

Barriers to Oral Healthcare for Uninsured Immigrant Children at the University of Maryland School of Dentistry

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Background:

•Barriers to oral health care can have a negative impact on a child's oral health-related quality of life (OHRQoL), including basic daily functioning, socialization, behavior, school performance, sleep quality and mental health.

•Vulnerable populations, including immigrant children and those without insurance, are at higher risk for poor oral health due to various social and structural determinants of oral health.

Purpose:

•To identify barriers to optimal oral health and negative OHRQoL indicators among uninsured immigrant children at the University of Maryland School of Dentistry pediatric clinic.

Methods:

- This cross-sectional study administered a written 38-question survey to a convenience sample of 49 parents of uninsured immigrant children at the University of Maryland School of Dentistry pediatric clinic.
- Most questions were answered on a Likert Scale.
- Descriptive statistics were calculated.

Results:

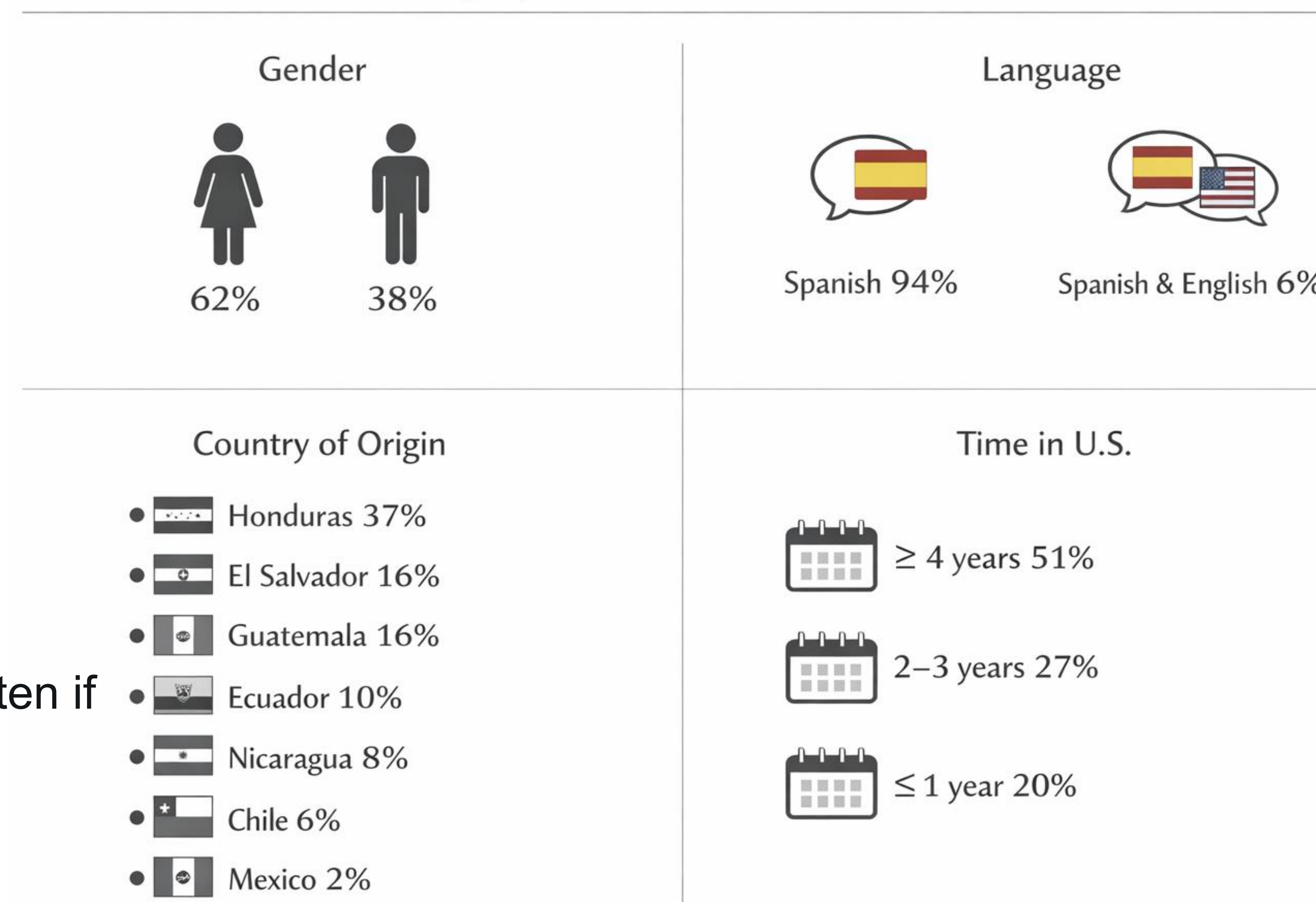
The most prominent barriers to care were:

- Cost and lack of insurance (65%; 93% would attend the dentist more often if insured)
- Transportation challenges (47– 55%)
- Language and cultural barriers (40– 46%)
- Work-related constraints (30% unable to miss work; 28% fear job loss)

Table 1. Key Results Summary (N = 49)

Domain	Key Finding	n	%
Access to Care	Never seen a dentist	29	60%
Financial Barriers	Could not afford dental care	28	65%
Insurance Impact	Would visit more with insurance	43	93%
Transportation	Long travel time	26	55%
Oral Health Burden	Tooth pain	16	33%
Functional Impact	Missed school	16	35%
Psychosocial Impact	Unhappy with teeth	18	37%
Social Determinants	Food insecurity	26	54%

Figure 1. Demographic Characteristics (N = 49)



Conclusions:

- Parents of uninsured immigrant children identified barriers to access to care and OHRQoL issues for their child.
- An area for further investigation is the impact of social determinants and health policies on the oral health status, experiences and attitudes of uninsured immigrant children.