COVID-19 & LATINO COMMUNITIES

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19
ON LATINO COMMUNITIES IN
THE GREATER CHARLOTTE AREA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Camino Community Center is a non-profit organization focused on equipping all people to live healthy, hopeful, and productive lives. Since 2003, Camino has served low-income Latino families in the greater Charlotte area through a health clinic, mental health clinic, health education services, thrift store, food pantry, homeless outreach program, and a variety of other health and human services. The community center is **bilingual** and **multicultural**, bridging gaps between language and cultural barriers for families in need.

Since the onset of COVID-19 in March 2020, data on the impact of the pandemic on Latino communities has emerged across the US, demonstrating that

Latinos have been disproportionately impacted by the virus physically, emotionally, and financially.

However, much of this data comes from states with more established Latino immigrant populations like New York, Texas, or California. Given differences in community needs, the demographic makeup of the community, and access to services, these data are not generalizable to areas with relatively less established Latino immigrant populations like North Carolina (NC).

Existing data on Latino communities is often collected through instruments like the US Census or through surveys administered by academic or government institutions like the Pew Research Center, State and County Health Departments, or other government entities. Such data may not be representative of local immigrant communities, especially those in geographical areas with a high proportion of undocumented immigrants.

Undocumented immigrants are not likely to fill out the census or similar forms or participate in research studies due to fear of discrimination and/or deportation and a lack of trust in providing personal data to bureaucratic institutions.

Latinos make up approximately 10% of NC's total population (US Census Bureau, 2018). However, NC is estimated to have one of the highest undocumented populations in the US (Baker, 2017), meaning this number is likely highly underreported. Over 1 in 4 Latino residents in NC live in Mecklenburg or Wake Counties (US Census Bureau, 2018). The Latino population makes up more than 14% of the population in Mecklenburg County (US Census Bureau, 2018), 66% of whom are immigrants, with more than 100,000 of those being undocumented (UNC Charlotte Urban Institute, 2006).

Given this data is 15 years old, these numbers are likely much higher today. Not to mention, original numbers were likely underreported due to fear and mistrust in undocumented populations.

Camino's Research and Evaluation Department developed an electronic survey to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on the local Latino immigrant community, inclusive of individuals who may normally be excluded from similar studies conducted by other institutions. The survey was sent in Spanish to patients, clients, church members, and other members of Camino's networks.

In less than 24 hours, Camino was able to receive a response from 370 Latino immigrants, 20% of whom reported being undocumented. Within 72 hours, we received 422 responses.

The survey asked questions about the impact of COVID-19 on physical and mental wellbeing, finances, and employment status, and feelings on the vaccine. Preliminary findings show 73% are female, 90% are immigrants and approximately 40% are undocumented.

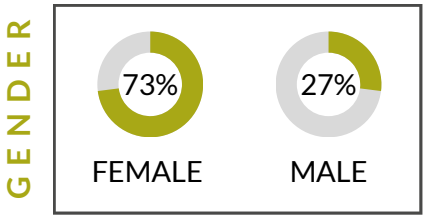
The implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on the financial situation of Latinos are noteworthy:

77% reported household income decreased; 64% reported a member of their household lost their job; 89% reported experiencing stress related to their financial situation; 71% reported some level of difficulty getting food; 73% reported some level of difficulty paying for medical appointments; 71% reported difficulty paying rent/mortgage. There are also negative implications on Latino's mental and physical wellbeing: 75% reported COVID-19 has impacted their physical wellbeing; 89% reported it impacted their mood; and 89% reported experiencing stress related to COVID-19. When asked about the COVID-19 vaccine, most respondents (68%) reported high likelihood of getting the vaccine if it were made available to them.

However, almost half of respondents (49%) felt there are barriers to getting the vaccine; the biggest barrier reported is a lack of trust in the vaccine or not knowing whether it will benefit them (37%), followed by a lack of health insurance (20%).

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

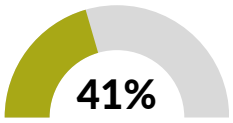
Between February 17 and February 22, 2021, 422 individuals responded to a survey conducted by the Department of Research and Evaluation at Camino. The following are the demographic findings:



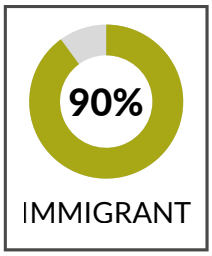
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

35% SOUTH AMERICA	**5%** DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
27% MEXICO	**4%** CUBA
26% CENTRAL AMERICA	**3%** PUERTO RICO*

*3% of all survey respondents wrote in "Puerto Rico" as their *country of origin.*

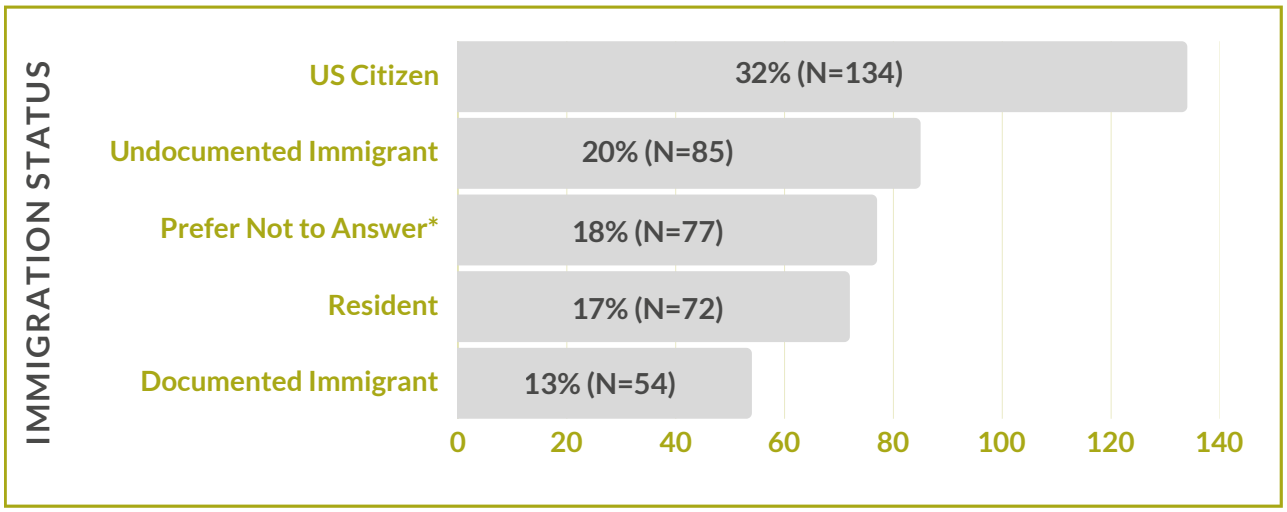


OF PEOPLE UNINSURED



20 DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

81 DIFFERENT US ZIP CODES

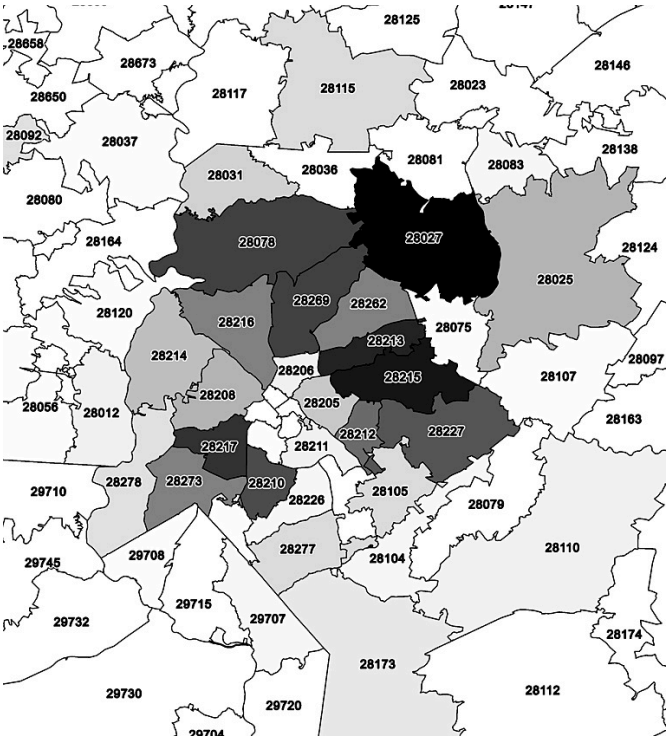


*Given Camino's extensive knowledge of and experience with the Latino community, it is highly likely those who selected "prefer not to answer" are undocumented, making the total approximately 38% n= (162) undocumented.

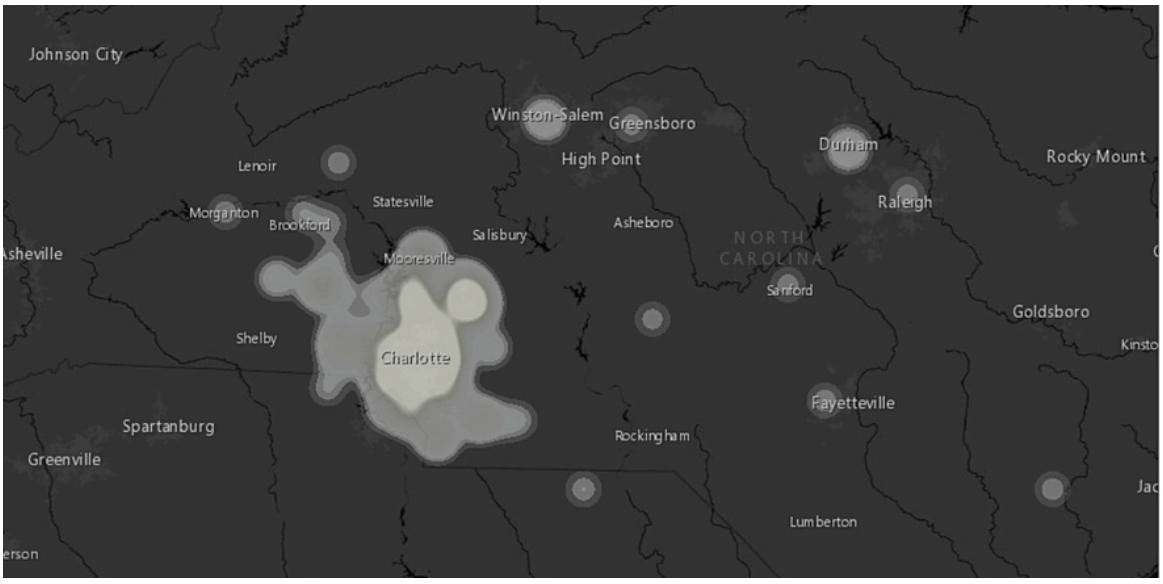
REACH

1.

Map 1 represents the amount of people who completed the survey in each zip code in and around Charlotte. Darker areas represent that more people filled it out within that particular zip code.



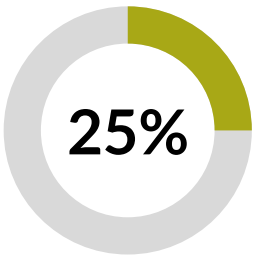
2.



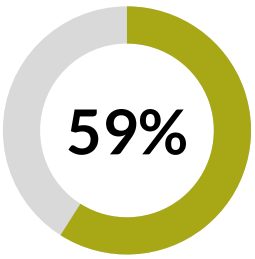
Map 2 demonstrates the reach the survey had across North Carolina. The larger areas highlight where more people completed it.

COVID-19 QUESTIONS

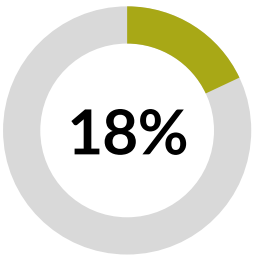
Participants were asked a series of questions about how COVID-19 has impacted them and their households. The following are their responses:



have tested positive for COVID-19



had someone in their household test positive for COVID-19



had a family member be hospitalized due to COVID-19

ABILITY TO OBTAIN NECESSARY SERVICES DURING COVID-19

Participants were asked a series of questions about their experience obtaining various services during the pandemic. The following are their responses:

71%

DIFFICULTY GETTING FOOD

299 participants reported difficulty getting food due to COVID-19.

66%

DIFFICULTY GETTING MEDICINE

277 participants reported difficulty getting medicine due to COVID-19.

73%

DIFFICULTY PAYING MEDICAL BILLS

307 participants reported difficulty paying for needed medical appointments due to COVID-19.

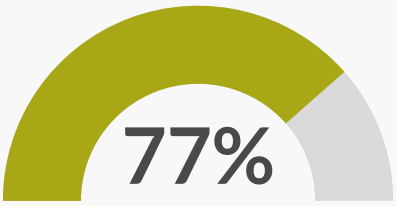
71%

DIFFICULTY PAYING FOR HOUSING

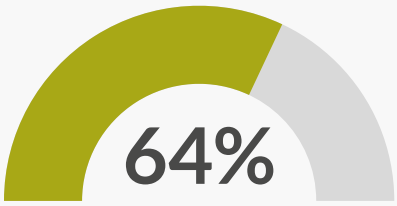
299 participants reported difficulty paying for rent or mortgage due to COVID-19.

FINANCIAL HEALTH AND COVID-19

Participants were asked how their financial situation has been impacted by COVID-19:



reported their household income decreased (n=**326**)



reported a member of their household lost their job (n=**270**)

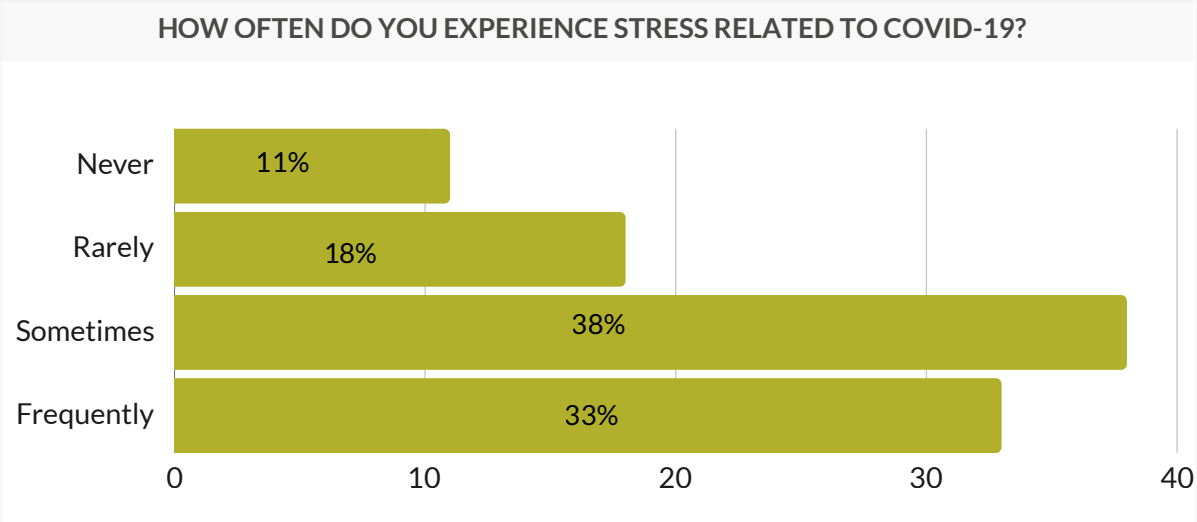
88%

REPORTED FINANCIAL STRESS

371 participants reported COVID-19 has caused them financial stress

PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND COVID-19

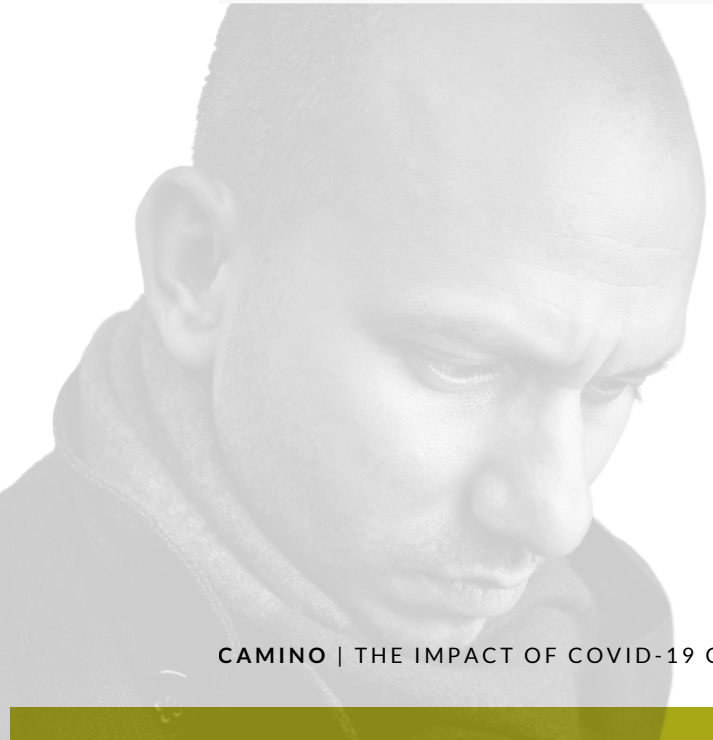
Participants were asked how COVID-19 impacted their physical and mental wellbeing:

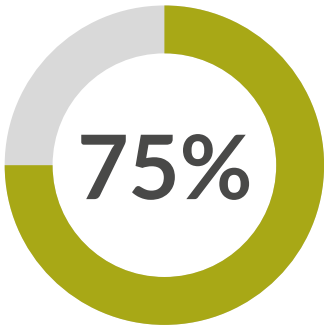


89%

EXPERIENCED STRESS

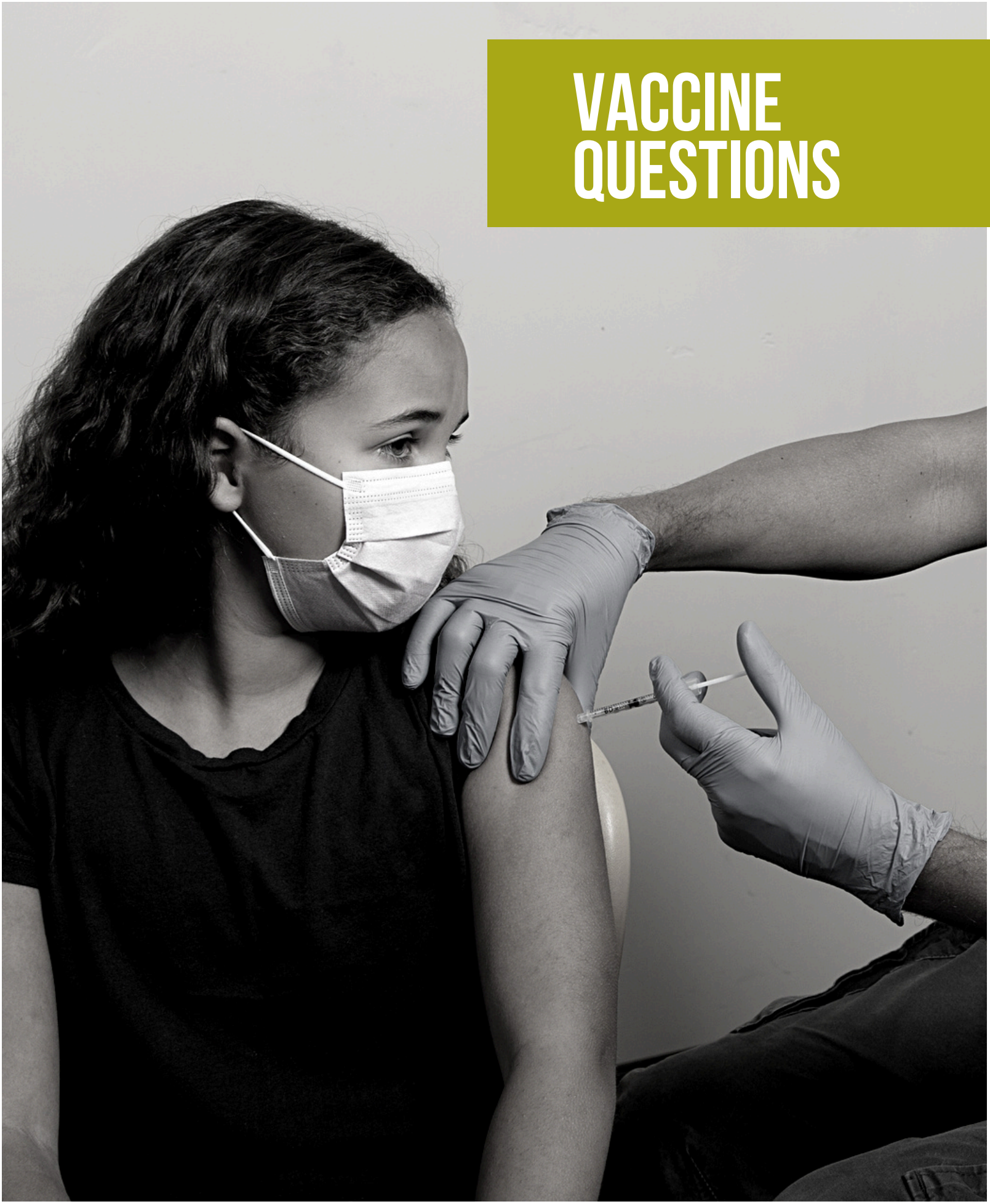
377 participants reported experiencing stress related to COVID-19





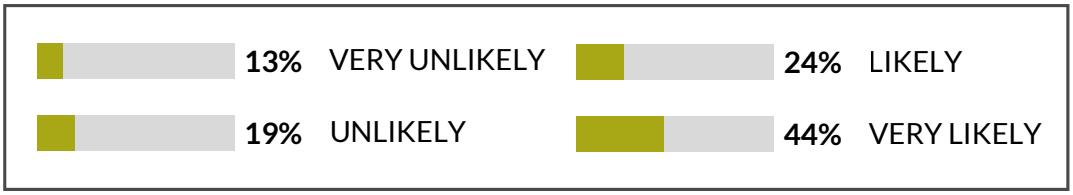
of participants reported COVID-19 has impacted their physical health (n=**315**)

VACCINE QUESTIONS

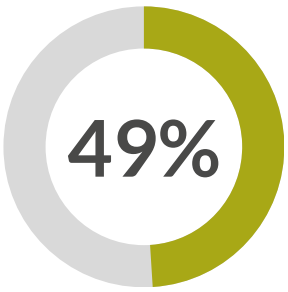


COVID-19 VACCINE & LATINO COMMUNITIES

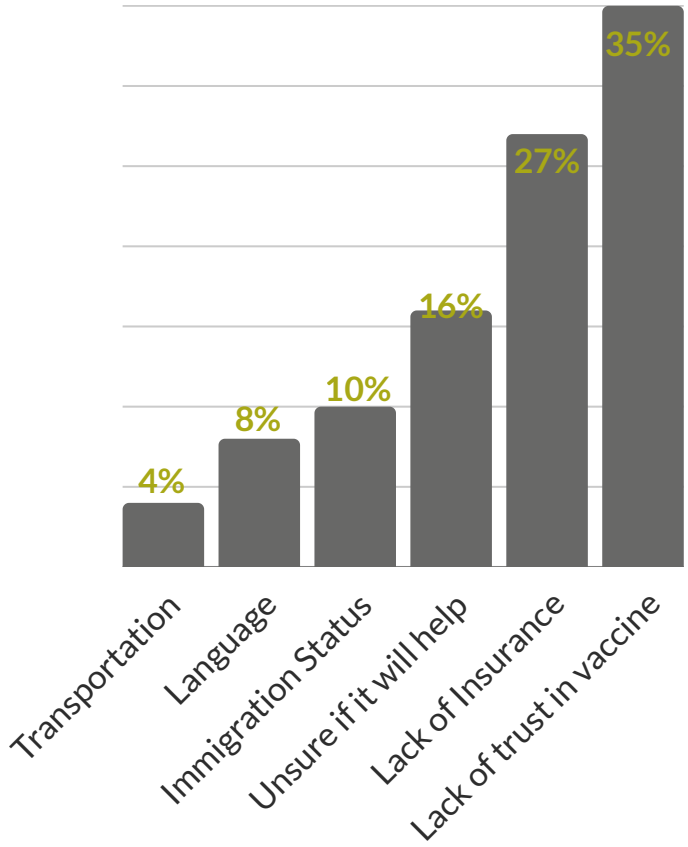
LIKELIHOOD OF GETTING COVID-19 VACCINE



BARRIERS TO GETTING COVID-19 VACCINE



of participants reported having barriers to getting the vaccine



CONCLUSION

This is the first survey to measure the perceived impact of COVID-19 on Latino immigrants in the greater Charlotte area. The data was collected by a community center that has worked for more than 20 years to establish the trust of the Latino community, increasing the likelihood the data is both truthful and representative of the local Latino immigrant community. Not to mention the survey captures the perspectives of undocumented immigrants, many of whom felt comfortable enough to report on their documentation status, and who may not have participated if the survey had been administered by another institution. Administering a survey such as this through a local community center ensures the inclusion of a group of people who are often left out of research and/or decision-making processes like the development and implementation of programs and services. This data shows Latino immigrants have been impacted by the pandemic—physically, emotionally, and financially. This data also shows Latino immigrants would receive the COVID-19 vaccine if it were made available to them, disproving a common misconception that Latino immigrants do not want the vaccine. In fact, Camino Community Center successfully vaccinated 80 community members at a recent COVID-19 vaccine clinic in February 2021; 90% of those with a scheduled appointment showed up to receive the vaccine. Taken together, these findings suggest low rates of vaccines in Latinos may be due to a lack of access to the vaccine through trusted sources, rather than a lack of desire to be vaccinated. Data from this report can be used to inform the development of programs and services that meet the needs of the Latino immigrant community in the Charlotte area.

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Camino Worldwide

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