

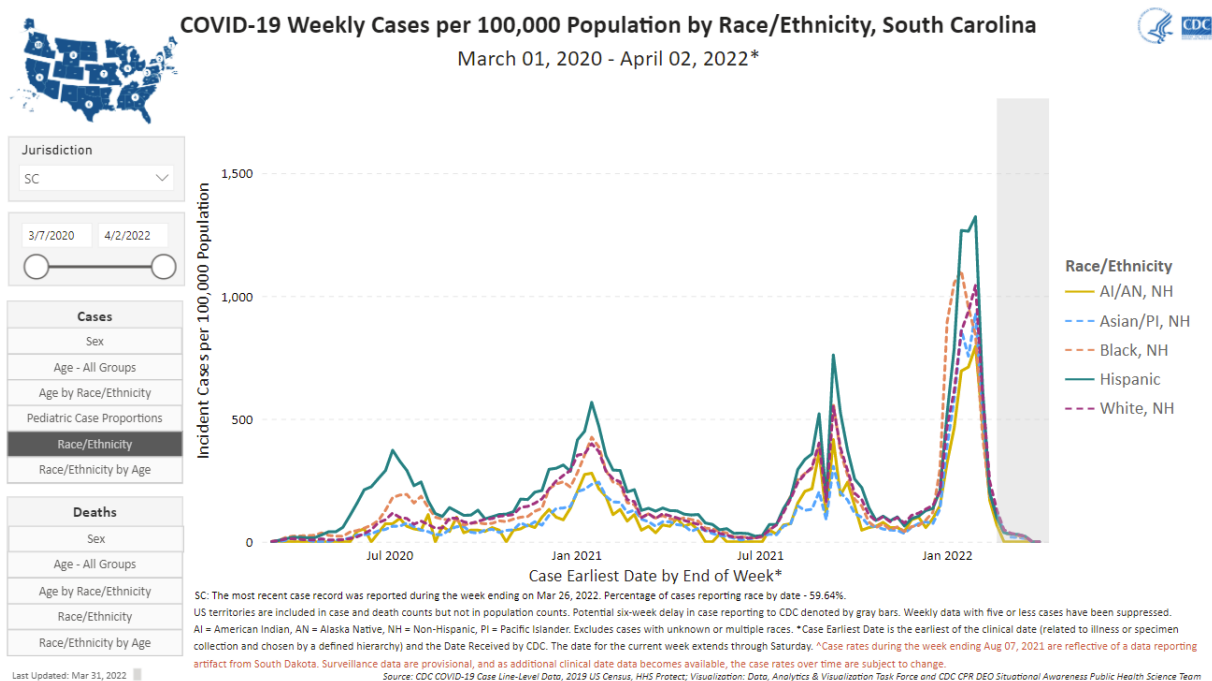
PASOs Combats COVID-19 Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities in South Carolina

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In March of 2020 our lives changed. The Sars-CoV-2 virus quickly spread resulting in the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic. This pandemic has been devastating on many levels. Two years later, we are still seeing the ongoing effects. Almost everyone has lost someone to COVID-19 in the past two years. Many have also faced drastic life changes like losing their jobs.

The Hispanic and Latino community has been disproportionately affected by this pandemic both nationally and here in South Carolina. Nationally the Hispanic unemployment rate was 18.1 percent in April 2020 (Krogstad & Lopez, 2021). The Hispanic community was also disproportionately impacted by COVID cases and COVID deaths.

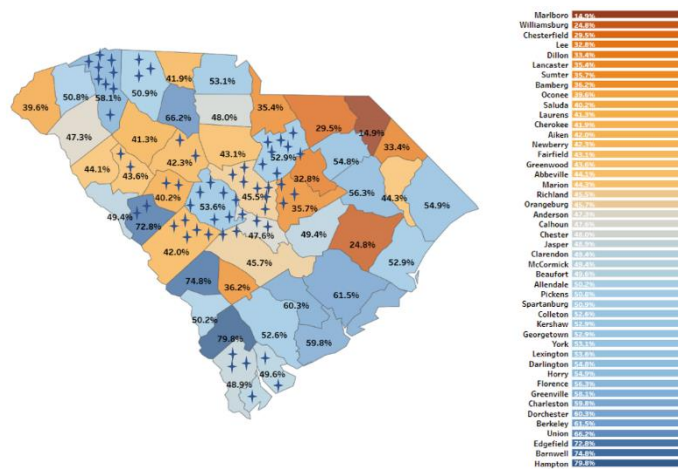
Figure 1



More than 50% of Latinos have a family member who has become ill or died from COVID-19 (Martínez, 2021). This community is more likely to work at jobs that require them to be out in public during the pandemic—putting them at a higher risk (Martínez, 2021).

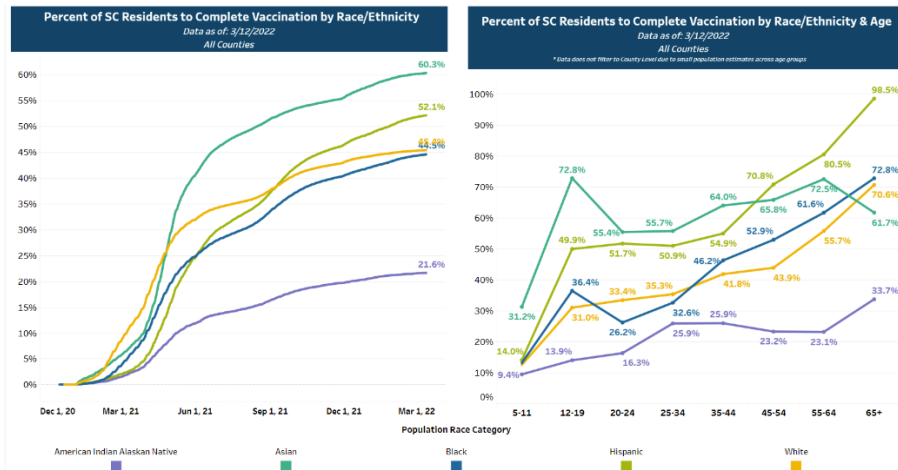
A bright point in this pandemic has been the release of the COVID-19 vaccines at the end of 2020. These vaccines lessen the severity of COVID-19, along with the use of other mitigation strategies, such as social distancing, wearing a mask, and washing hands frequently. PASOs at the Arnold School of Public Health has worked alongside the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SC DHEC) to offer the Hispanic and Latino community support in the vaccination process. PASOs held 56 events across the counties they serve to offer testing and vaccination support. PASOs helped 672 adults receive the vaccine from April 2020 to April 11th, 2022. Additionally, the organization helped 43 children receive the vaccine. Figure 2, below, shows how these efforts have led to increased vaccination rates across the state.

Figure 2



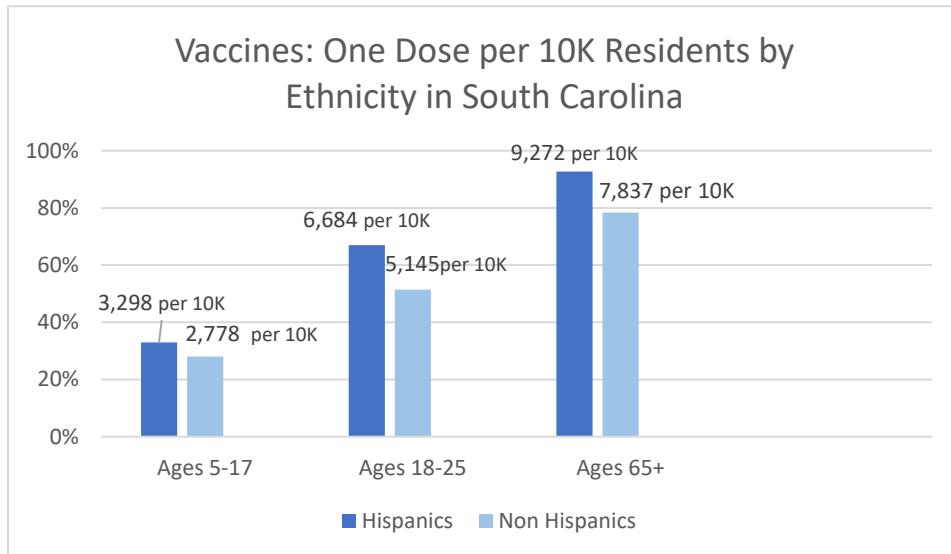
PASOs’ efforts to help the Latino community get vaccinated are clear when looking at the data. About 58.7% of the Latino population is vaccinated compared to 53.4% of the entire South Carolina population (Martínez, 2021) Similar data is presented by SC DHEC in Figure 4.

Figure 4

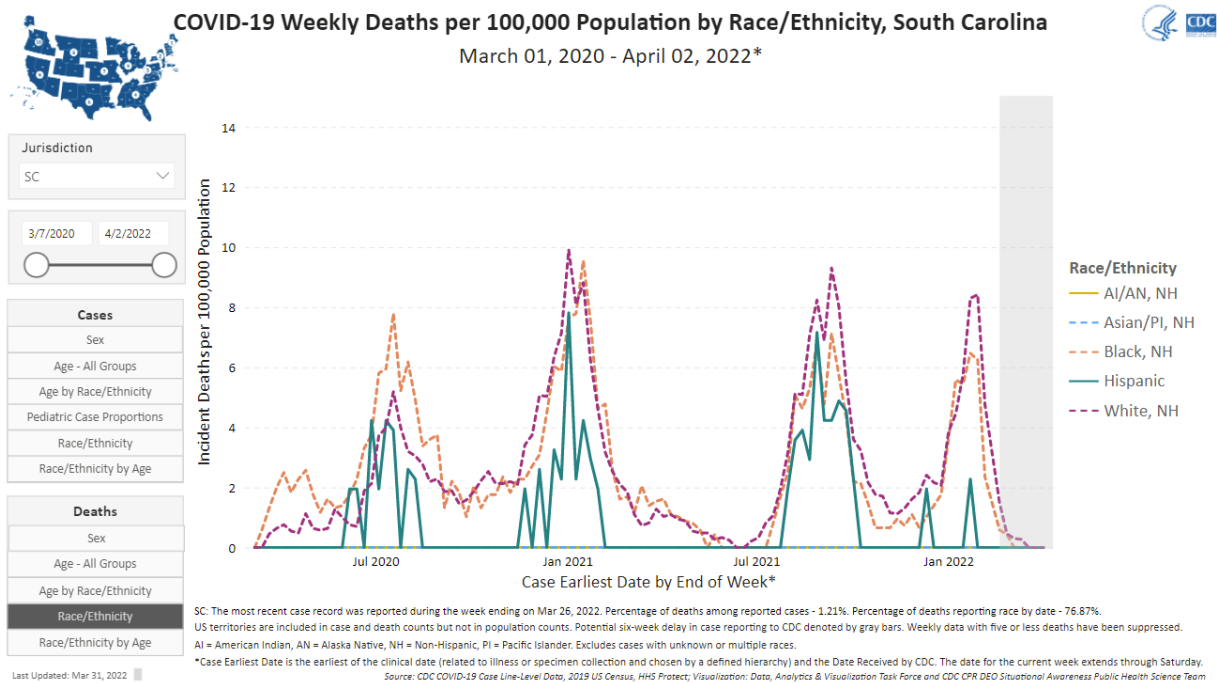


Hispanic/Latino vaccination rates across all age groups are consistently higher than non-Hispanic populations in South Carolina (Martínez, 2021) (see Figure 5).

Figure 5



Lastly, Figure 6, below, shows that Hispanic COVID-19 mortality rate has drastically dropped from July 2021 to Jan 2022, a testament to the power of vaccines. PASOs and the Arnold School of Public Health at the University of South Carolina are taking great strides to improve health equity across our state.



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. COVID Data Tracker. Atlanta, GA: US Department of Health and Human Services, CDC; 2022, March 31. <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker>

Krogstad, J. M., & Lopez, M. H. (2021, August 16). *Coronavirus economic downturn has hit Latinos especially hard*. Pew Research Center's Hispanic Trends Project. Retrieved March 30, 2022, from <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2020/08/04/coronavirus-economic-downturn-has-hit-latinos-especially-hard/>

Martínez, A. A. (2021). *The Pandemic and Our Community: The Fight Against COVID-19 in South Carolina*. Columbia, SC: DHEC.