

## Health Needs of the Brazilian Community on Martha's Vineyard: Summary of Findings from a Digital Survey, Focus Group, and Key Informant Interviews

As part of the preparation for the HRSA Service Area Competition, Island Health Care launched a community research effort to better understand the health needs of the Brazilian population on Martha's Vineyard. Due to language barriers, stigma, capacity constraints, and the itinerant nature of the Brazilian Community, limited research existed related to the health needs and care access challenges for this population.

The first round of our efforts included a digital survey available in Portuguese and English and covered topics related to the Brazilian population's health concerns and healthcare accessibility. Then to learn the more nuanced details of the digital survey topics, our team also conducted a small focus group and series of key informant interviews. The discussions centered on the themes of 1) Differences in healthcare between the US and Brazil, 2) The Culture of Health, and 3) Barriers to Access. Our survey, focus group, and the key informant interviews revealed the following:

### *Digital Survey Findings:*

- The three most important factors for living a healthy life on Martha's Vineyard included, Good jobs and a healthy economy (46.7%), Good place to raise children (46.7%), and Access to affordable housing (33.3%)
- The three most important health issues identified by the Brazilian Community were, Dental Problems (46.7%), Infectious Diseases (40%), and Obesity (40%)
- The three most adverse health behaviors identified by the Community were, Alcohol abuse (80%), Drug abuse (53.3%), and Poor eating habits (53.3%)
- The majority of respondents felt the overall health of the Brazilian Community was "Somewhat Healthy" (40%), out of a range from very unhealthy > very healthy
- The majority of respondents felt their personal health was "Healthy" (66.7%), same range as above
- When asked if they were satisfied with healthcare on MV, 73.3% replied "Yes"
- The range of respondents' confidence in navigating the US Healthcare System was Confident (46.7%), A little confident (33.3%), and Very confident (20%), out of a range don't feel confident > feel very confident
- 86.7% of respondents agreed that MV is a good place to grow old
- 60% of respondent felt there was a variety of health services on the Island
- 66.7% of respondents do not have a Primary Care Provider
- 80% of respondents felt their opinions are valued and respected when they visit the doctor
- 53.3% of respondents live in a household with 3-4 people
- 80% of respondents felt their housing was adequate, out of a range not adequate > adequate
- n = 15

### *Other Survey Responses:*

The digital survey also had a free response section prompting respondents to list any additional community health concerns. Respondents identified the following:

- Easier access to services
- General Practitioner access
- Family Doctor access
- Access to consultation
- Increased access to local service specialists – general (2)
  - Dermatologist access (2)
  - Mental Health Specialist /Psychologist access (2)
  - Addiction care access
  - Nutritionist access
- Access to Dental treatment / Dentist (4)
- Safe housing access
- Easy access to pay hospital bills
- Make it easier to schedule appointments

*Major Findings from the Focus Group & Key Informant Interviews*

- The Brazilian Community, like the rest of the Island, faces long wait times or long intervals between appointments due to a shortage of care providers, especially in dental and specialty concentrations.
- There is a need to increase the Brazilian Community’s trust in health care institutions on the Island including addressing stigma faced by Brazilians but also immigrants in general. In practice, this could look like dedicated phone lines or websites in Brazilian-Portuguese.
- Many respondents also pointed out ways to improve outreach to the segments of the Brazilian Community that actively engage in healthcare, including health education outreach and more coordination with communication hubs for the Brazilian Community such as the churches, support groups, and informational social media groups.
- Respondents, particularly those in healthcare professions, cited a need for basic health education among the Brazilian Community, especially since most people arrive to our shores with less than a high school education. (health education generally starts in high school in Brazil, but it’s not uniform throughout the county)
- Lastly, regarding language logistics and accessibility, respondents highlighted a need for more attention around dialect and literacy level. While most Brazilians have a good understanding of European Portuguese, there are distinct differences between European Portuguese and the dialects spoken in Brazil that vary from region to region. Therefore, it is important to use Brazilian-Portuguese interpretation, translation, etc. when it is available. As far as general communication, it is important to consider the education level of the Brazilian Community when creating health care or public health messaging since there are low literacy and health literacy levels throughout the Community.
- The focus group consisted of two participants with two follow up key informant interviews, n = 4

To view the full list of survey questions (in Portuguese and English), please [click here](#).

To view the Focus Group and Key Informant Interview presentation slides, with questions, [click here](#).

The full five-page Focus Group & Key Informant Interview Report can be found [here](#).