

# COMMUNITY OUTREACH EL PASO COUNTY

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## PROJECT INTRODUCTION

The Colorado State University El Paso County Extension office offers an array of different programming workshops for adults and children.

Our focus as interns this summer was to help increase our outreach to the Latinx community in El Paso County. The office wants to ensure that all programming workshops achieve parity and have language accessibility to everyone. Within these 10 weeks, along with making vial points of contact, we found local interpreters to be registered with the office for events offered in a different language.

After reaching out to various contacts, we advertised a few a programs to see if our outreach would work. We were asked to hold programming for different communities to identify key stakeholders within underserved communities. We also conducted a focus group to determine questions such as what location, times and types of events have the best turnouts as well as determine barriers to participation.

## INTERNSHIP GOALS

The goal of this position was to connect Colorado State University Extension in El Paso County with underserved members of the community. During the course of this internship, we met with each programmatic area in the office to better understand their specialties. We also ended with a focus group with a variety of community members and leaders to help us better understand the needs of the community.

## HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO YOUR EDUCATION

Janeth: As a Business Administration Major concentrating in Marketing, this position was another great example in how networking is a crucial aspect in any field of work! We were in contact with 40+ people, in different formats and capacities.

Valeria: As a political science major, this opportunity gave me more insight into how the county works and why organizations are vital for more involvement from an array of communities.

## WHAT YOU DID

We began the internship by reaching out via email to 40+ organizations and individuals. We focused on seven primary sectors: non-profit organizations, education, faith-based, health, civic, private businesses and communication.

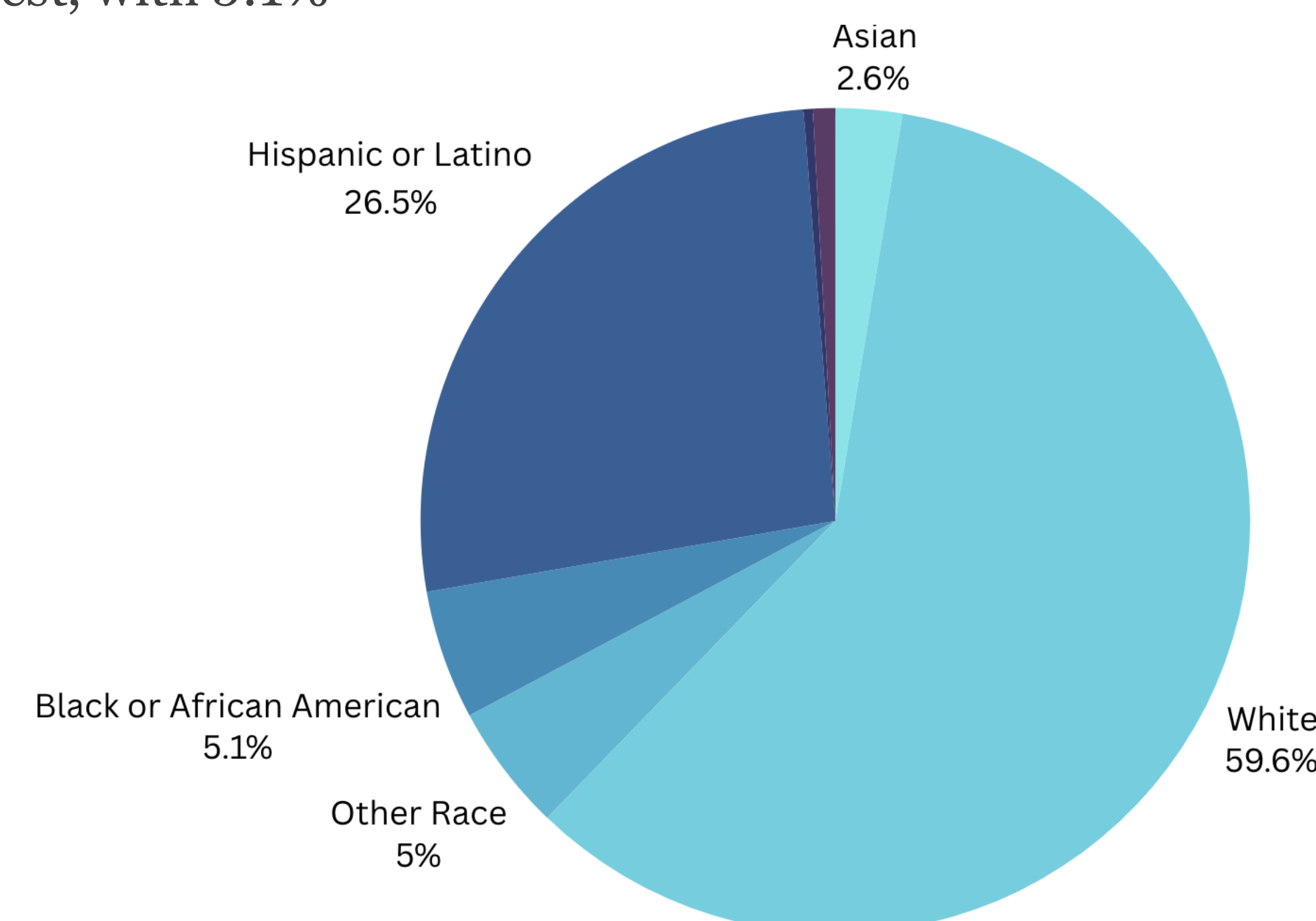
Along with virtually meeting interpreters within El Paso County, we also had 8+ meetings with community leaders to inform them of what Extension offers. While meeting with community leaders, we explained what the focus of Extension is and how we can further collaborate with people within their community.

We also focused on contacting schools, specifically Title 1 schools and English Learning Adult Programs. When speaking with directors and principals we discussed ways we could collaborate with schools. An idea that shows promise would be to hold a class at parent night or having it as a class for adults learning English. It would be a great way to reach out to a variety of community members and also advertise Extension classes.

We also had the opportunity to hold a first-time focus group with a variety of community members and leaders that helped us gather data through these interactions. We had individuals with and without children also give us information as to some benefits and barriers to

## EL PASO COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS

With El Paso County's renewed focus on reaching diverse audiences, we looked into the demographics of the county. Hispanics make up 26.5% of the community- and this percentage has increased significantly in past years, making this an important group to reach. Black or African American is the next highest, with 5.1%



## WHAT YOU LEARNED

A common theme that arose throughout the data collection and interviews was that individuals miss out on opportunities such as these classes and programs due to lack of time, flexibility, and lack of awareness of programs. Better ways for people to learn of programs include face-to-face communication and being approached individually rather than expecting people to search for activities on their own.

Another noticeable theme on why individuals would not be able to attend classes is the absence of language accessibility. Many individuals who primarily speak Spanish do not feel comfortable attending classes only conducted in English. When providing more language accessibility, we saw more engagement with classes and interest of being more involved with Extension.

When it comes to programming being available for youth, we learned that in the summer it is a little harder to get exposed to these children's families if it already wasn't mentioned in the spring semester/before the summer.

## NEXT STEPS

After conducting the focus group, we have a deeper understanding of what the community needs are and how Extension can better its' programs for the community. When analyzing the data from the focus group, Extension can now focus on expanding its programs to the underserved sections of El Paso County and how to better reach out to community members.

From the focus group, we also know a variety of ways, such as using online event calendars, Meetup.com, "Events" on Facebook, or having a table at back-to-school events to better advertise the programming the office offers and what could incentivize communities to participate in Extension.

The El Paso County Extension office can now reach out to various communities and organizations to gain more traction. We hope that in the future, that with a list of interpreters and some key contacts, the Office will be able to engage more with the Hispanic community.

The El Paso County Extension office will continue to strive for accessibility to all its programming to diverse communities.