

LANGUAGE ACCESS

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- Translation
- Interpretation
- Health Literacy
- Digital Literacy
- Technology
- Language Lines
- Financial Literacy



The **Language Access** domain of the SDOH deals with large issues, such as news being difficult to understand for non-native English speakers, and small issues, such as nutrition facts on the labels of food and food packages being difficult to interpret. The following section will review survey questions related to demographics and social circumstances through the lens of language access. Language access was also discussed at length in some of the focus groups, quotes and analysis from which are examined at the end of this section.

GEOGRAPHY

Erie County has a high percentage of residents who speak languages other than English as their primary language. However, when asked "How well do you speak English?" most ZIP codes have response rates of *Very Well* at over 99%. Several areas of Erie County reported lower English fluency, including the City of Buffalo and the City of Lackawanna. The 14203 ZIP code was the least likely to respond *Very Well* of urban ZIP codes, at less than 93%.

Of the 58 individuals who indicated they speak *English Not Well* or *Not at All*, 51 live in Buffalo ZIP codes.

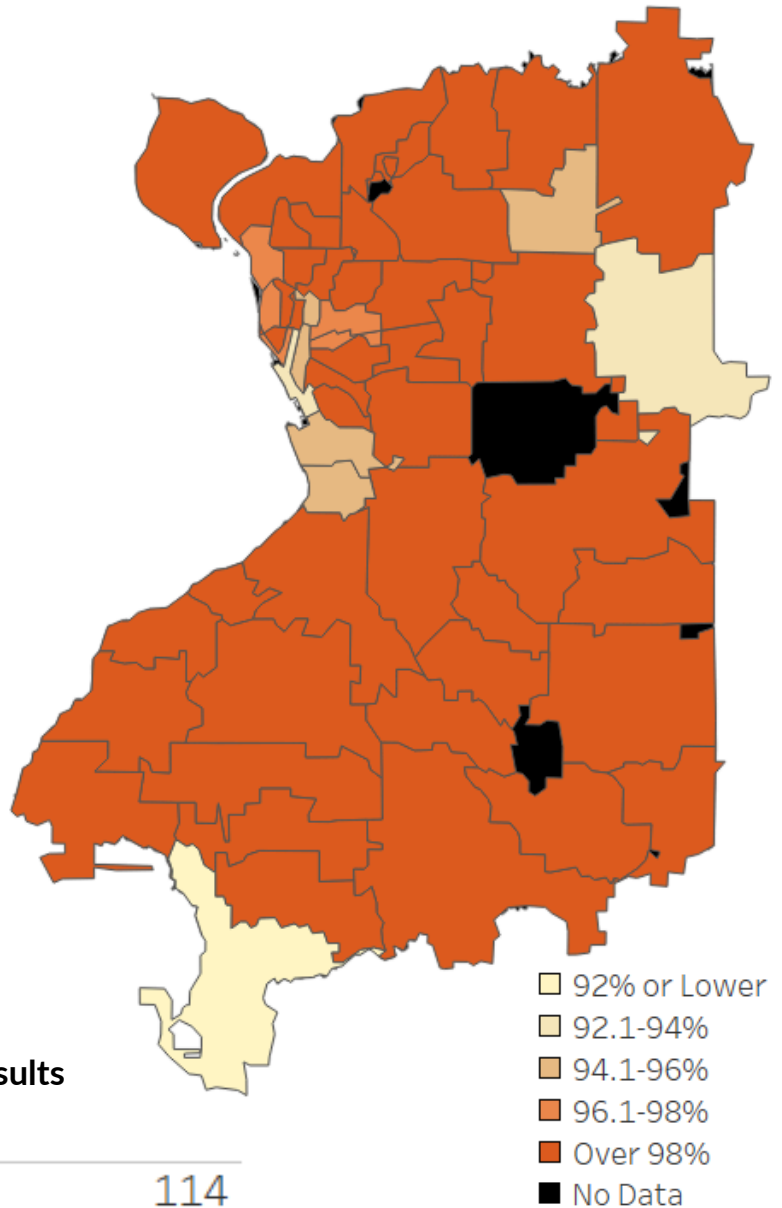
14203

on the West Side of Buffalo was the ZIP code the lowest positive response among urban areas, with 7.4% of respondents indicating they spoke *English Not Well* or *Not at All*.

2%

of survey respondents indicated they speak *English Not Well* or *Not at All*.

English Speaking Ability by ZIP Code



English Speaking Ability Overall Results

How well do you speak English?

Do Not Wish to Say	114
Not at All	9
Not Well	49
Well	211
Very Well	3,068

Some ZIP codes have fewer than 10 respondents. Therefore, the rates depicted on the map may not be representative of the community within these areas.

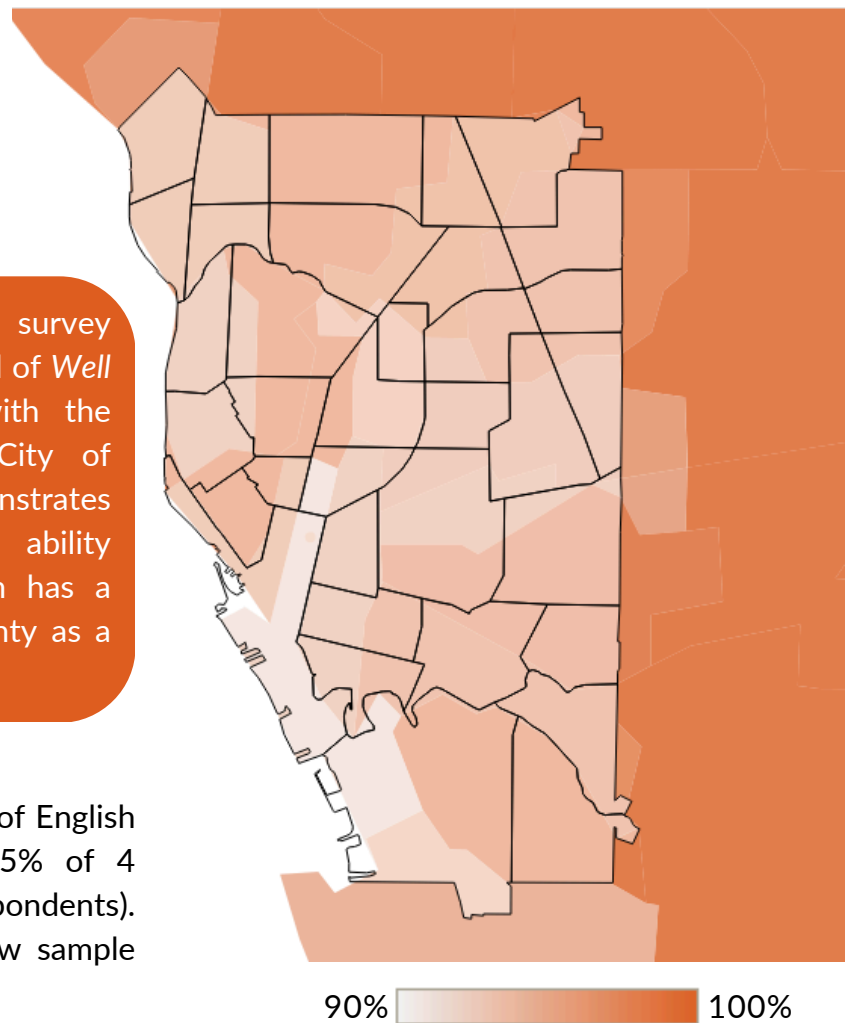
GEOGRAPHY

Gaps in English language fluency are most obvious in the City of Buffalo. ZIP codes within the Central and Fruit Belt neighborhoods are most strongly affected, with more than 7% of respondents indicating that they speak English *Not Well* or *Not at All*.

English Speaking Ability by ZIP Code with City of Buffalo Neighborhoods

This map shows the ability of survey respondents to speak English at a level of *Well* or *Very Well* against ZIP code, with the neighborhood breakdown of the City of Buffalo in an overlay layer. This demonstrates the difference in English speaking ability between the City of Buffalo, which has a variety of percentages, and Erie County as a whole, which is much more uniform.

Several other ZIP codes have low rates of English language fluency, including 14070 (25% of 4 respondents) and 14004 (93% of 14 respondents). This may be attributable to notably low sample sizes in those areas.

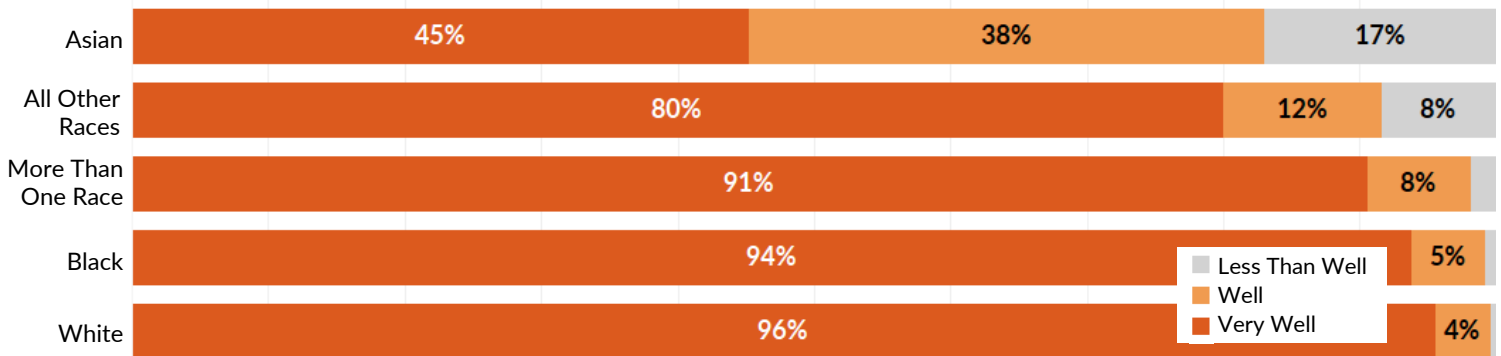


Some ZIP codes have fewer than 10 respondents. Therefore, the rates depicted on the map may not be representative of the community within these areas.

RACE

There appears to be a significant correlation between English fluency and race that does not appear to include respondents who are Black, White, or More Than One Race. Respondents who indicated a race outside of these three categories, including Middle Eastern or North African, American Indian or Alaska Native, Pacific Islander or Hawaii Native, and Asian respondents, had markedly lower response rates of *Well* or *Very Well*.

English Speaking Ability by Race



45%

of the 116 Asian respondents indicated that they speak English *Very Well*, the lowest of any race.

24%

of Middle Eastern or North African respondents speak English *Less Than Very Well*.

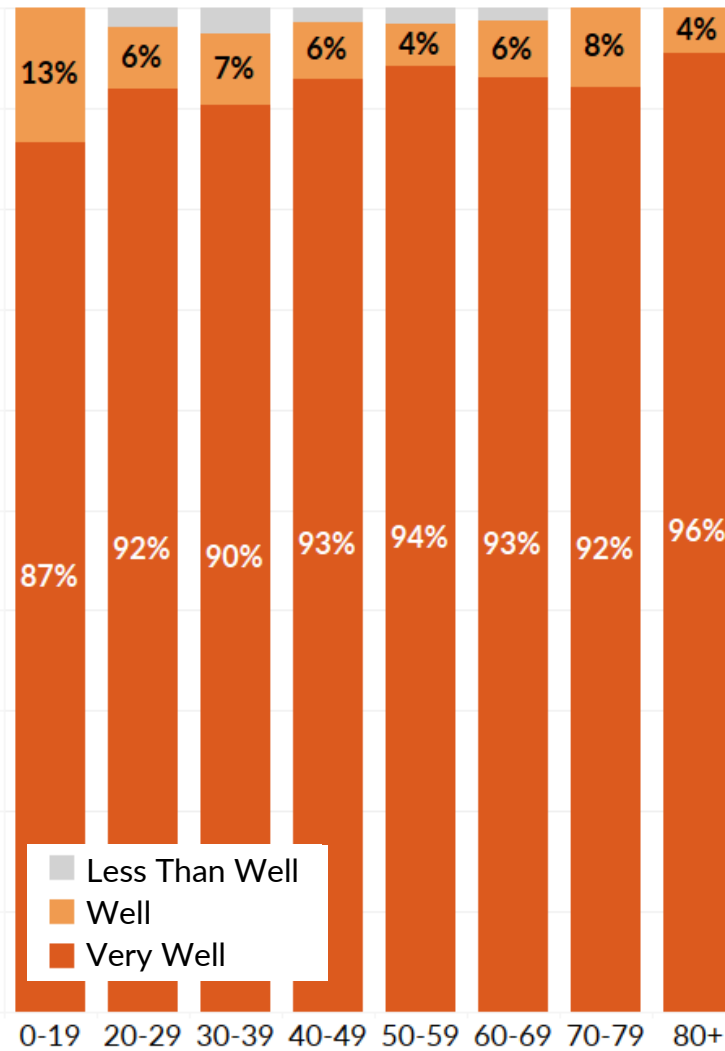
40%

of Pacific Islander or Hawaii Native respondents speak English *Less Than Very Well*.

Middle Eastern or North African, American Indian or Alaska Native, Pacific Islander or Hawaii Native, and Asian respondents were the least likely to indicate that they spoke English *Well* or *Very Well*, all at less than 60%. The highest rates were among Black and White respondents, both with a greater than 99% response rate of *Well* or *Very Well*.

AGE AND EMPLOYMENT

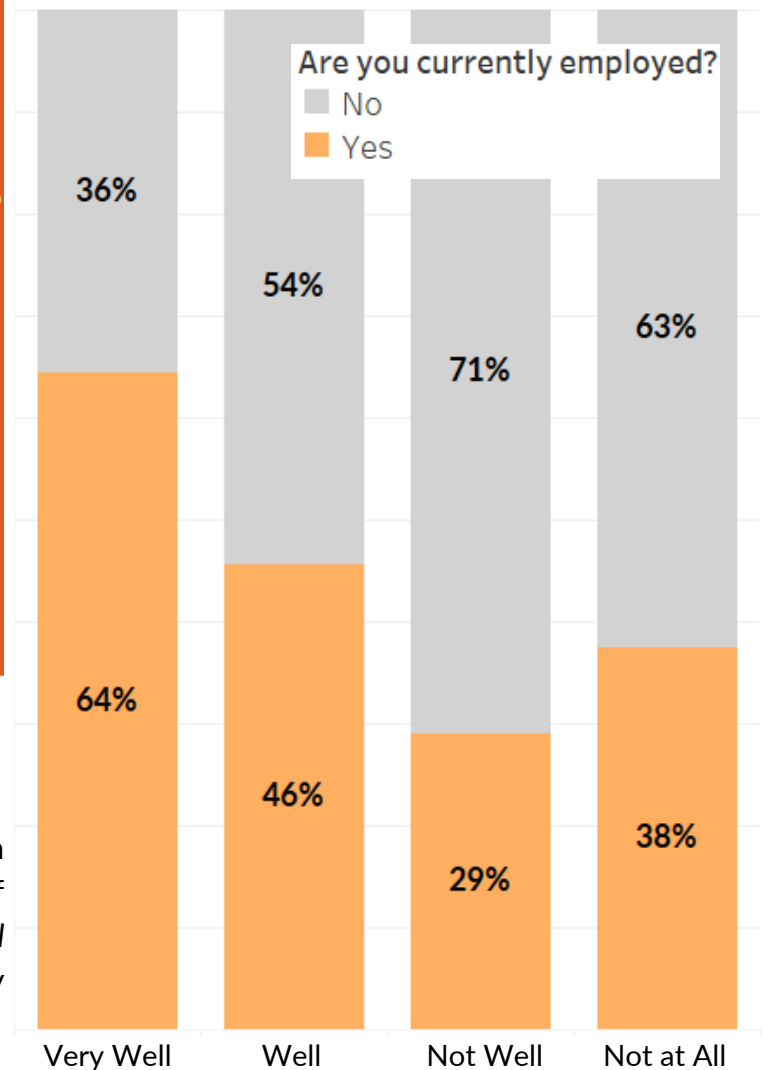
English Speaking Ability & Age



Age as a Factor

Adults aged 30-39 are the least likely to respond that they speak English *Very Well* and the most likely to indicate that they speak English *Not Well* or *Not at All*. There appears to be an increase in English speaking ability among respondents as they age.

Employment & English Speaking Ability



Employment and Language Skills

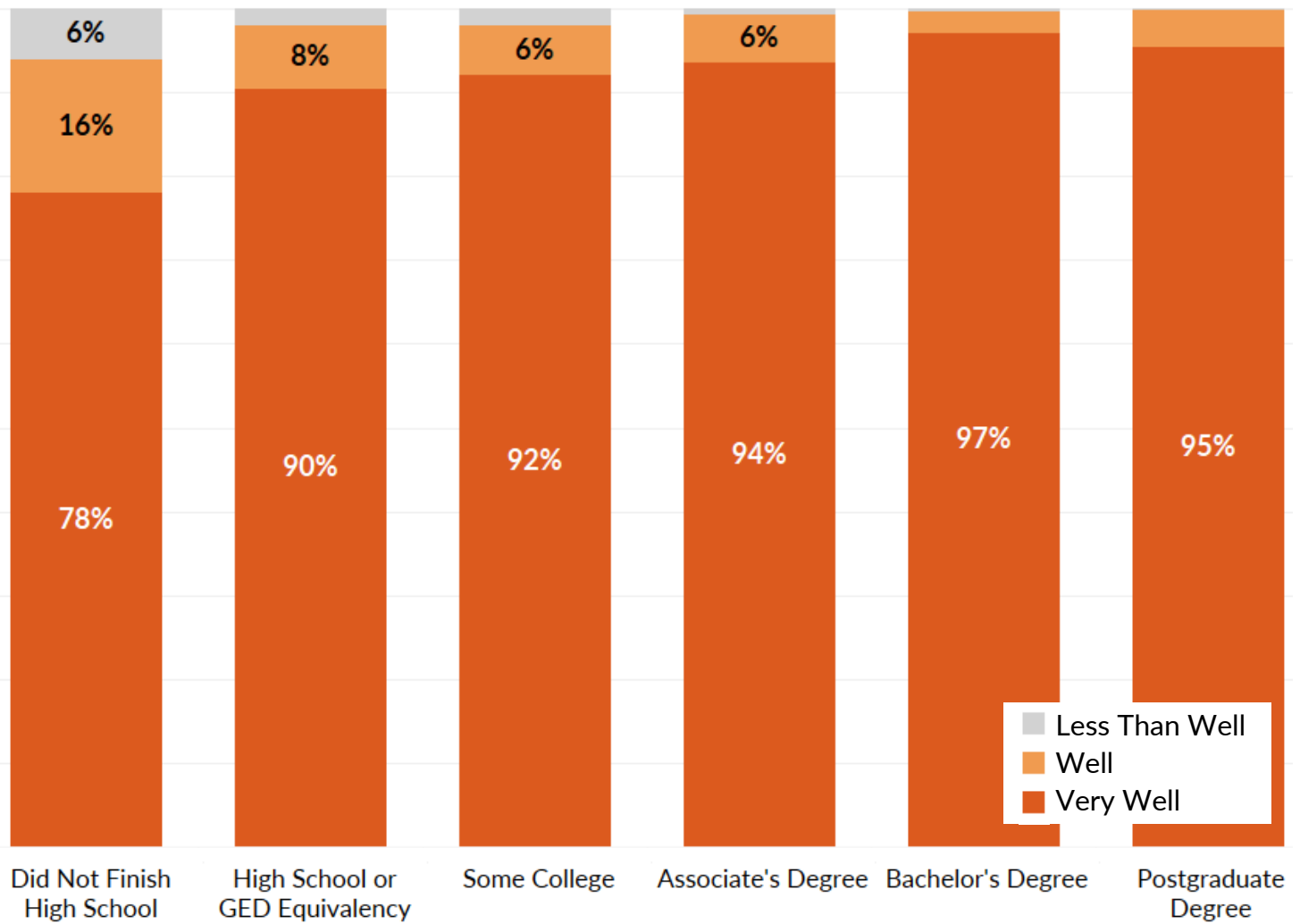
Of those who responded that they speak English *Very Well*, 67% said that they were *Employed*. Of those who said that they speak English *Not Well* or *Not at All* only 25% and 28% said that they were *Employed*, respectively.

Respondents who speak English at a level of *Well* or *Very Well* have an employment rate of 63%, more than double the employment rate of those who speak English *Less Than Well*, only 30% of respondents. This highlights English speaking ability as a major barrier to employment in Erie County.

EDUCATION

When compared with education level, notable patterns begin to appear within the responses to the question “How well do you speak English?” The highest percentage by far of individuals who speak English at a rate *Less Than Well* was among those who *Did Not Finish High School*. Of the 278 individuals who indicated they *Did Not Finish High School*, 44 indicated they speak English *Well* and 17 indicated that they speak English *Less Than Well*.

English Speaking Ability and Education

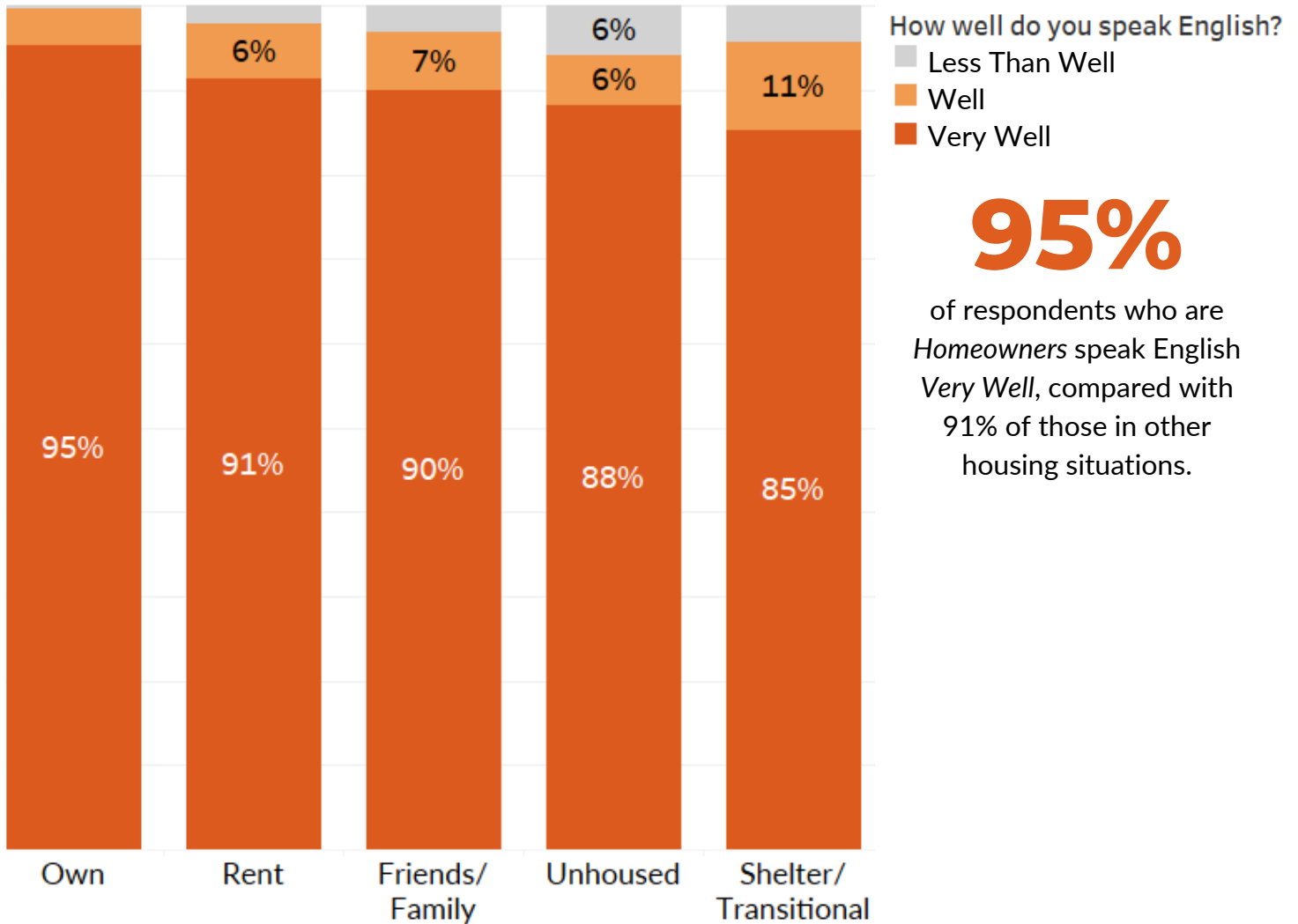


There appears to be a relationship between English speaking ability and education, as nearly all respondents with a *College Degree* indicated that they speak English at a level of *Very Well* at 96%, compared with only 89% of those with *No College Degree*.

HOUSING

Housing appears to be correlated with English speaking ability, with only 58 of the 1291 Homeowners who responded to the survey indicating that they speak English *Less Than Well*. As shown below individuals who *Rent*, are staying with *Friends/Family*, are *Unhoused*, or are living in a *Shelter/Transitional Housing* are less likely to have indicated that they speak English *Well* or *Very Well*.

English Speaking Ability & Housing Situation



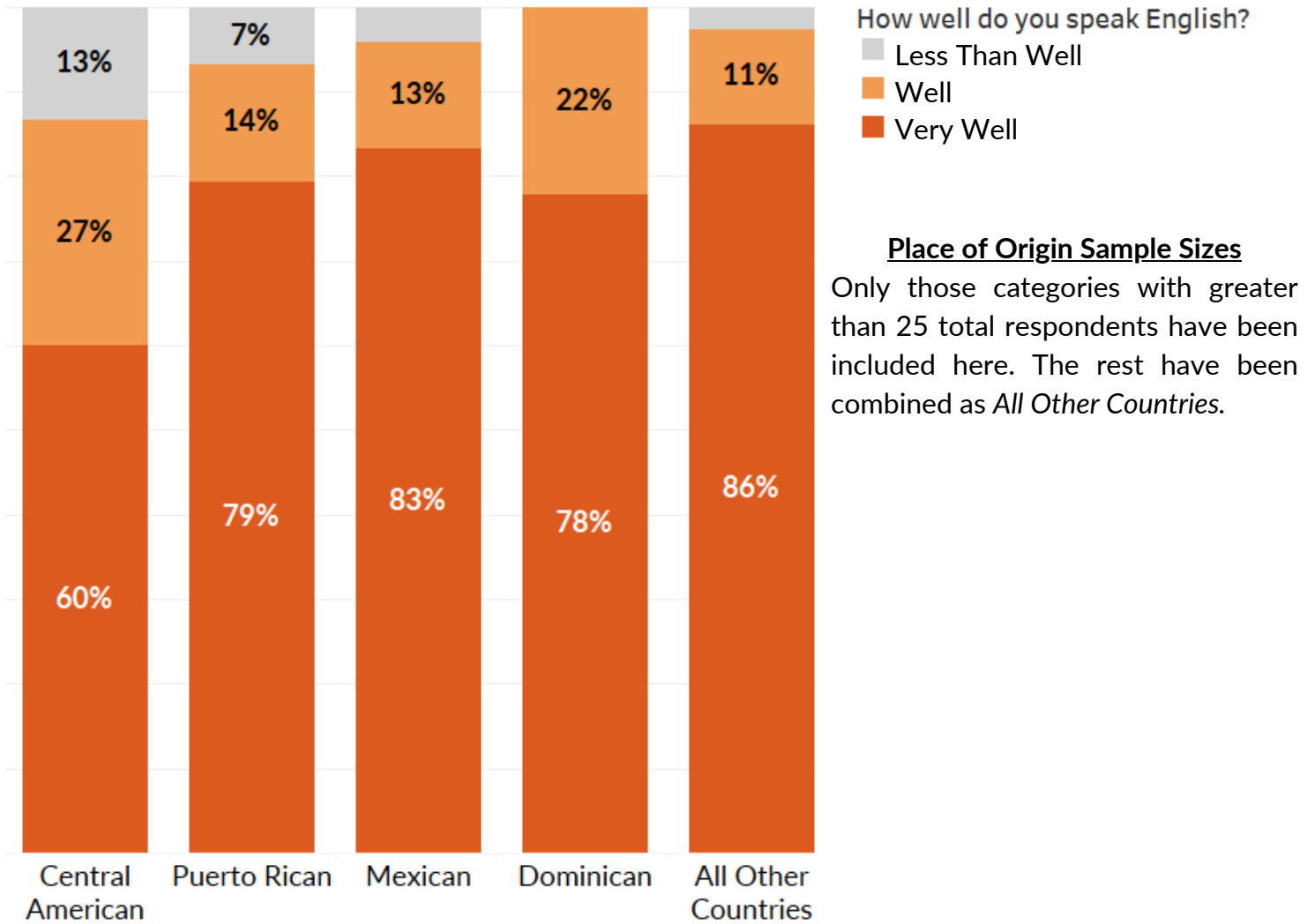
39%

of respondents born in a *U.S. Territory* or *Outside the United States* are Homeowners, compared to 45.3% of those born in the *United States*.

PLACE OF ORIGIN

Of the Erie County Residents who responded to the survey, 227 denoted their ethnicity as Hispanic/Latino and then further specified their place of origin. This amounts to 6% of the total survey population. There was a meaningful amount of variance in the English language proficiency between these groups.

**English Speaking Ability by Place of Origin
Among Hispanic/Latino Respondents**

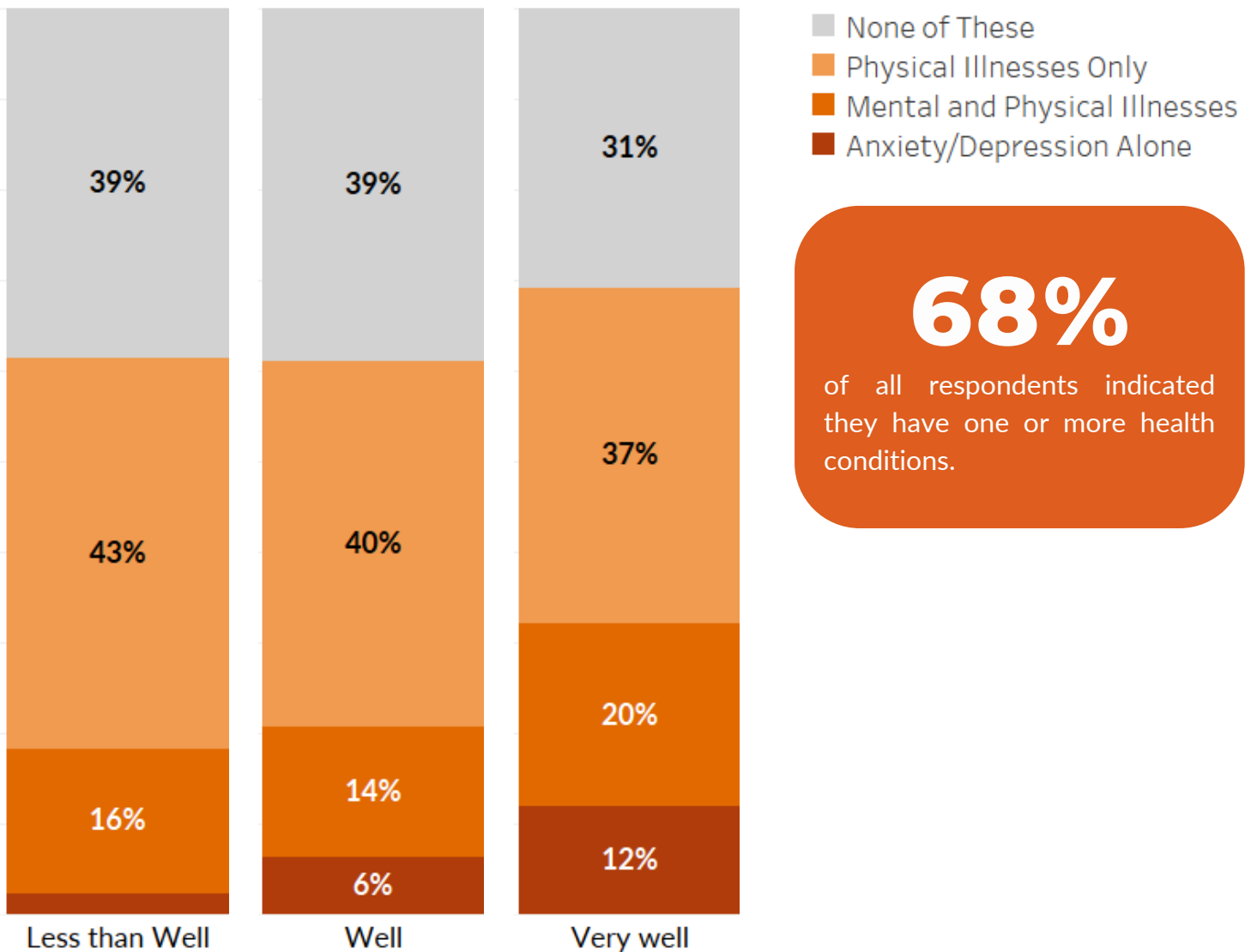


79%

of all individuals who selected a country as a response to this question indicated that they speak English at a rate of *Very Well*. The highest rates of respondents who indicated that they speak English *Less Than Very Well* were among those of *Central American* origin, at 9 of the 13 respondents, and those of *South American* origin, at 4 of the 6 respondents.

HEALTH CONDITIONS

Respondents were given a list of health conditions and asked to select all those that apply to them. These conditions included conditions such as *Disease of the Liver, Asthma, Cancer, and Anxiety/Depression*. Responses other than *Anxiety/Depression* were categorized into the aggregate category *Physical Illnesses* and were then compared to responses of *Anxiety/Depression Alone* and responses that included both *Mental and Physical Illnesses*. Individuals who do not speak English fluently appear to disproportionately experience certain conditions, as these responses are not evenly distributed.

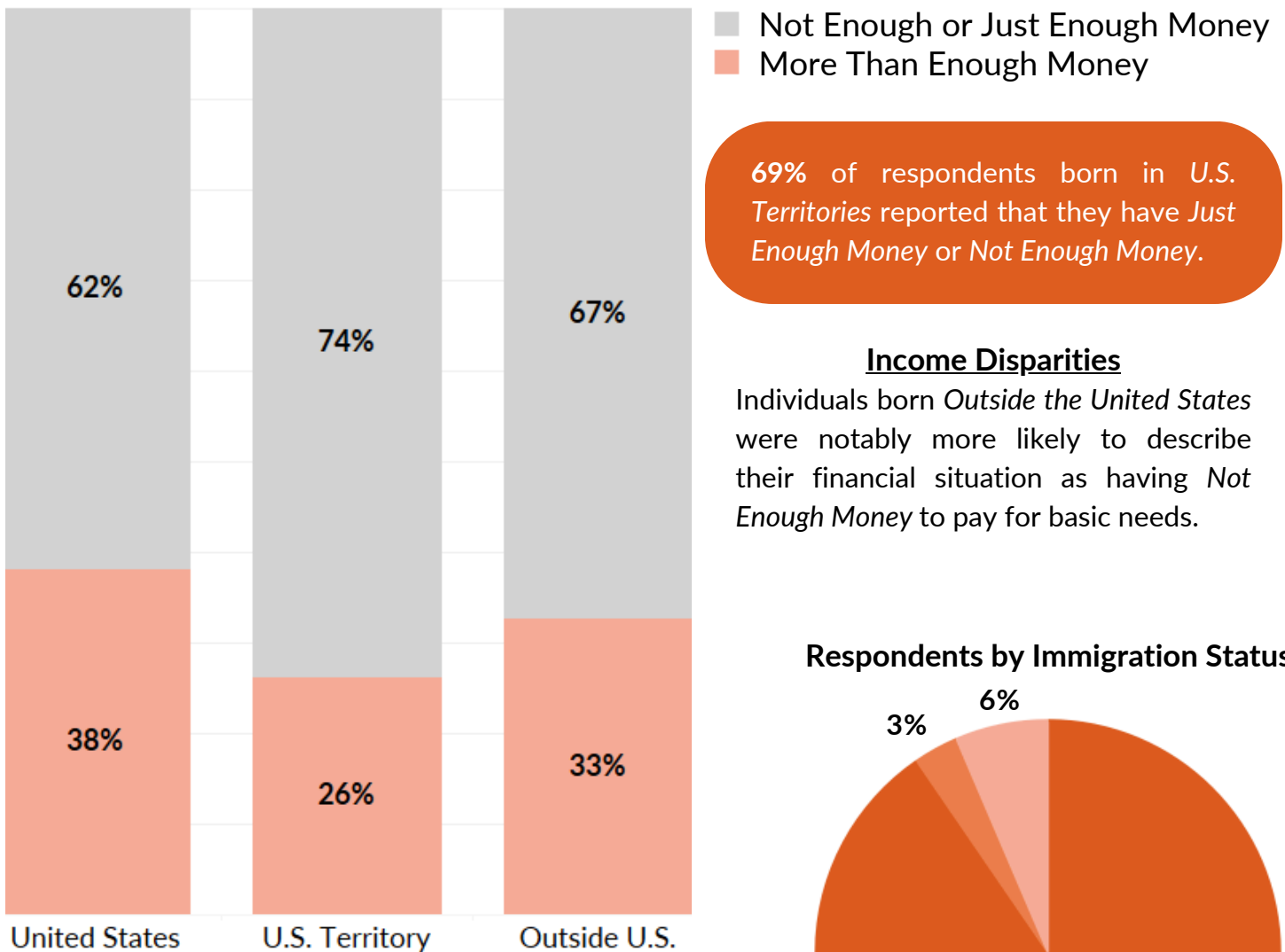


Several health conditions correlated with notably high or low rates of English speaking ability. Of respondents who indicated that they have a disease of the liver, only 73% indicated that they speak English *Very Well*, compared with 92% of the survey population as a whole. Of individuals who indicated that they experience *Anxiety/Depression*, whether alone or in combination with another health outcome, more than 95% of respondents indicated that they speak English *Very Well*.

INCOME

Respondents were asked “Which of the following best describes your financial situation?” and could select from responses indicating that they had *Just Enough Money* for their needs or *Not Enough Money* for their needs. These two categories are combined below to compare against those who have *More Than Enough Money* to pay for all of their household’s bills and expenses. These results are compared below with the immigration status of the respondents, for which question respondents could indicate they were born in one of the 50 *United States*, in one of the *U.S. Territories* (e.g. Guam, Puerto Rico), or that they were born *Outside the United States*.

Financial Situation by Immigration Status

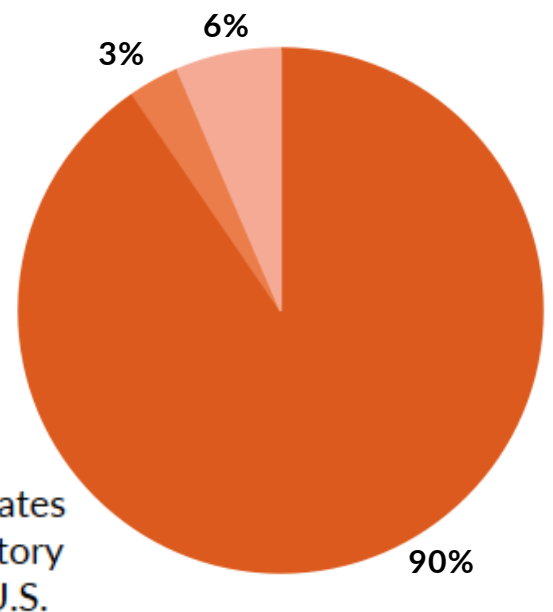


69% of respondents born in U.S. Territories reported that they have *Just Enough Money* or *Not Enough Money*.

Income Disparities

Individuals born *Outside the United States* were notably more likely to describe their financial situation as having *Not Enough Money* to pay for basic needs.

Respondents by Immigration Status



10%
of respondents were born in a *U.S. Territory* or *Outside the United States*.

■ United States
■ U.S. Territory
■ Outside U.S.

FOCUS GROUPS ON LANGUAGE ACCESS

Spanish Language Access

Below are a number of quotes and takeaways from the ECOHE focus groups related to challenges faced by Spanish speakers. These quotes and takeaways came primarily—but not exclusively—from the Hispanic/Latino focus group and the Urban Caregivers focus group. The majority of participants in both of these focus groups spoke Spanish as their primary language.

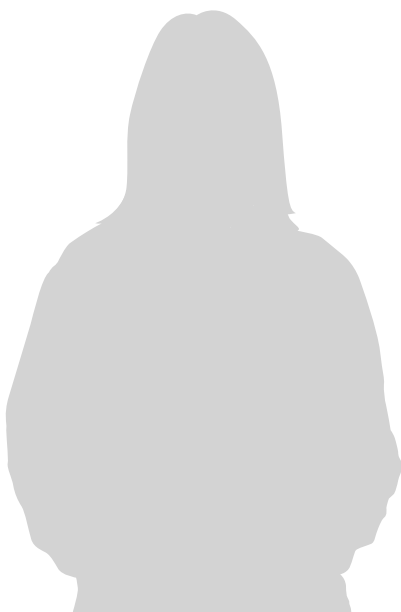
“I had a year and a half left. All my [college] paperwork is in Spanish. So when I went to college in downtown, they told me they cannot accept the paperwork. That I need I need to pay somebody \$400. \$400 to translate all the paperwork. I want to go to school! I want to go back to school and I have to pay them to translate my paperwork when they are supposed to have these people in college that do that. [...] I went to [a local organization]. And they want to charge me \$400. And I said, What kind of help is that? [...] \$100 a page. [...] I came in here for help. And you're going to charge me all this money?”

-Urban Caregivers Focus Group



Translation and Interpretation in Spanish

Two of the most prominent issues discussed in focus groups by Spanish speakers were ease of access to information in Spanish and access to translation services. Several participants noted that getting reliable information in Spanish is difficult, particularly before, during, and following the 2022 Blizzard. Lack of accommodation to Spanish speakers in medical settings and community settings was a concern expressed in both the Urban Caregivers Focus Group and the Hispanic/Latino Focus Group.



“And there's a lot of women that need help filling [paperwork] out, like extensively. You know, like when [Spanish-speaking inmate] gets paperwork, she gets confused and then she needs help explaining because of the language barrier.”

-Incarcerated Women Focus Group

FOCUS GROUPS ON LANGUAGE ACCESS

Bengali Language Access

One focus group was conducted with the Bangladeshi community. This focus group captured responses on Bengali language access as well as assumptions made about which languages a person might speak based on their appearance or religion.

“Changing yourself is a big challenge. We have to change a lot of things. Our language, our pronunciation, accent.”

-Bangladeshi Focus Group



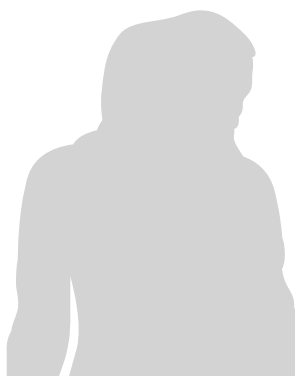
Lack of Access to Information in Bengali

Participants of the Bangladeshi focus group expressed a lack of access to medical information in languages that are easy for them to understand.

“At ECMC, I saw that everything written in different languages, but not in our language. I saw Chinese language, the Indian language, and Arabic language, but it—as a growing community, we have to establish that one thing, [language access]. And as a Bengali, because now a lot of patients [are] going to all the hospital and would like Bengali speaking [care providers]. They're going to read Bengali. [...] Arabic language, we can read but we cannot understand. This is the thing. Indian language we understand, but cannot read.”

-Bangladeshi Focus Group

Additionally, participants expressed similar views to those in the Spanish speaking focus groups, noting that interpretation services are available but may not be reliable.



“Generalization is a big thing in American culture. So you just see Islam as Islam is the same thing as Arabs. And then anyone who looks remotely Indian is just all Indian.”

-Bangladeshi Focus Group

“In some of the facilities they have an interpretation service, but the interpreter is not available. [...] I helped a lady who was in the court and because she's my family friend I have to go with her every time she has a court date because there is no interpreter. And even though there is an interpreter available and maybe she's more likely to be [waiting] maybe half an hour.”

-Bangladeshi Focus Group