Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Home Health Aide (HHA) Workforce:
Perceptions of HHAs Surveyed During the Summer of 2020

March 4, 2022

During the summer of 2020, we surveyed 1,316 Home Health Aides (HHAs) employed by a large New York City Licensed Home Care Service Agency.

The aim of the survey was to understand, six months into the pandemic, how COVID-19 had affected the health, well-being and work life of this essential workforce. This information can help industry leaders and policy makers as they develop pandemic preparedness plans to protect the future health and safety of direct care workers and the clients they serve.

Whenever possible, survey questions were drawn from validated, published research studies.

The survey was conducted from August 6 to September 20, 2020.

HHAs could complete the survey via smartphone, computer or telephone.

Participation in survey was voluntary, confidential and anonymous.

To thank them for their participation, survey respondents were eligible to enter a drawing for a chance to win one of 100 $25 gift cards.
HOW TO INTERPRET THE DATA

1) Survey participation was voluntary; respondents could choose to skip any question. Percentages are based on the number (“n”) of HHAs that provided an answer to that survey question.

2) Percentages from questions answered by a small subset of survey respondents should be interpreted with caution.

3) Totals may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

4) Totals from questions that directed respondents to “Check all that apply” do not add up to 100%
## WHO TOOK THE SURVEY

### DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE 1,316 HOME HEALTH AIDE SURVEY RESPONDENTS

| AGE (n=1,196) | | ANNUAL INCOME (n=533) | | LIVING ARRANGEMENTS (n=772) |
|---------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| Under 35      | 15%                  | Under $15,000        | 50%                       |
| 35 to 54      | 53%                  | $15,000 to $34,999   | 37%                       |
| 55 to 64      | 27%                  | $35,000 or more      | 13%                       |
| 65 or older   | 6%                   |                      |                           |

| GENDER (n=1,300) | | EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT (n=772) | | HOUSEHOLD SIZE (n=772) |
|------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Female           | 96%                  | No diploma or GED           | 18%                     |
| Male             | 4%                   | High School or GED          | 29%                     |
| Non-binary       | <1%                  | At least some college       | 53%                     |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RACE/ETHNICITY (n=1,208)</th>
<th></th>
<th>CHILDREN UNDER 18 YEARS OLD IN HOUSEHOLD (n=766)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black or African-American (not Hispanic or Latino/a)</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino/a (and any race)</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White or any other race (not Hispanic or Latino/a)</td>
<td>12%</td>
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|                      | |                         | |                            |
| LIVES ALONE         | 10%                         | LIVES WITH OTHERS        | 90%                        |
|                       |                            |                       |                           |
| HOUSEHOLD SIZE       | 3.5                         |                       |                           |
|                       |                            |                       |                           |
| ADULTS AGE 65 AND OLDER IN HOUSEHOLD (n=758) | |                         |                           |
| Yes                  | 28%                         |                       |                           |
| No                   | 72%                         |                       |                           |

| CHILDREN UNDER 18 YEARS OLD IN HOUSEHOLD (n=766) | |                       |
| Yes                                               | 48%                         |                       |
| No                                                | 52%                         |                       |
IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON HHA HEALTH CONCERN

SELF-REPORTED HEALTH STATUS:
In general, would you say that your health is... (n=796)

- Excellent: 27%
- Very good: 40%
- Good: 26%
- Fair: 6%
- Poor: <1%

WORRY ABOUT BEING INFECTED:
How worried have you been about being infected with COVID-19 since the outbreak began? (n=959)

- Not at all: 11%
- Slightly: 9%
- Moderately: 16%
- Very: 25%
- Extremely: 38%
MENTAL HEALTH:

Respondents were categorized as having experienced “severe,” “moderate,” “low,” or “no” mental distress using a modified version of the validated Kessler-6 Scale of Mental Distress (K6). Respondents’ level of mental distress was calculated based on their responses to the following sets of questions:

1. Thinking back to when the COVID-19 outbreak began (in March) about how often did you feel...
   a. ... nervous?
   b. ... hopeless?
   c. ... restless or fidgety?
   d. ... so depressed that nothing could cheer you up?
   e. ... that everything was an effort?
   f. ... worthless?
   g. ... lonely

Response options for a to g:
1. All of the time
2. Most of the time
3. Some of the time
4. A little of the time
5. None of the time

2. The same set of questions was asked starting with “In the past 30 days how often did you feel…”

![Bar Graph]

- Mental distress at the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020 (n=854)
- Mental distress in the previous 30 days* (n=852)

* Data was collected August 6-September 20, 2020
DIRECT IMPACT ON HHA HEALTH:

“Yes” includes respondents who gave any of the following responses to survey questions:

1. Selected either of the following responses to the question “Have you been diagnosed with COVID-19 or suspected that you had it?”
   - “Yes, had positive test”
   - “Yes, medical diagnosis, but no test”

2. Checked any of the following responses to the question “How has the COVID-19 outbreak affected you?”
   - “Was not able to work due to COVID-19 related illness”
   - “Was in self-quarantine for possible COVID-19 exposure at a client's home”
   - “Was in self-quarantine for possible COVID-19 exposure from family members or friends”

(n=888)
HEALTH IMPACT ON PEOPLE CLOSE TO HHA:

“Yes” includes respondents that checked any of the following responses to the question “Have any of the following happened to any one close to you (including immediate family, housemates, or close friends) because of Coronavirus/COVID-19? Check all that apply.”:

- Fallen ill physically
- Hospitalized
- Put into self-quarantine with symptoms
- Put into self-quarantine without symptoms (e.g., due to possible exposure)
- Passed away

(n=883)
ECONOMIC AND PRACTICAL IMPACTS OF COVID-19

IMPACTS ON HHA:
How has the COVID-19 outbreak affected you?
Check all that apply.
(n=887)

- Had trouble paying my rent/mortgage: 25%
- Had difficulty arranging for childcare: 13%
- Incurred increased costs for childcare expenses: 6%
- Had trouble paying for my medications: 3%
- Worked with children at home with me: 3%

SOMEONE CLOSE LOST EMPLOYMENT INCOME:
“Yes” includes respondents who gave any of the following responses to survey questions:

1. Checked either of the following responses to the question “Have any of the following happened to any one close to you (including immediate family, housemates, or close friends) because of Coronavirus/COVID-19?”
   - Lost or been laid off from job
   - Reduced ability to earn money

2. Checked the following response to the question “How has the COVID-19 outbreak affected you?”
   - Someone in my household became unemployed or had their hours reduced due to COVID-19

(n=880)

No 60%
Yes 40%
**HHA PERCEPTIONS OF PRIOR HEALTH EMERGENCY AWARENESS AND TRAINING**

**AWARENESS:**
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
"Before the COVID-19 outbreak, I knew that it was possible that I would be asked by [employer] to respond to a public health emergency." (n=1,108)

- Strongly agree: 49%
- Somewhat agree: 38%
- Somewhat disagree: 7%
- Strongly disagree: 6%

**TRAINING:**
Before the COVID-19 outbreak, did you receive any training related to public health emergencies from [employer]? (n=1,114)

- Yes: 63%
- No: 23%
- Don't know: 15%
HHA PERCEPTIONS OF COVID-19 COMMUNICATIONS

AGENCY COMMUNICATIONS:
How satisfied are you with the level of communication from [employer] about the COVID-19 outbreak? (n=819)

- Extremely satisfied: 51%
- Somewhat satisfied: 42%
- Somewhat dissatisfied: 5%
- Extremely dissatisfied: 2%

SUPERVISOR COMMUNICATIONS:
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
"Since the COVID-19 outbreak started, I have been able to easily reach my supervisor when I have questions or concerns." (n=982)

- Strongly agree: 38%
- Somewhat agree: 37%
- Somewhat disagree: 13%
- Strongly disagree: 11%
HHA PERCEPTIONS OF PERSONAL AND CLIENT SAFETY

PPE FOR SELF:
For the following questions please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the below statements.

- "At the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, [employer] provided adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) to keep ME safe." (n=1,026)
  - 50% Strongly agree
  - 11% Somewhat agree
  - 27% Somewhat disagree
  - 5% Strongly disagree

- "[Employer] is CURRENTLY providing adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) to keep ME safe." (n=1,033)
  - 71% Strongly agree
  - 23% Somewhat agree
  - 4% Somewhat disagree
  - 3% Strongly disagree

PPE FOR CLIENTS:
For the following questions please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the below statements.

- "At the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, [employer] provided adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) to keep my CLIENTS safe." (n=1,021)
  - 45% Strongly agree
  - 28% Somewhat agree
  - 14% Somewhat disagree
  - 6% Strongly disagree

- "[Employer] is CURRENTLY providing adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) to keep my CLIENTS safe." (n=1,025)
  - 61% Strongly agree
  - 28% Somewhat agree
  - 5% Somewhat disagree
  - 6% Strongly disagree
WORK STATUS AND COVID-19 IMPACT

FACTORS THAT MAY AFFECT HHA WORK SAFETY OR SATISFACTION:

TRAVEL TIME:
In total, how long do you spend traveling from home to your work locations and back? (n=1,028)

- More than one hour: 36%
- One hour or less: 64%

NUMBER OF CLIENTS SERVED SINCE MARCH 2020:
Since the COVID-19 outbreak began (in March), approximately how many different clients have you served? (n=1,129)

- None: 4%
- One: 34%
- 2 to 5: 42%
- 6 or more: 20%
Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, about how many hours a week did you work for [employer]? (n=1,081)

In the last month, about how many hours have you been working each week? (n=976)

**NUMBER OF HOURS WORKED PER WEEK (MEAN)**

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, about how many hours a week did you work for [employer]? (n=1,081)

In the last month, about how many hours have you been working each week? (n=976)

**HOURS REDUCED DUE TO COVID-19:**
Were your hours reduced right after the COVID-19 outbreak? (n=1,136)

No 63%  
Yes 30%  
Unsure 7%

**HOURS WORKED PER WEEK RIGHT AFTER START OF THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK (MEAN)**
This question was only asked to those that said their hours were reduced right after the COVID-19 outbreak.

About how many hours a week were you working right after the outbreak (in March)?* (n=316)
HHAs’ PERCEIVED PREPAREDNESS FOR COVID-19

A. In the beginning of the outbreak in general, how well did [employer] prepare you to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak? You may think of areas of handling personal protective equipment (PPE), infection control procedures and knowledge, and other safety issues. (n=983)

- Prepared me well: 56%
- Prepared me somewhat: 26%
- Prepared me a little: 9%
- Did not prepare me: 8%

B. Over time has your level of preparedness changed? Would you say... (n=977)

- I feel more prepared: 61%
- I feel about the same level of preparedness: 21%
- I feel less prepared: 2%
- Not at all: 16%

HHAs were considered “prepared” if they said:

1. Their employer prepared them well in the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak (question A) and/or
2. They feel “more prepared now” than at the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak (question B)

(n=980)

Prepared: 85%
Not prepared: 15%
AVAILABILITY:
Indicate how much you agree or disagree with this statement: "I called out during the COVID-19 outbreak more than I usually would." (n=943)

HHAs were considered “available” if they indicated that they did not call out from work during the COVID-19 outbreak more often than they usually would. (n=943)
JOB SATISFACTION:
How satisfied you are with your current job as a home health aide at [employer]? (n=833)

- Extremely satisfied: 53%
- Somewhat satisfied: 40%
- Somewhat dissatisfied: 5%
- Extremely dissatisfied: 2%

LOOKING FOR ANOTHER JOB:
Are you currently looking for a different job either as a home health aide or doing something else? (n=836)

- No: 55%
- Yes: 18%
- No, but thinking about it: 27%
HHA PERCEPTION OF HOW IMPORTANT THEIR WORK IS VERSUS HOW VALUED OR APPRECIATED IT IS

**How important do you think your work as a Home Health Aide is?**
(n=886)

- Very Important: 95%
- Somewhat Important: 5%
- Not important at all: <1%

**How much do you think society values or appreciates your work as a home health aide? Would you say...?**
(n=890)

- Very much: 40%
- Somewhat: 45%
- Not at all: 16%