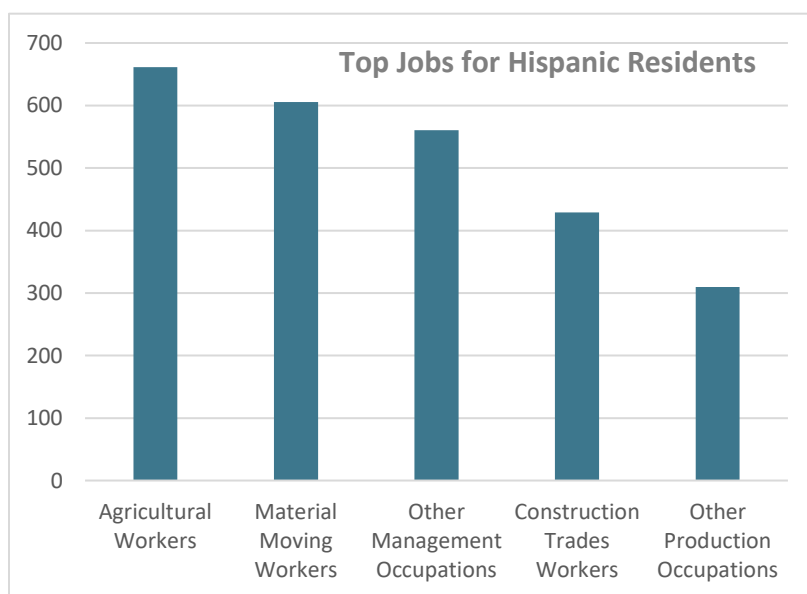
Access to  
Medical Services



The growth of the Hispanic population in Linn County is likely due to the economic opportunities in the county. Linn County's economy has a significant agricultural sector; approximately 7.5% of all jobs in the county are in this industry, with over 4,100 jobs. Hispanics make up a disproportionate amount of the workers in this industry. Thirty-nine percent of all agricultural workers (662 workers total) and 23.5% of farm supervisors are Hispanic. This industry, which is vital to the economic health of Linn County, is highly dependent on its Hispanic workforce. But the impact of the Hispanic workforce can be felt throughout the Linn County economy. The graphs below show the occupations that are most dependent on a Hispanic workforce, as well as the most numerous jobs for Hispanic residents.



Source: EMSI, 2020





## Available Resources

**There are resources available in Linn and Benton Counties that are meant to assist the Hispanic population.** The organizations listed in the table in the appendix have missions to aid the Hispanic communities in Linn County. Their services range widely and include housing assistance, childcare, educational classes, and translation, as well as simply offering spaces for Hispanics to congregate.

However, most of these services are located in Corvallis and Albany, and services for Hispanics are nearly non-existent in rural parts of the county. Geographic isolation, lack of transportation options, and the inability of some residents to get a driver's license means that for some Hispanic residents, these resources are too far away to be of use. Instead, when Hispanic residents were asked where they go for support, many mentioned that they rely on resources from their local church or school. While these institutions can provide assistance, they are likely ill-equipped to provide solutions for residents seeking transportation options, healthcare, or driver's license services.

These organizations are likely the first step to supporting Hispanics in Linn County and can be partnered with in order to outreach to Hispanics in the community and to provide additional assistance to the Hispanic Community. Organizations based in Albany and Corvallis that are doing Hispanic-specific programming should be encouraged to provide resources across Linn County, particularly in hubs like Lebanon, Mill City, and Sweet Home. Where necessary, independent organizations and programming should be developed in these communities. Some further research is likely necessary to determine where needs are prevalent.

**As a broader theme, the Hispanic community in Linn County, particularly those living in rural Linn County, needs to be seen and heard.** Every city in Linn County includes families of Hispanic residents; currently these people fail to be represented in local leadership and often lack proper support. Linn County must view these residents as valuable assets to their community—they are worthy of support, and they deserve a seat at the decision-making table, and deserve to have their voices heard.



## Outreach Strategies

Based on the information provided in this report and RDI's experience working with Hispanic populations in rural Oregon, the following outreach strategies are proposed for local consideration, with the goals of (1) understanding the needs of the growing Hispanic community in Linn County, and (2) ensuring this population is able to fully contribute to the communities and economy of the region.

- Use census information and other data to understand the geographic location, economic sectors, and community organizations where the Hispanic population is present.
- Build a relationship with the Hispanic community by establishing trust: attend their festivals, celebrate their holidays, shop in their businesses, and get involved in other events.
- Increase engagement with the Hispanic community by creating opportunities for people to serve, including public boards and committees and Hispanic Advisory Councils.
- Partner with churches, Hispanic organizations, and Hispanic leaders in the community by finding groups that are connecting regularly. These ambassadors can help with outreach efforts to provide needed services.
- Remove barriers to participation in community events and services by offering language interpretation, food, and childcare. Consider agricultural seasons and cultural events when scheduling programs for the Hispanic population.
- Don't just translate outreach materials and forms. The message that you are trying to communicate has to be designed by Hispanics who understand familiar Spanish usage and can make sure materials and forms sound familiar and connect to the targeted population.
- Increase local capacity to understand the needs of Hispanic people, include them in decision making, and work with and across diverse populations.

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***“Being involved with local associations has provided me with opportunities to service my community and to raise awareness of the Latino community.”***

***~ Interviewee Paty Hernandez***



***“Making an effort to have staff who speak their language in the city departments. This means a great deal to Latinos.” ~ Interviewee Cindy Ruiz***

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## About Rural Development Initiatives

**RDI is a private, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that works to develop networks of rural leaders, revitalize rural economies, and elevate rural voices** in Oregon, Washington, Northern California, and Idaho. Established in 1991 to help Oregon's rural communities move forward after devastating shifts in resource-based economies, RDI has worked in over 300 communities across the region. With staff and a ten-member board of directors rooted in rural communities throughout the Pacific Northwest, RDI facilitates the interdependence of economy building, leadership development, and public policy.

RDI has experienced exceptional growth in our Latine programs over the past few years. Our financial literacy and entrepreneurship program, Pasos al Éxito, has provided a foundation for many communities to build additional capacity. Communities have subsequently held leadership trainings for Spanish speakers, Latine youth leadership camps in partnership with higher education institutions, and community-wide efforts to identify strategies to retain and expand the Latine-owned businesses in their communities.

This report was created to bring to light the need for resources for Linn County's Hispanic community and help support local leaders, and was prepared by RDI's Latine Service Area Manager Christian Vázquez-Rivera, RDI's Bilingual Program Coordinator Brenda Brown, and RDI's Economic Vitality Program Manager Nathan Davis. To discuss this report or have a conversation about how leaders in your community can engage with the Hispanic population and existing resource providers to create a better integrated and supported community at large, contact Christian Vázquez-Rivera at [cvazquezrivera@rdiinc.org](mailto:cvazquezrivera@rdiinc.org).

### About the Team

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### Christian Vázquez-Rivera, Latine Service Area Manager

Christian's expertise includes rural leadership and economic development, program adaptation for cultural competence, and outreach and engagement focused on Spanish-speaking communities.

### Brenda Brown, Bilingual Program Coordinator

In her role at RDI, Brenda serves the Latine population in rural communities, supporting people and motivating them to start and grow their own businesses.

### Nathan Davis, Economic Vitality Program Manager

Nathan's background is in policy analysis, research and evaluation methods, economic development support, and food policy.



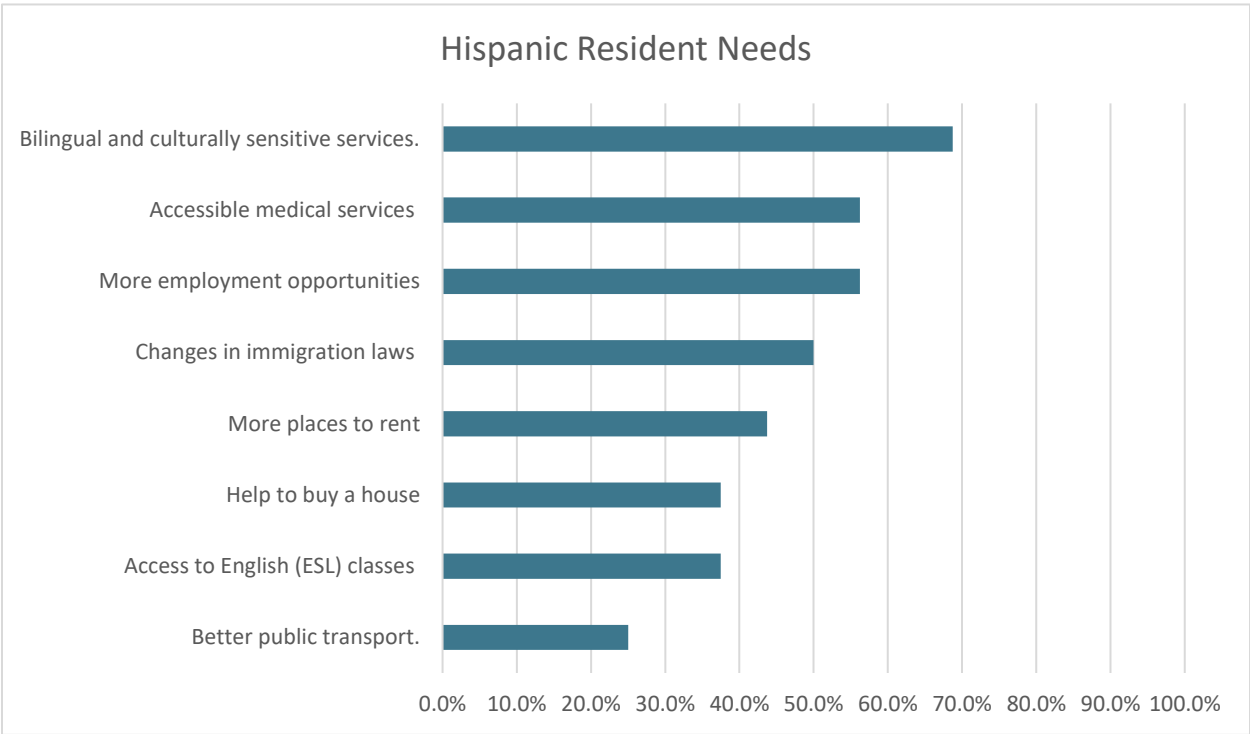
## Appendix

### List of Resources for Hispanic Residents in Linn County

Organization	Services	Contact Information
Community Services Consortium 250 Broadalbin St SW #2A Albany, OR 97321	Housing, Utility assistance, Weatherization, food share. Headstart, Workforce and education	(541) 928-6335
Casa Latinos Unidos 1435 SW 35th St Corvallis, OR 97333	Interpreting, translations, completing forms and applications, resume building, drafting letters, technology assistance, help making medical appointments, referrals to low-cost or free legal services. Leadership trainings, citizenship classes, and advocacy trainings	(541) 423-7840
Linn-Benton Hispanic Advisory Committee (HAC)	40+ member community coalition that meets monthly to share information and coordinate resources on behalf of Hispanics living in the two-county area.	Millie Barriger (541) 791-0195 Millie.Barriger@cityofalbany.net
Centro Cultural Cesar Chavez for Students at OSU 691 SW 26th St Corvallis, OR 97331	Support the Hispanic and Chicanx student community in the achievement of their educational and professional goals and retention of their culture	(541) 737-3790
Linn Benton Community College 6500 Pacific Blvd SW Albany, Oregon 97321	Offers convenience and flexibility with classes held at four campus locations in Albany, Corvallis, Lebanon, and Sweet Home	(541) 917-4999
Centro de Bienvenida 2638 NW Jackson Ave Corvallis, OR 97330	Offers a safe place for parents to go and get help they need in Corvallis Multicultural Literacy Center	(541) 704-2376
Old Mill Center 1650 SW 45th St Corvallis, OR 97333	Full-service provider of preschool, mental health, early intervention and parent support for children birth to 18 and their families. Our services address the educational, social, emotional, and family needs of a diverse population of children.	(541) 757-8068
DevNW 257 SW Madison Ave #200 Corvallis, OR 97333	Financial classes, access to affordable rental housing, built affordable homes to buy, foreclosure counseling, access to funds, IDA accounts, etc.	(541) 752-7220

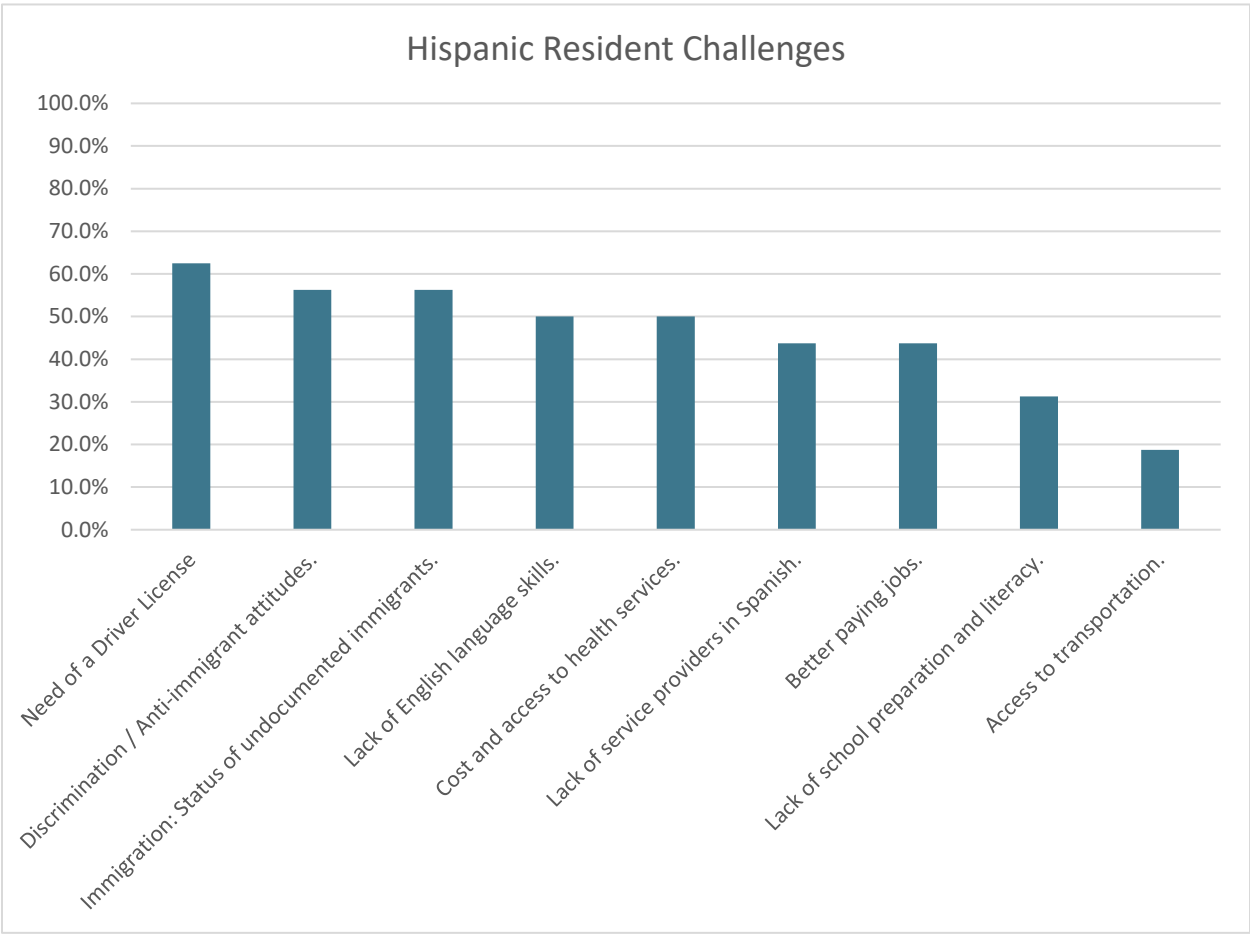


Detailed Graphs: Community & Economic Data



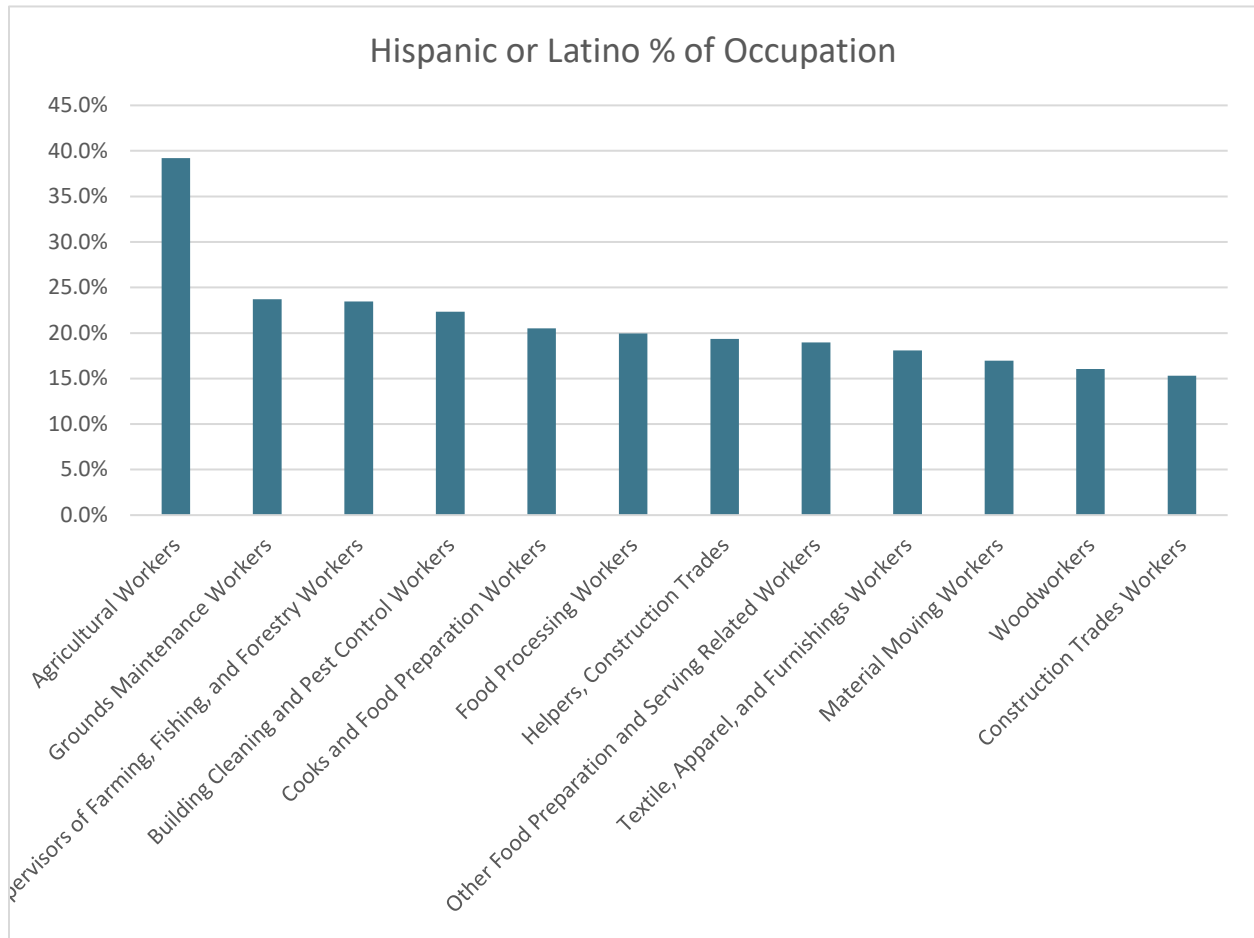
Source: EMSI, 2020





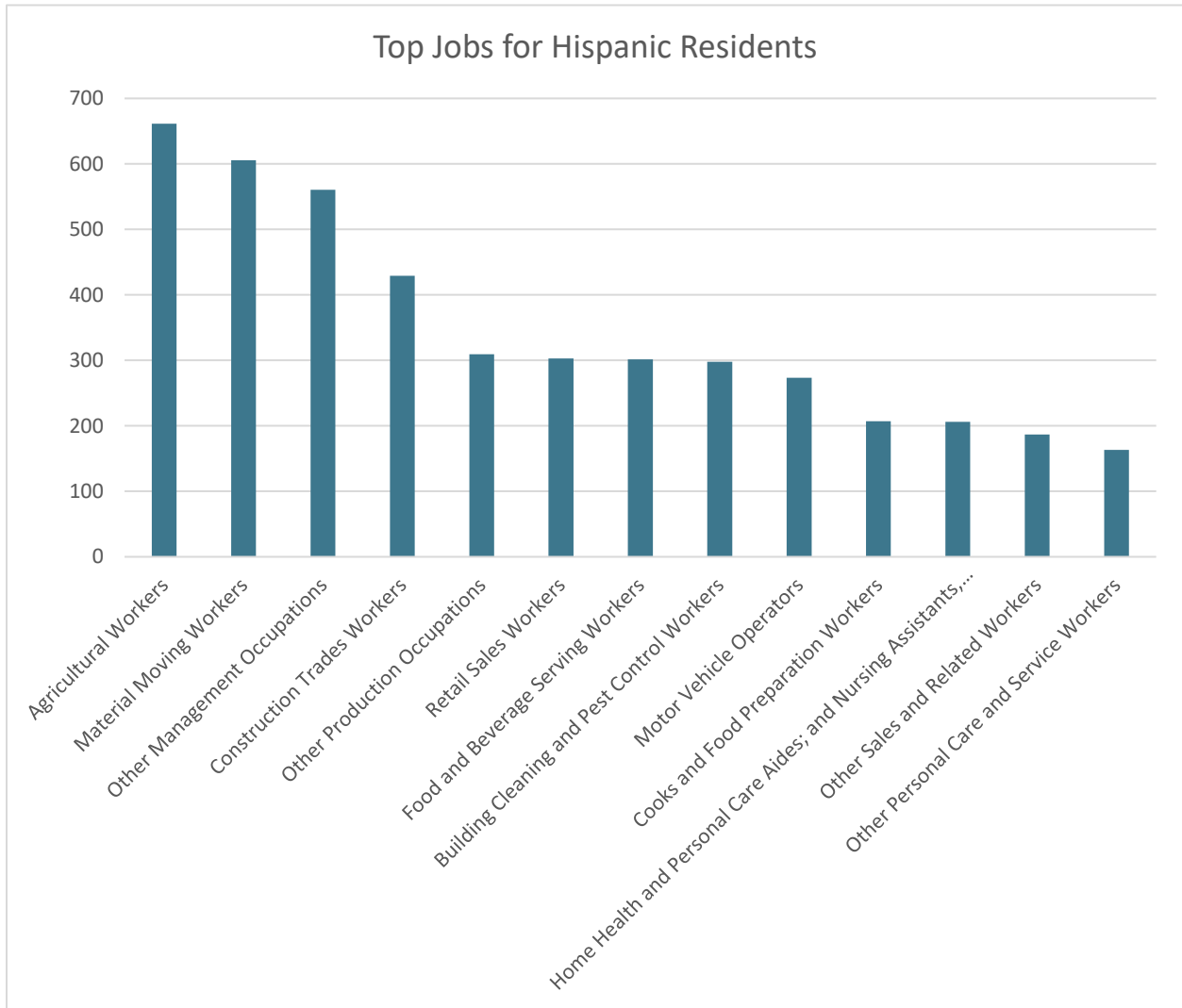
Source: EMSI, 2020





Source: EMSI, 2020





Source: EMSI, 2020

