

2016 West Liberty Community Survey: *Summary Report*



Background. In West Liberty, Iowa, (population 3,750) 52% of residents self-identify as Latino and 43% as non-Latino White. Like many other towns in Iowa, its Latino population has historically been small, and the current profile reflects recent changes in US Latino residential patterns. Beginning in the early 1990s, both transnational and internal US migrants have increasingly settled in non-traditional areas to take advantage of greater labor opportunities in agriculture, construction, and livestock processing. Indeed, between 2000 and 2010, the non-Latino proportion of West Liberty declined by 10% but the Latino share grew by 45%. In 2011, West Liberty was recognized as Iowa's first majority-Latino in a national radio story: <http://www.npr.org/2011/10/10/141150607/west-liberty-is-iowas-first-majority-hispanic-town>.

Coalition. The West Liberty Coalition is a community-academic partnership that has met monthly since November 2014. Local membership includes representatives from several key constituencies, such as the West Liberty Community School District, St. Joseph's Catholic Church, West Liberty Rotary Club, the Iowa State University Extension officer for Muscatine County, as well as citizens at-large. A variety of faculty and students, drawn largely from the University of Iowa College of Public Health, attend regularly.

Objective. In response to the demographic changes, potential unmet health needs, and scant local information, the West Liberty Coalition conducted a household survey to identify community strengths and needs. The results that are summarized in this report are intended to serve as preliminary data to inform coalition activities and support future grant proposals to address community health in West Liberty. Further, the project may serve as a prototype of methods to for community health assessments in small towns throughout Iowa. Members of the Coalition presented select survey results at the 2017 Governor's Conference on Public Health in a session devoted to West Liberty Coalition activities.

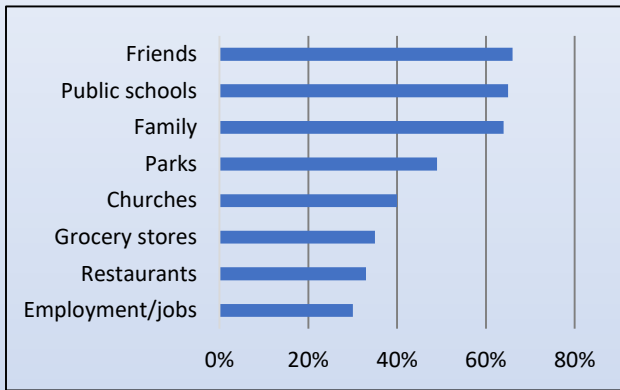
Methods. Under the guidance of the Coalition, Dr. Paul Gilbert (Assistant Professor in the Department of Community & Behavioral Health, University of Iowa College of Public Health) designed a household survey. As West Liberty has a municipal monopoly on electric power, a random sample of residential electric utility subscribers was selected. From each household, research assistants invited one adult to answer a survey questionnaire on an iPad. Participants had to be 18 years of age or older and have lived in West Liberty for six months or longer. The questionnaire was available in English or Spanish and included questions about community strengths, health concerns, social cohesion, social support, civic engagement, access to health care, individual health-related behaviors, and participant demographic characteristics. Latino participants were asked an additional eight items assessing acculturation level. All participants received a \$10 gift card for Target, Walmart, or the New Strand Theatre (their choice). Research assistants went door-to-door visiting the randomly selected households between August and October, 2017. Several drop-in sessions were held at the West Liberty Public Library in October 2017, and a version of the survey that could be completed and mailed back was distributed in November 2017.

Acknowledgements. The community survey would not have been possible without the assistance of the following research assistants:

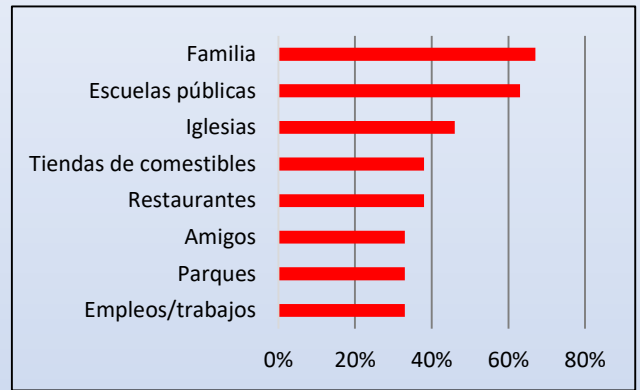
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What makes West Liberty a good place to live?



Non-Latinos



Latinos

The most frequently endorsed factor by non-Latinos was friends. Among Latinos, the most frequently endorsed factor was family.

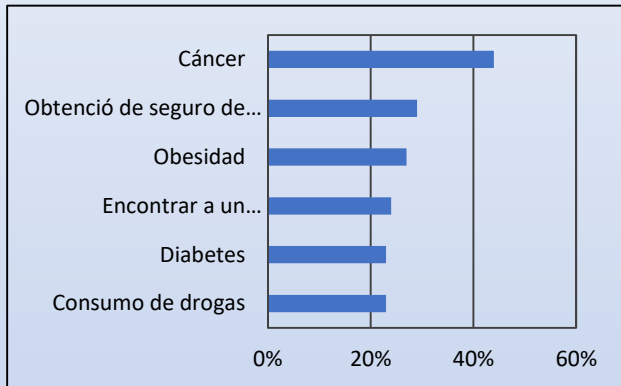
Among both groups, the public schools were the second most frequently cited factor, suggesting widespread high favorability.

There were some differences between non-Latinos and Latinos in the ordering of other characteristics, but there appears to be general agreement.

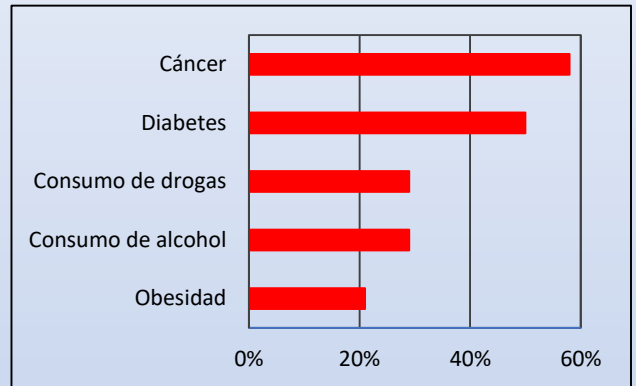
Survey participants were able to name other things that made West Liberty a good place to live. Analyzing these comments for themes, several additional characteristics emerged. They were less frequent than those shown in the charts above but were reported by both non-Latinos and Latinos:

- Diversity
- Characteristics of life in a small town
- Location (notably easy access to Iowa City and Muscatine)
- Sense of community

What are the top health concerns among people living in West Liberty?



Non-Latinos



Latinos

The most frequently endorsed health concern among both groups was cancer; however, the level of concern appears slightly higher among Latinos (58%) than non-Latinos (44%). A limitation of the survey was that it did not inquire about the type of cancer that participants were concerned about.

Five additional concerns were endorsed by non-Latinos and four additional concerns were endorsed by Latinos. With the exception of diabetes among Latinos, levels of endorsement were generally low (20%-30%). In addition, the ranking of concerns was different between groups. Thus, there appears to be little agreement between non-Latinos and Latinos on health concerns beyond cancer.

Survey participants were able to name other health concerns. Analyzing these comments for themes, one additional concern emerged, which was reported by both non-Latinos and Latinos:

- Aging and services for the elderly

What would make West Liberty a healthier community?

The paper questionnaire contains five main sections:

- Demographics:** "¿Cómo se describen a usted mismo/a en West Liberty?" and "¿Cómo se describen a usted mismo/a en español en West Liberty?" with blank lines for responses.
- Residence:** "¿Qué hace de West Liberty un buen lugar para vivir?" followed by a list of amenities with checkboxes:
 - Parques
 - Restaurantes
 - Empleo/comercio
 - Hoteles
 - Escuelas
 - Tiendas de comestibles
 - Servicios de salud (por favor describa)
- Services:** "¿Hay algunos negocios o servicios que no están disponibles en West Liberty?" with a blank line.
- Healthcare:** "¿Hay algunos negocios o servicios que no están disponibles en West Liberty?" with a blank line.
- Open-ended:** "¿En su opinión, ¿qué más podría hacer West Liberty para ser una comunidad más saludable?" with a blank line.

Paper questionnaire

The iPad questionnaire is a digital version of the paper form, displayed on a mobile app interface. It includes the same questions and options as the paper version, with a "Showcard 1" button next to the multiple-choice list. The interface also shows a "Report ID" and a "REDCap" logo at the top.

iPad questionnaire

This open-ended question elicited the most comments, which were often quite detailed. Analyzing the comments thematically, two common suggestions emerged, which were reported by both non-Latinos and Latinos:

- Infrastructure improvement (especially for physical activity, such as walking trails and a recreation center)
- Access to health care services (such as more health care providers in town, expanded hours of services, better insurance coverage)

Additional themes emerged related to community amenities but differed by group:

- Non-Latinos frequently desired more healthy grocery store options and organized physical activities
- Latinos frequently suggested better housing and job opportunities

Social Factors

	Full sample (n=110)	Non-Latinos (n=86)	Latinos (n=24)
Average social cohesion score (range 1-4) *	2.87	2.97	2.49
Done any volunteer work of community service in past 12	53%	61%	25%
Served on local board, council, or organization	22%	22%	21%
Gotten together informally with others to deal with community	34%	36%	25%
Registered to vote *	84%	93%	50%
Average social support score (range 1-5)	4.32	4.36	4.16

*statistically significant difference, $p < .05$

Perceptions of the social environment and participation in civic activities varied in several ways between groups:

- Non-Latinos reported higher social cohesion than Latinos, reflected by stronger agreement to a four-item scale that included items such as “People in West Liberty are willing to help each other” and “People in West Liberty can be trusted.”
- A larger proportion of non-Latinos reported having done volunteer work or community service in the past year.
- A smaller proportion of Latinos were registered to vote.

Notably, perceptions of social support did not differ between non-Latinos and Latinos.

Participation in local boards or community organizations and informal activities to solve community problems did not differ between the groups.

Results suggest that effort to increase Latino civic engagement may be warranted.

Health Status

	Full sample (n=110)	Non-Latinos (n=86)	Latinos (n=24)
Very good or excellent self-rated health *	47%	53%	25%
Has health insurance *	93%	98%	75%
Has a personal doctor or health care provider	88%	88%	88%
Personal doctor or health care provider is in West Liberty	29%	25%	43%
Good or very good self-rated oral health *	70%	76%	50%
Has dental insurance	71%	71%	71%
Had a dental visit within past 12 months	69%	70%	67%

*statistically significant difference, $p < .05$

Health profiles of non-Latinos and Latinos differed in several key ways. Although perceptions of physical health were modest overall, approximately one-half (53%) of non-Latinos reported very good or excellent health but only one-quarter (25%) of Latinos reported very good or excellent health.

Nearly all non-Latinos (98%) had health insurance, but three-quarters (75%) of Latinos had health insurance.

Equivalent large majorities (88%) of both groups had a personal doctor or health care provider; however, less than half reported that their provider was in West Liberty.

Despite equivalent majorities of both groups having dental insurance and a dental visit within the past year, a larger proportion of non-Latinos (76%) reported good or very good oral health than Latinos (50%).

Survey Participant Demographics

	Full sample (n=110)	Non-Latinos (n=86)	Latinos (n=24)
Average years living in West Liberty (range 1-69) *	25	27	17
Female	66%	66%	67%
Educational attainment *			
Less than HS or GED	9%	1%	40%
HS diploma or GED	51%	53%	45%
4-year college degree	40%	46%	15%
Relationship status			
Married or cohabitating	66%	69%	58%
Formerly married	26%	23%	38%
Never married	7%	8%	4%
Employed full- or part-time	78%	78%	79%

*statistically significant difference, $p < .05$

Latinos and non-Latinos who participated in the community survey resembled each other in terms of proportion female, relationship status, and employment status.

Latinos' average years living in West Liberty was less than that of non-Latinos. Latinos' education levels differed from non-Latinos, such that there was a greater proportion who had not completed high school or received a GED.

Among limitations, only a small number of Latinos agreed to participate in the community survey.

Nevertheless, this community survey generated data on perceived strengths and needs of a majority-Latino rural community, finding both differences and commonalities with non-Latino residents. Results may guide future health promotion activities.