

Multicultural media and Ottawa's Latin American community

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Introduction

Extensive research has been conducted in the United States on the role of multicultural media in the identity formation of immigrant groups, but little research on the subject has been done in Canada. The Ottawa Multicultural Media Initiative (OMMI) aims to gain a better understanding of the role that multicultural media play in the integration and participation of Ottawa's immigrant communities. The study examines migrants' access to and use of media, as well as how they feel represented in Canadian media. This UROP project focuses more specifically on the Latin American community, its access to and use of multicultural media, its feelings of representation in the media, and the role of media in its integration and participation.

Approximately 3% of Canada's Latin American population resides in the Ottawa-Gatineau Census Metropolitan Area where they can access services in both official languages (Statistics Canada 2011). Many of these immigrants have come to Canada in the last 10 years and therefore it is important to study the potential role of media in their process of integration and participation in Canadian society.

Methodology

Preparatory reading

- Canadian multicultural media
- Latin Americans in Canada and the US

Census data analysis

- Community profile of Latin American immigrants in Ottawa

Literature search

- Literature review
- US-Canada comparison
- Content analysis

Data analysis

- 281 OMMI surveys completed by Latin American immigrants between May 2012-January 2013

Results of OMMI survey for the Latin American community

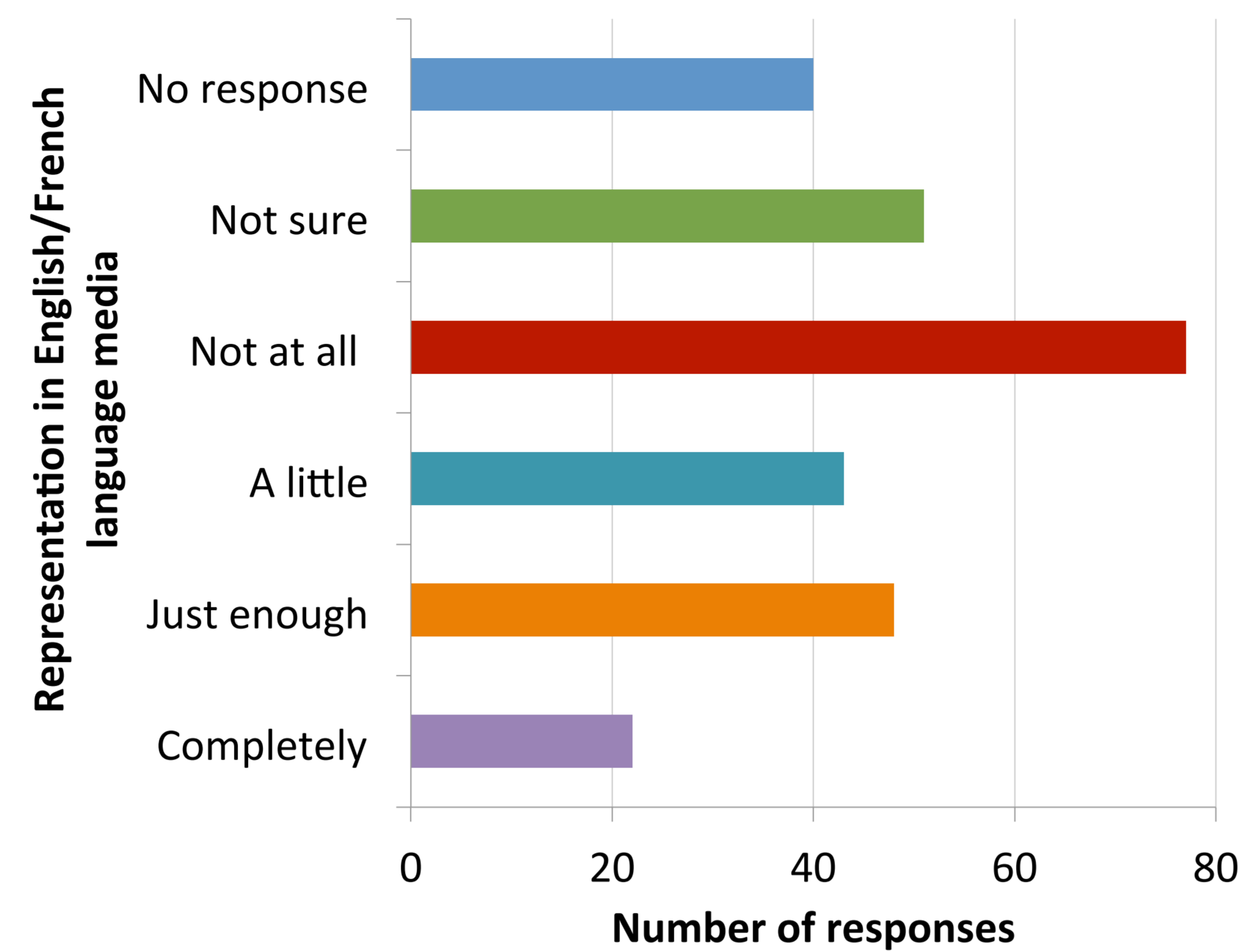


Figure 1 Representation in English/French language media, Latin American community. Regardless of gender, the majority of participants said they feel represented 'a little' or 'not at all' by English/French language media. 'Just enough' was also a popular response.

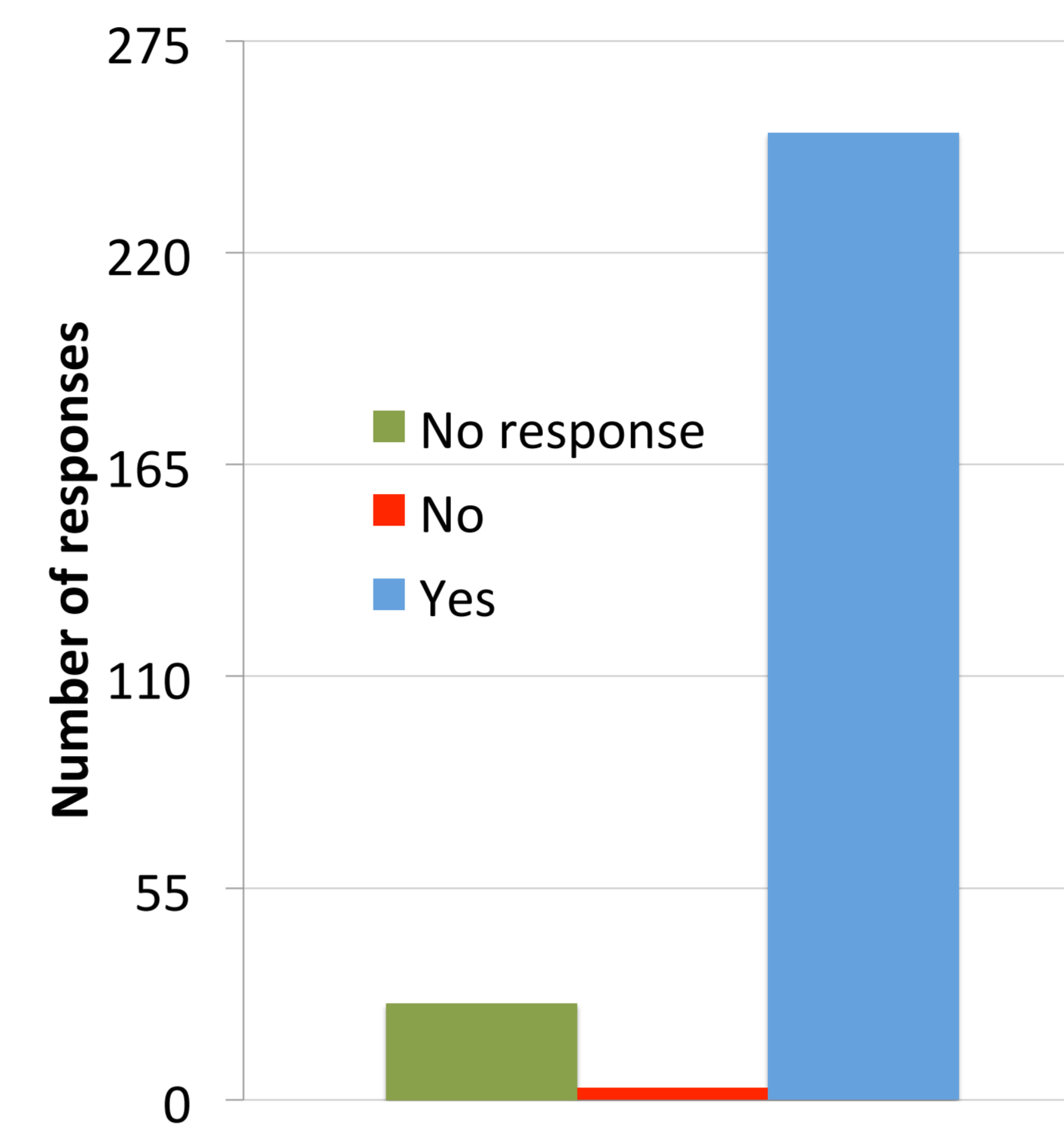


Figure 2 Latin American media help with civic engagement in Ottawa. Respondents said that Spanish language media helps them with civic engagement and feeling involved in the community.

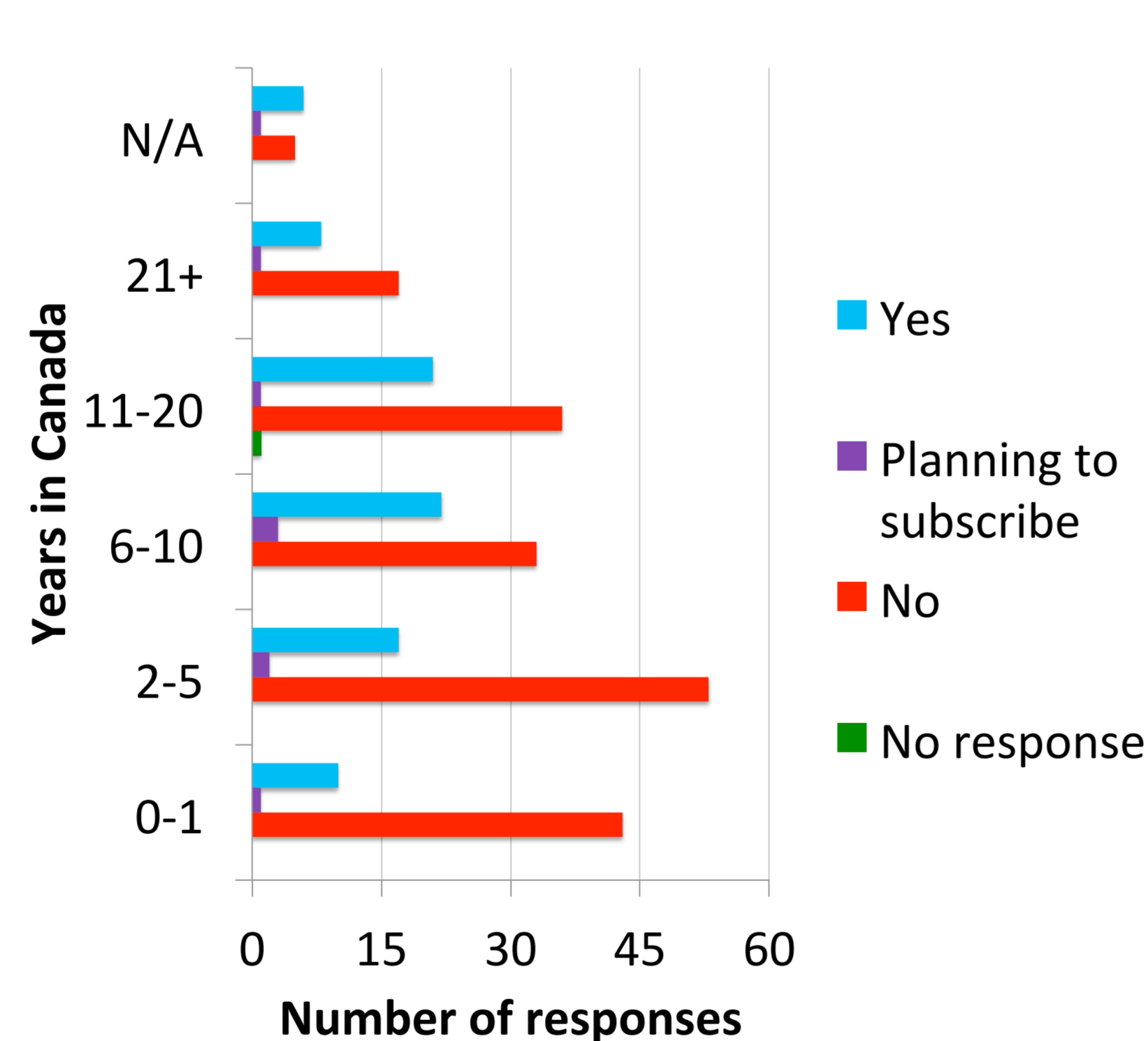


Figure 3 Subscription to Latin American media by number of years spent in Canada. 188 of 281 respondents said that they currently do not subscribe to Latin American media

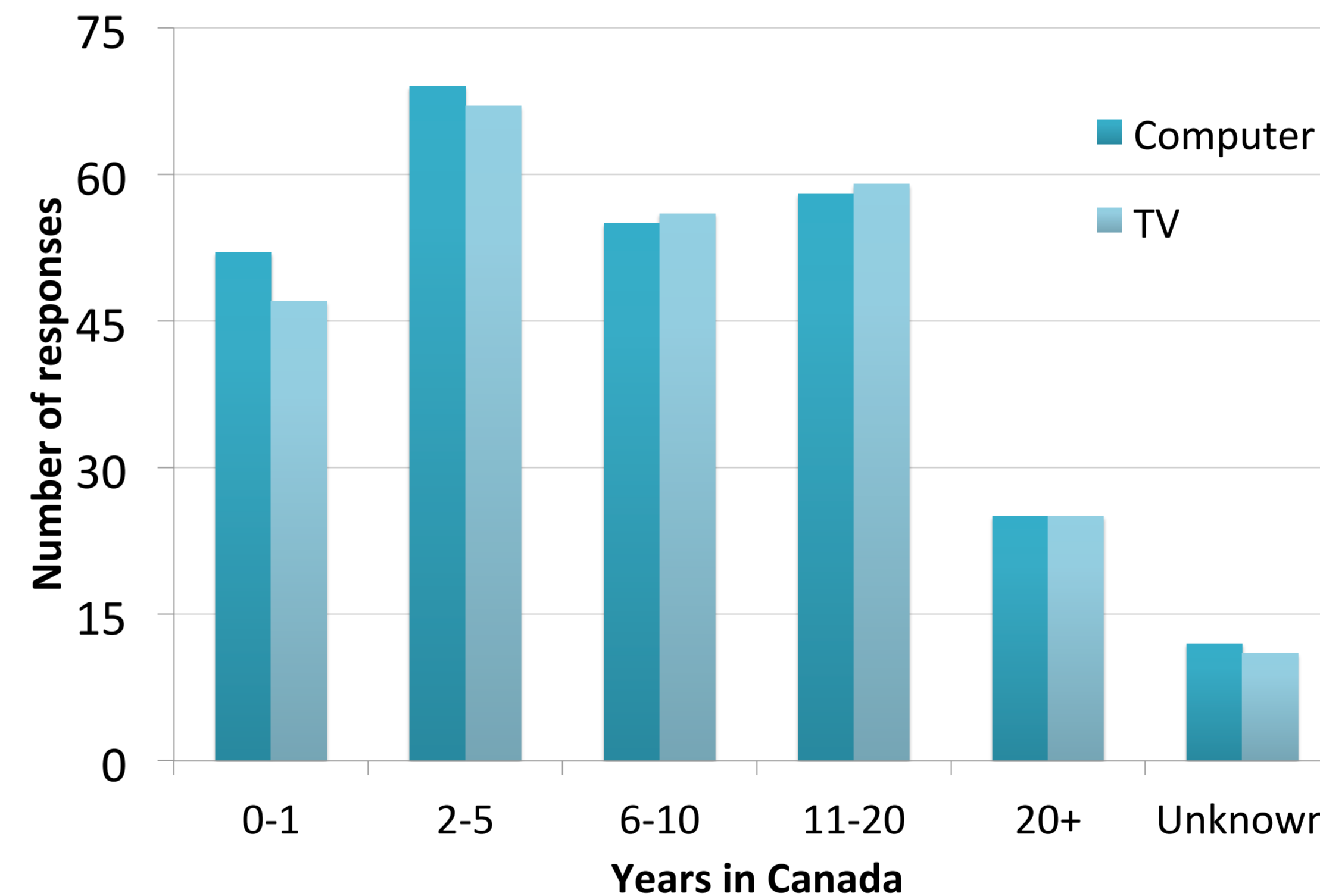


Figure 4 TV and computer access by number of years spent in Canada. 94% of respondents said they have a TV in their home and 96% said they have a computer in their home. Most of their media consumption is done online and new arrivals are extremely likely to use online media. This could mean that the migrants are highly educated and have the financial resources to access many forms of media.

Literature Review

Most existing research on Latin American media is US-based and consists of content analysis of various media, including newspapers, magazines, TV shows, and commercials.

The literature reveals that Latin Americans in the US tend to feel ridiculed and stereotyped by the media (Rivadeneira, 2011). Mastro and Ortiz (2008) found that Latin American women tend to be portrayed as homemakers and generally look younger than their business-oriented male counterparts. Nevertheless, it can be argued that Latin American media in the US put an emphasis on the vital role of the family in the lives of Latin Americans (ibid. 2008).

There is less research on Latin American media content and use in Canada. Moreover, there is little to no research on the role of multicultural media in migrants' settlement, integration, and participation in the receiving society.

Conclusion

The Latin American participants in the OMMI survey reported that they rarely subscribe to and consume Spanish language media such as radio and newspapers, likely a result of low availability of these forms of media in Ottawa. This lack of media could be due to a low density of ethnic population that makes it difficult to produce media.

Close to 100% of survey participants said they have a computer and TV in their home. This finding suggests that Latin Americans in Ottawa have the means to access media using sophisticated devices and feel at ease with technology. Participants said they do not subscribe to Latin American media and choose to use online media, including the City of Ottawa website to access local services and programs. This finding is significant for the City of Ottawa which should take it into account when designing its website in order to better cater the information provided to the local Latin American community.

This research is valuable because service providers and media outlets can learn how to better engage clients and viewers who belong to multicultural groups. It would be useful to conduct similar projects at a national level in order to understand how geographic and community context influence the access, use, and role of multicultural media in immigrant integration.

References

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