

What's keeping some Hispanic Americans from getting the COVID shot?

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While a large number of Hispanic Americans have received at least one

dose of a COVID-19 vaccine at this point, a new study suggests barriers may still stand in the way for those who might want to get shots.

Researchers identified four key [barriers to vaccination](#): access to appropriate health care services, money, concerns about immigration and misinformation.

"We're falling short on outreach that is culturally and linguistically relevant, that is considerate of people who aren't just culturally diverse but who have specific needs and continue to struggle with equity and access," said study co-author Adriana Perez, an associate professor of nursing at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.

[Many barriers exist for Latino adults](#), said study co-author David Marquez, a professor of kinesiology and nutrition at the University of Illinois Chicago.

"Most are rooted in inequities that Latino people face," he said. "This study brings some of those to light and how we might better address them."

Researchers worked with 21 individuals who were part of another study that focused on factors influencing Latino participation in research.

The new study was conducted early in the pandemic, between April and June 2020, before COVID vaccines were available.

Participants were divided into three focus groups. They shared how they felt about being [tested for COVID](#) and whether they would get a [vaccine](#) if one was developed.

Twelve administrators of organizations serving primarily Latino communities in urban and rural California also answered questions about

barriers they saw to testing and vaccination.

About a year after the COVID vaccines reached the marketplace, researchers followed up with the Latino leaders.

Four key themes emerged from those discussions.

The first was a lack of access to high-quality health services. "Not having a place to go for care was a big concern," Perez said. "Latinos as a group have one of the highest uninsured rates in the country, and many live in [rural communities](#). They expressed to us that they were really pressed for resources, they were really being stretched."

Some also viewed health care providers as government agents. One focus group summed it up this way: "All roads lead to possible deportation."

"This is the often-secret suffering of rural and urban Latino/Hispanic communities," said Elena Portacolone, an associate professor at the Institute for Health & Aging at the University of California, San Francisco School of Nursing. "It was particularly prevalent at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, when vaccines weren't yet on the horizon."

Study participants also expressed concerns about vaccine cost, transportation to get it and potential lost time at work, as well as overarching financial concerns about the pandemic and possible job or income losses.

Researchers also pointed to a lack of reliable information about the vaccine and mixed messages from traditional and social media.

"They would get a message on TV that's not congruent with what they were hearing on the ground," Perez said. "For COVID—and many other

public health issues, for that matter—there needs to be clear messaging."

Ultimately, about 41 million of the nation's 62 million Latino or Hispanic residents did receive at least one COVID shot. Hispanic Americans comprise 19% of the U.S. population.

"When it comes to public health and COVID-19, our system doesn't take into account a person's culture," Perez said. "We're still missing the mark for Latinos across the country."

Researchers said overcoming barriers to vaccine uptake among Latinos will require more resources as well as relevant [public health](#) policy and better coordination between state and local governments.

"An intentional and long-term commitment by policymakers, public officials, health care providers, and private entities to eradicate inequities" is needed, Portacolone said. "This could include expanding access to [health](#) care and making paid sick and family leave mandatory, among other ideas. Overall, these findings call for a strong commitment to equity."

The study was published Oct. 12 in the journal *PLOS ONE*.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [COVID-19 vaccines](#).

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