
Increasing Opportunity in NH: Findings from a Community Listening Project

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Introductions & goals for the session

Presenter introductions

At the end of this session, audience members will:

- Understand NH's Opportunity Gap from the perspective of lived experience
- Understand community-based Participatory Action Research
- Create connections with colleagues and peers to inspire action

Overview

As the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation undertook a strategic planning process to set priorities for the coming years, the Foundation set out to listen closely to people who have faced those barriers.

Through a process called Participatory Action Research (PAR), the Foundation recruited and hired people closest to the issues our communities are facing to define the problems, do the research and recommend actions.

PAR is research conducted by and for those most directly affected by the issue, condition, situation, or intervention being studied or evaluated. By participating in this session, we hope you will understand the deep value of this approach.

What is the Opportunity Gap?

Opportunity gap = when uncontrollable factors such as a person's race, ethnicity, ZIP code, and socioeconomic status affect the person's achievements, such as educational attainment, income in adulthood, home ownership, etc.

Examples of opportunity gaps in NH:

- There are differences in educational outcomes for kids depending on geography, even if family income is the same.
- A child raised in high income family in Merrimack County is more likely to complete college than a child raised also in a high income family in Sullivan County. (48% of kids from high income families in Merrimack complete college, while 44% of kids in Sullivan County do).
- For kids raised in low income families, this difference is even greater. 24% of kids raised in low income families in Merrimack County go on to complete college, while only 10% of kids from Sullivan County
- **That's a 14% gap depending on what county a child grows up in.**

The Community Listening Project



Amy



Brande



Clement



Fay



Glory



Maria



Patti



Joede



Jules



Lidia



Somayeh



Stacie



Suraj



Tamara



Yusi

Key question

What are the barriers to opportunity in NH and what can be done to address them?

How we answered this question:

- Survey with 478 respondents across 10 counties, available in 10 languages
- Interviews and quotes gathered from 135+ people
- Our own experiences and knowledge
- Focused outreach on groups we know face barriers to opportunities: people of color, immigrants, people with disabilities, people with low-income, LGBTQ+ people etc.
- Research conducted b/w April and August 2021

Things to be aware of in understanding the results:

- Changed/removed identifying details to protect the identities and privacy of the people who were interviewed or took the survey.
- Our team of 15 researchers were selected because of our personal experiences and our networks, which means we were able to quickly access credible input from people who trust us or our affiliations.
- This research project was done using non-random sampling techniques. Survey respondents and interviewees were selected based on the convenience, experience or judgment of the researchers.
- Survey respondents and interviewees are not representative of mainstream, white, middle-class NH population at large. In order to shed light on barriers to opportunity in NH, we intentionally focused outreach on groups we know face these barriers, such as people of color, immigrants, people with disabilities, and people with low-income.

Key themes from the listening process

Housing and Baseline Resources:

Access to resources, especially housing, is a crisis-level challenge across NH. Over 50% of people surveyed said access to resources to meet their basic needs like housing and transportation was a top 3 challenge for them and their community. Even multiple members of this 15-person listening team experienced evictions or threats of evictions within the few months of this process.

Mental Health:

Mental health was the #1 challenge for most survey takers and for many subpopulations.

Discrimination:

Discrimination and racism across NH is very high for specific groups - over 84% of people of color, immigrants and those with disabilities said they were discriminated against most or some of the time. Discrimination and language barriers also deepened barriers to access for these groups especially in healthcare, jobs and mental health.

Housing & Baseline Resources

Figure 3: Most difficult resources to access by group with top two reasons why*

	ALL GROUPS	SPECIFIC GROUPS					
	All Respondents	People of Color	Has a disability	Immigrant	Up to high school education	<\$25,000 / year annual income	Unemployed or receiving disability
	N = 264	86	67	63	72	64	51
Rental Housing or Housing to Buy							
Public Transportation							
Healthcare							
Community Programs							
Assistance Programs							
Public Housing							

Difficulty of access

- Most difficult resource to access
- 2nd most difficult resource to access
- 3rd most difficult resource to access

Reasons for lack of access

- Affordability
- Transportation
- Limited availability (e.g., few programs, limited hours etc)

- Not available in my community
- I don't know where to find these resources
- I don't qualify for these resources

**Based on respondents who identified access to resources to meet basic needs as a top 3 challenge*

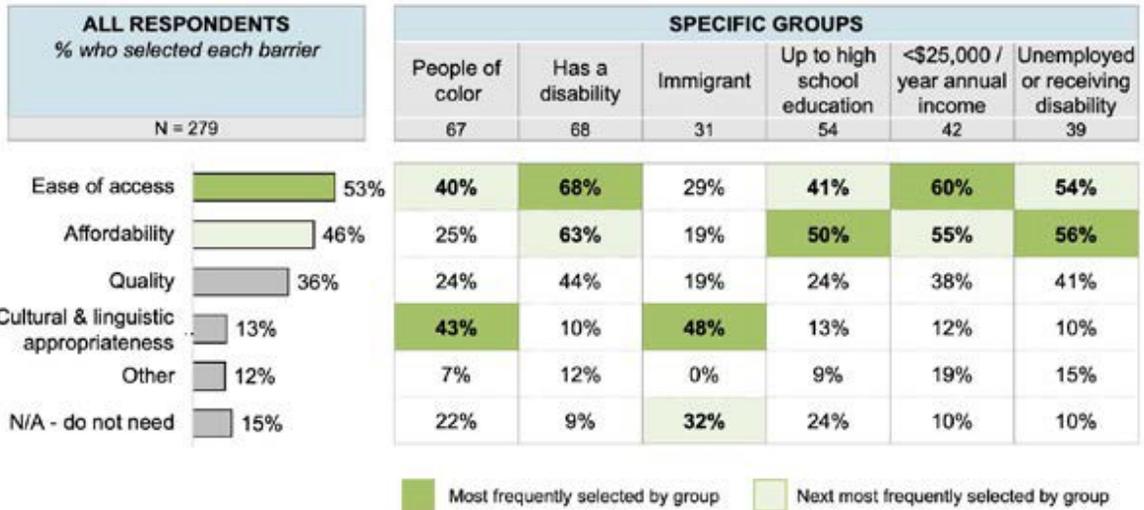
“I came to [the] USA with my college degree, I was [a] professor. Now I work at [a fast food restaurant], I make minimum wage and can not to go to college and do not have information where I can be certified to become teacher.” - **refugee**

“It’s harder for immigrants also, even to apply for an apartment because we don’t have a rental history, or credit history, we are easily denied even if we have a job to afford it.” - **refugee**

“The rental market in NH is pricing everyone out. With the cost of rent in my community. I have to spend nearly 45% of my income on housing, which leaves me with very little resources to save. As a result, the possibility of ever owning a home feels completely out of reach because I would never be able to afford to put down a down payment.” - **female, white**

Mental Health

Figure 6: What are the biggest barriers you or your family members have faced to getting mental health resources?*



*Based on respondents who identified mental health as a top 3 challenge

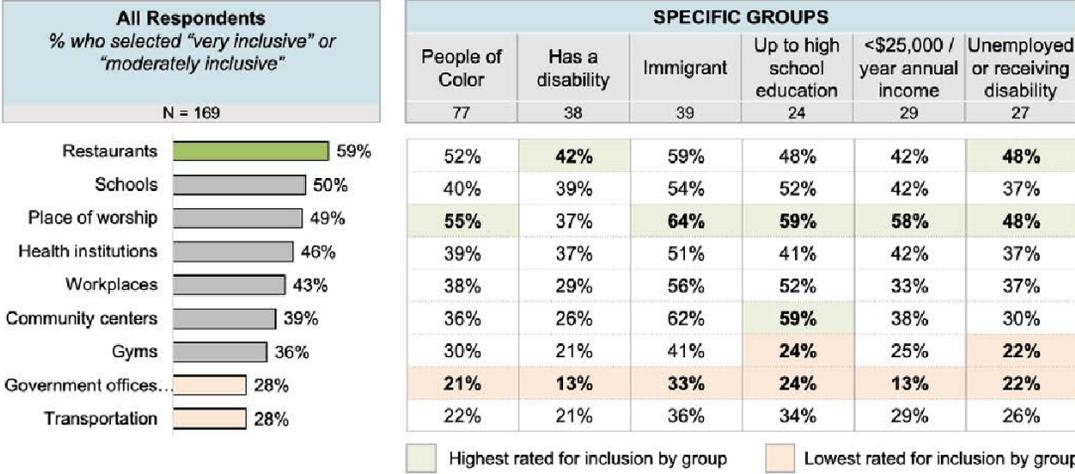
“Everyone tells me to get my head right but how can I do that with no insurance? Then I think that finding a place to call home is more important, but my inability to hold a job as an untreated schizophrenic keeps me in a cycle of not having anything.” - **white, homeless individual**

“[With respect to mental health] there is an issue within the African community. They do have many cases but can[not] admit it.” - **immigrant**

“I do have mental health issue and never feel treated like other client , one day is female interpreter other day is a male interpreter , other time I go home without getting services because they did not have interpreter.” - **single mom**

Discrimination

Figure 8: How inclusive are the following parts of your community?* (*"Inclusive" is defined as "open, welcoming and accessible to all people"*) * Percentages represent those identifying this space as "very" or "moderately" inclusive



**Based on respondents who identified discrimination as a top 3 challenge. Government offices include elected leaders (e.g., legislature, school board, town councils)*

“My child operates in invisibility. They are becoming aware that they don’t see themselves reflected in the school. Although they don’t speak about it, I can see the impact in their faces and how they carry themselves in and out of school.” - **female, African American/Black**

“New Hampshire is a very white, Christian state. There is very little acknowledgement that there is religious diversity and people who don’t celebrate Christian holidays on a regular basis. My daughter was a sophomore the first time that her teacher wished her a happy Rosh Hashanah; it made her cry to finally be seen in this way.” - **female, white, Jewish**

“After the Atlanta shootings, my friends said they don’t feel safe because we feel like we are immigrants, because of our skin color, because of our English and the way we speak, we have accents, especially those who do not speak English or speak it badly, they don’t feel like they belong here....They feel the white people who know their immigration status could easily call ICE. They have to say, yes, to do whatever their white friends ask them to do, especially if those people know their immigration status.” - **immigrant**

Top community listening team recommendations for providers

Micro-level: Listen to and learn from the people in your communities or service areas that are not being heard or seen. “Meet them where they are at.”

Macro-level:

- Increase access to mental health providers who offer clinically appropriate and culturally & linguistically competent services, especially for youth.
- Increase access to affordable and low-barrier housing.
- Increase access to anti-oppression/anti-bias technical assistance for all organizations and service providers.

Creating connections: Small group discussion prompts

What finding(s) most resonated with you?

What new understanding did you find within this topic?

Has this conversation changed your perception about those furthest from opportunity in NH? How?

Is there a next step you/your organization would like to take based upon the discussions we had today?

Reflection, Wrap-up and Q&A