

COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER Self Determination, Values and Leadership

The National Association of Community Health Workers (NACHW) implemented a Community Health Worker (CHW) survey in 2021 to advance the national professional identity, policy leadership and organizational capacity of CHWs in the United States. This infographic highlights responses to our national survey from 867

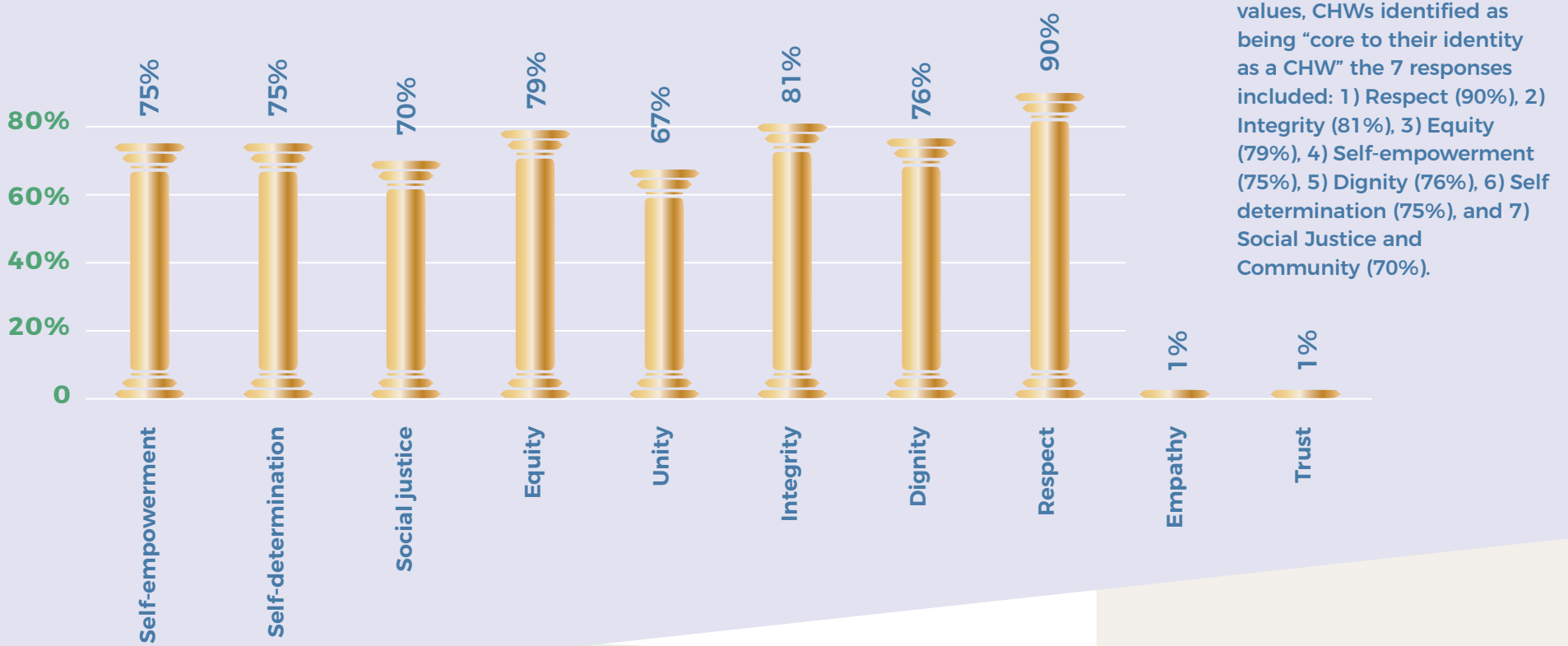
CHWs (772 English and 95 Spanish respondents) from 859 unique zip codes.

This infographic explores CHWs' values and leadership identities, and ways CHWs want to express and advance their leadership roles.

CHWs are organized around a clear set of core values to guide their profession. They

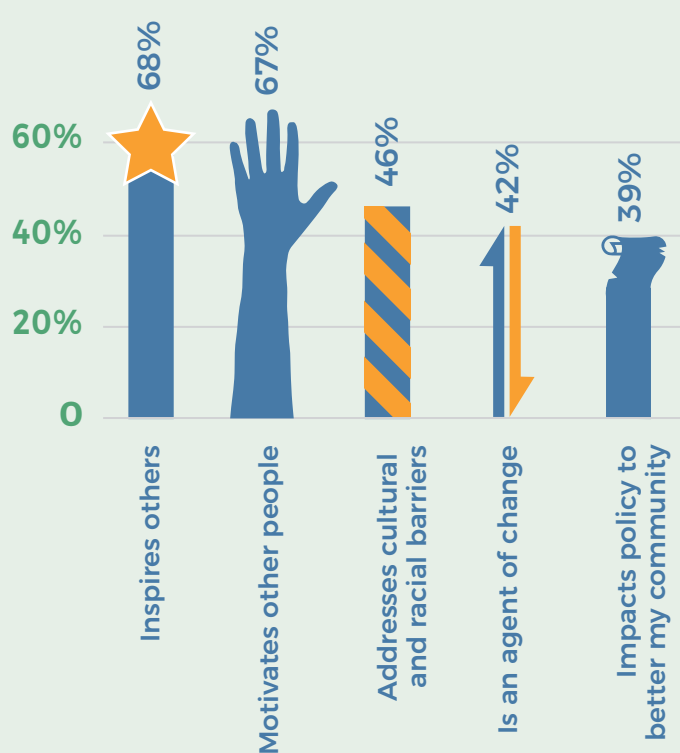
agree on indicators of leadership, and areas of leadership advancement. Furthering CHWs capacity, training, and advocacy opportunities around justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion will improve community trust, engagement, and well-being.

The following core values are part of my CHW identity



Within the national CHW survey, 867 CHWs were asked to choose from a list of 26 values. CHWs identified as being "core to their identity as a CHW" the 7 responses included: 1) Respect (90%), 2) Integrity (81%), 3) Equity (79%), 4) Self-empowerment (75%), 5) Dignity (76%), 6) Self-determination (75%), and 7) Social Justice and Community (70%).

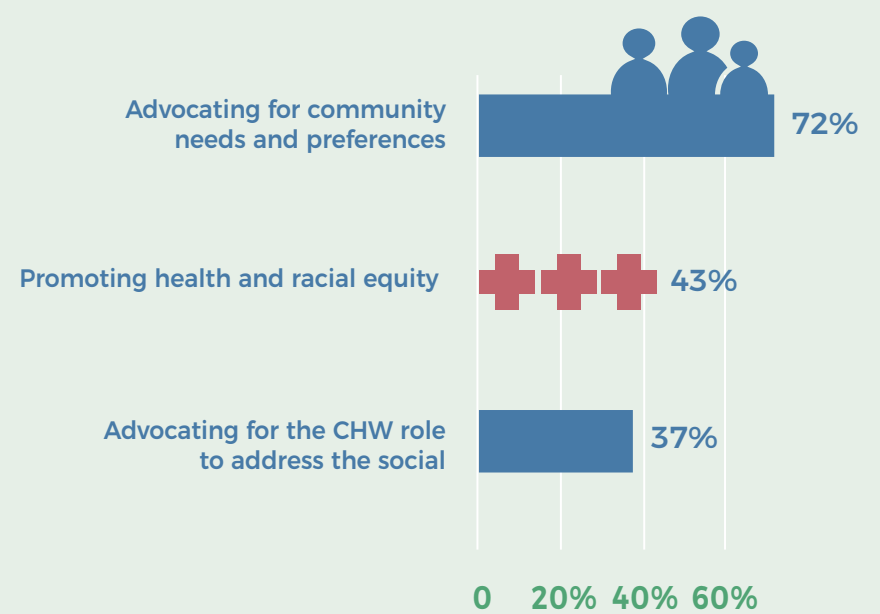
Top 5 items that describe what it means to be a CHW leader



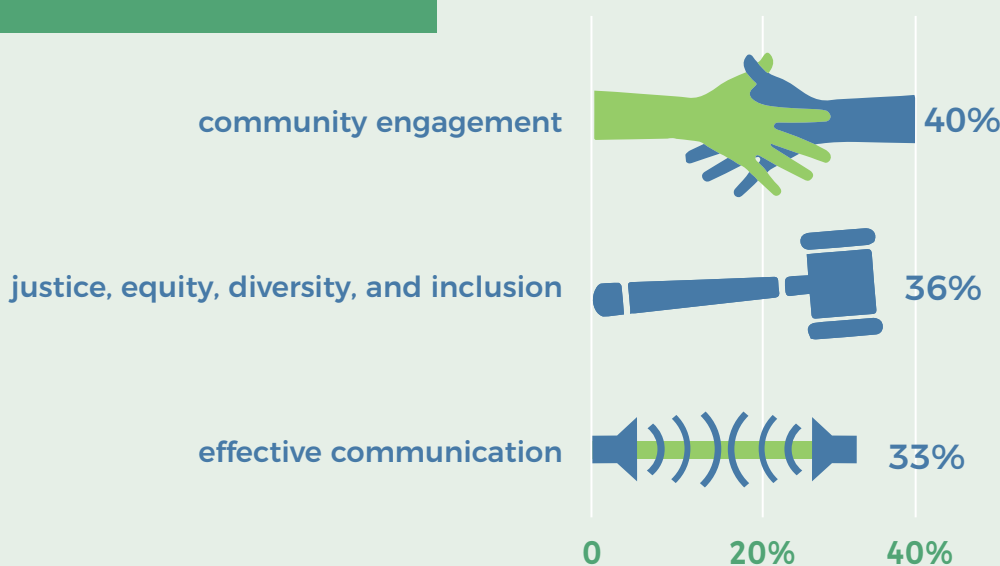
CHWs were also asked to rate their top 5 items that describe what it means to be a CHW leader. Of the 15 options, CHWs selected the following top 5:

- 1 Inspires others: 67.5%
2. Motivates other people: 66.0%
3. Addresses cultural and racial barriers: 45.9%
4. Is an agent of change: 41.6%
5. Impacts policy to better my community: 38.4%

Top 3 ways I express my leadership as a CHW



I am interested in building the following leadership skills (top 3)



CHWs confirm that a key way they express their identity as leaders is through their roles as advocates for community needs. They also acknowledge that this advocacy includes a focus on racial equity. Emerging as an urgent issue to realize CHW leadership, is to establish their roles to address the social determinants of health. Of the 14 options, CHWs selected the following top 3:

1. Advocating for community needs and preferences: 70.7%
2. Promoting health and racial equity: 42.8%
3. Advocating for the CHW role to address the social determinants of health: 40.0%

While CHWs reflect leadership capacity across roles and identities, CHWs were asked to answer their top 3 leadership skills from 15 options. The top responses included

1. Community engagement: 40.0%
2. Justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion: 35.6%
3. Effective communication: 33.4%
4. Grant writing: 29.9%
5. Partnership development: 22.0%



OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

- Co-develop justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion curriculum with CHWs and include these topics in CHW core competencies & training programs
- Core values developed by NACHW are endorsed by CHWs across the country and can be integrated into training, program, and policy development
- Employers should align the wording and assessment of CHW leadership capacity and readiness with the above descriptions as part of recruitment, job descriptions, promotional evaluations, and other opportunities
- State actors should prioritize the capacity, infrastructure, and sustainability of the CHW profession to address state-level plans and policy development.
- Payers and funders must include a description of CHWs' roles and services to address the social determinants of health in their models and grant opportunities.
- Workforce studies should explore CHWs in racial health equity and social determinants of health

ABOUT THIS PROJECT

The NACHW Advance CHWs project began in 2021 and is funded by Johnson and Johnson to advance the national professional identity, policy leadership and organizational capacity of Community Health Workers. CHWs is used as an umbrella term to describe community health representatives, promotores, aunties, outreach workers, peers and dozens of different work titles. CHWs are a diverse, capable, proven, frontline public health workforce, whose trust and cultural alignment with marginalized communities facilitates their roles as community educators, capacity builders, advocates and liaisons between under-resourced communities and health and social services systems (APHA, 2014).

CHWs' integration within medical, public health and social service initiatives are essential to eradicate racial and social injustice and health inequities disproportionately experienced by people of color. This data should be used for action to reverse harmful practices and barriers to CHW self-determination, leadership advancement and sustainability.

The survey, analysis and narratives were developed by NACHW staff and CHW leaders from across the country who are part of the Advance CHWs Project. Special thanks to our advisors and contributors to project phases. To learn more about the CHWs in this project and download all infographics and the full report please visit <https://nachw.org/advancechwsproject/>.