



NORTH CAROLINA
PREGNANCY & BIRTH
JOURNEYS

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THANK YOU !

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Community partners – ESPECIALLY the wonderful folks at
Mothering Asheville!

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WHAT WE COLLECTED

Demographic Data

Short Answer Questions

Qualitative Data: Stories

STORY PROMPTS

How and why did you choose your maternity health care provider? Have you been happy with your health care provider or team?

Have you attended all your appointments? What makes appointments easier or more difficult?

What makes a provider trustworthy?

Tell us about your telehealth experiences. Did you like or dislike telehealth and why?

What else is on your mind? Did we miss anything important (catch all question)?



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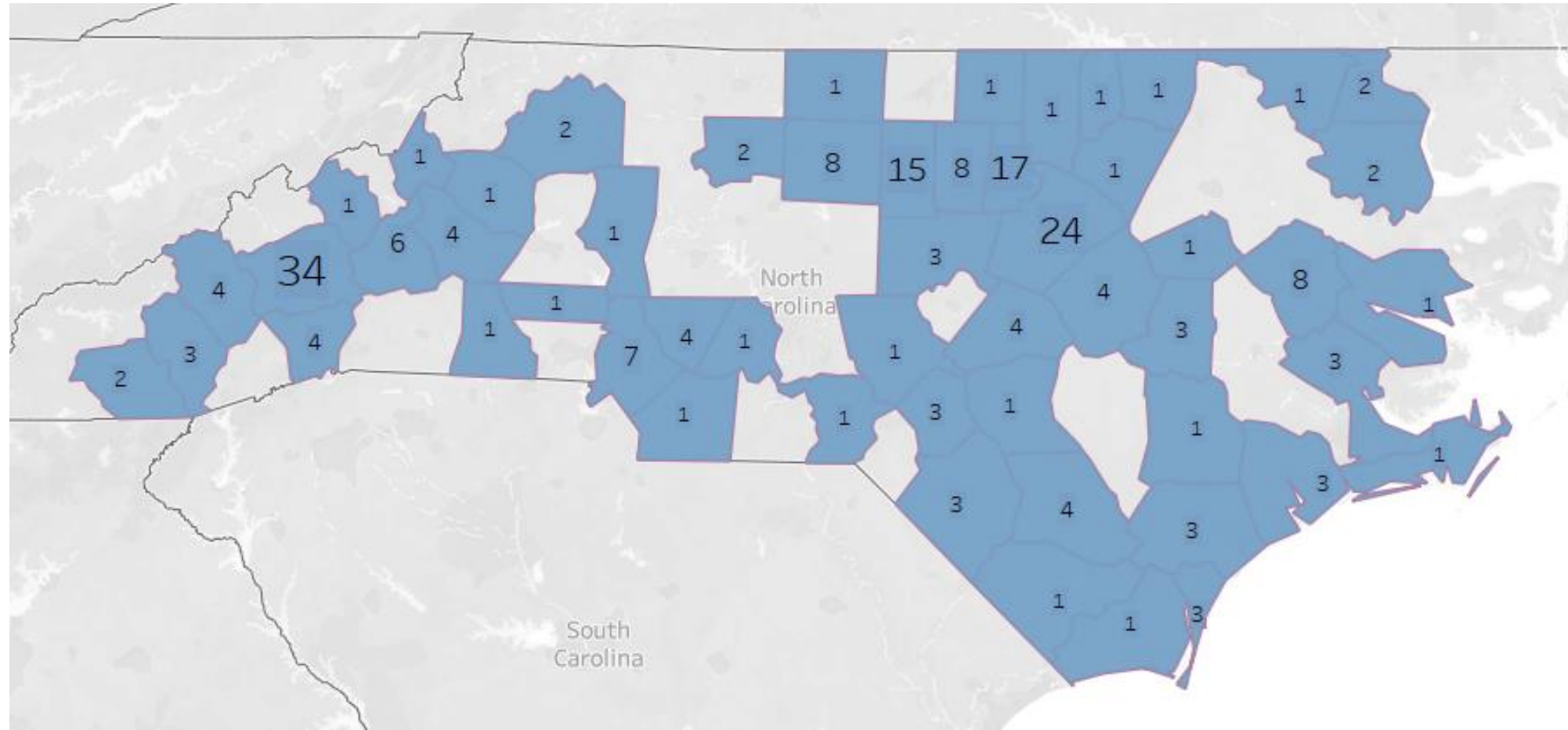
North Carolina Pregnancy & Birth Journeys Project **Proyecto de Embarazos y Viajes de Nacimiento en Carolina del Norte**

Collecting and sharing pregnancy and birthing stories from parents in North Carolina
Recopilar y compartir historias de embarazos y partos de padres en Carolina del Norte

Take the Survey In English

Responda a la Encuesta en Español

WHO PARTICIPATED?

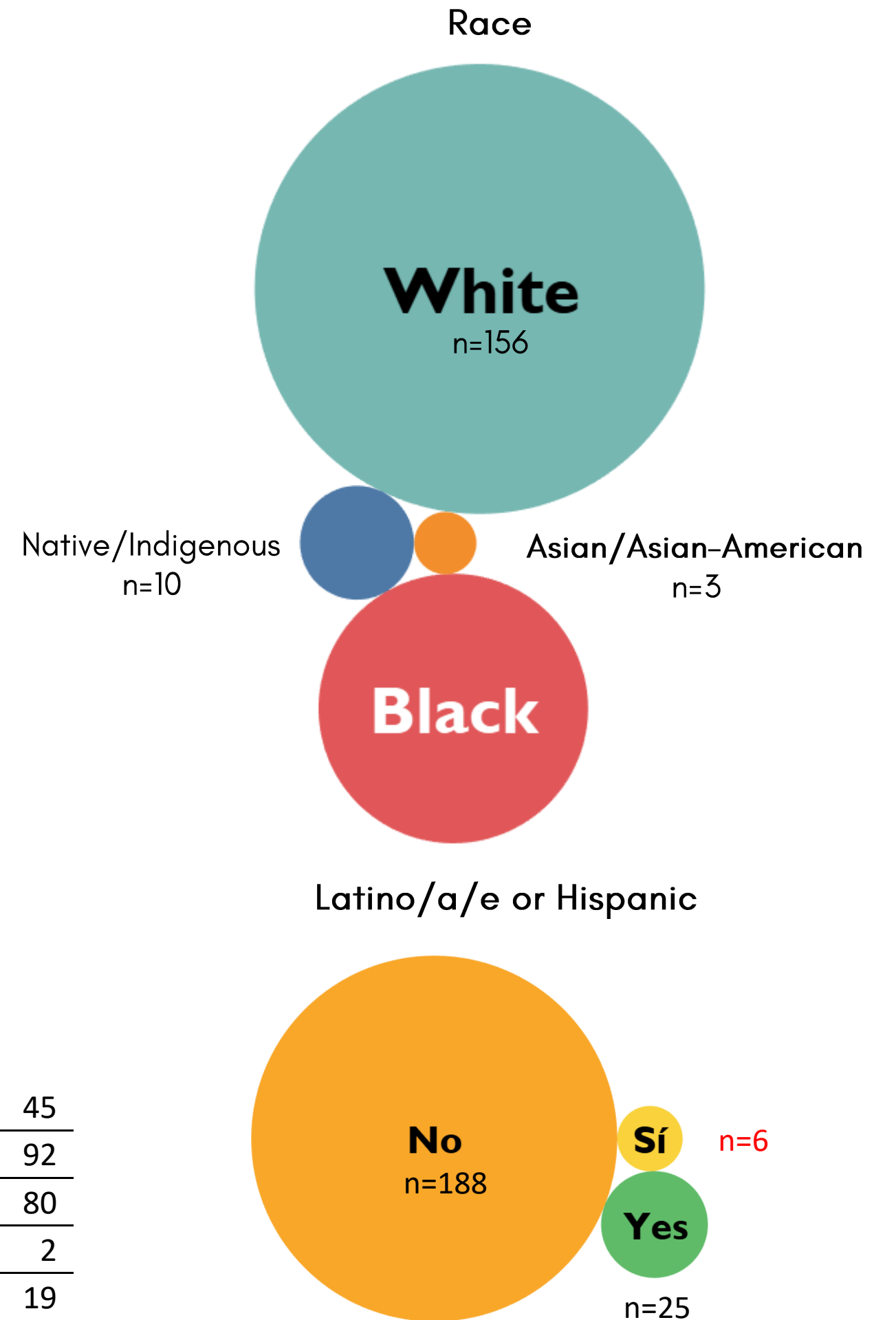


Insurance

Private Health Insurance	127
Medicaid	50
Pregnancy Medicaid	49
Self-pay	8
Tricare	6

Community of Residence (Geography)

Urban	45
Suburban	92
Rural	80
Other	2
Null	19



CHOOSING A PROVIDER

Previous experiences – For better or worse

“For my first two babies, I chose big practices that had a large number of providers that you rotated through at each visit. Because I knew I would be having a repeat Cesarean section, I wanted more personalized care, so I chose a smaller practice where I would see the same provider at every visit.”

Wanted a specific type of provider or facility

- midwives
- limited interventions
- Specific hospital

“To be honest, I chose MAHEC as my care provider because with my insurance, I wouldn't have to pay any copays for care billed & serviced by MAHEC! But even so, it was important to me to have options. I really wanted midwifery care for a more holistic approach that aligned with my health beliefs. MAHEC offered that, plus, of course, a competent staff of NPs & OBGYNs.”

Mom was high risk or had other health conditions

“After experiencing a miscarriage, I wanted to monitor my future pregnancies more closely and did not be forced to only be able to come in for my first prenatal appointment at 9 weeks.”

CHOOSING A PROVIDER: INSURANCE

Insurance: In-Network

"I wanted to deliver somewhere with a level 4 NICU just in case. I also had possible insurance issues where my plan was going to change the month before due date so needed to find a provider in-network with both of our insurances in case I had to drop mine. So- I did research and went with a practice in-network with both. I do wish I could have gone with UNC (Chapel Hill, not Rex) but Duke worked. I almost left the practice at one point because they said I asked too many questions and needed more appointments... but ended up SO happy with my providers at delivery. I wanted things I didn't get. Ideally I would have had a smaller practice, somewhere with doula support, water births, etc."

CHOOSING A PROVIDER: INSURANCE

Insurance: Medicaid

Unfortunately I left a great job a week before finding out I was pregnant. My only option for healthcare was Medicaid for Pregnant women. Due to this my option for OB was pretty limited and given my age and health I was high risk so I ended up with _____. There you only see NP or PA. The nursing staffing was lacking greatly with little care for any concerns I had. Because you see a PA the doctor later looks over their notes and changes things without knowing why something was being done. It also you meet no doctor til delivery and there is no relationship formed. This was my 3rd child and because I knew doctors the other times I was more comfortable. While the doctors where fine at delivery it was rather weird going through you whole life history while in labor.

Insurance: Uninsured

I had to choose using the health department in my area, because I had no insurance. It wasn't affordable for insurance. The OGBYN in our city wanted \$2,900 up front for no insurance. So far I am pleased with my care at the health department. Its just ridiculous that you can't get affordable health insurance or get decent care from a provider without having to pay an insane amount of money upfront.

CHOOSING A PROVIDER

Location: Close to home

- **PROBLEM:** Limited choices in many places – no options near home

“This pregnancy I have HG so I could not drive far for a provider. There is only 1 OBGYN in our town and he does not go to the hospital therefore each hospital trip and the delivery I will have some doc I have never met.”

“I live in a county where you have two options for OB care– the Health Department or The OB/GYN office– there is only 1 office in Carteret County. I have been very happy with my care thus far. They have taken strict COVID precautions and I have felt safe and well care for”

“I honestly didn’t have much choice. I lost my job mid pregnancy and had to find a doctor quick that would accept Medicaid. Many OBs in my area were not taking patients, said I was too overweight or wouldn’t accept Medicaid. I will say though that I got lucky because most of the doctors and nurses are wonderful and ease my fears about pregnancy.”

References, Recommendations, and Reviews

MOTIVATORS

- Sense that appointments were important for baby's health
- Desire to hear heartbeat/see ultrasound
- Desire for peace of mind
- Sense of importance for mom's health
- Sense of importance because of complications/high risk
- Clinical protocols around COVID made it feel safer

FACILITATORS

- Job flexibility (for scheduling)
- Provider scheduling flexibility
- Clinic is near home/easy to get to
- Appointments on a consistent/regular schedule
- Telehealth/virtual appointments



NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES: COVID RESTRICTIONS

Care Team Members not wearing PPE:

"I attended all my medical appointments. It was intense because it was so many appointments and sometimes I would have to wait for long periods of time. I enjoyed the ultrasound appointments being able to see my baby and know that she was okay. It was also stressful because of the pandemic, but there was one occasion when one of their staff was sick and not wearing a face mask."

Partners/Support Persons Excluded:

"during COVID, the hardest thing was not having my husband at each appointment, especially at the end. the day i found out our baby was breech and i would need a c-section, i was devastated. my birth vision was shattered, and i didn't have my support person there."

Children (including newborns) excluded:

"I have attended all of my appointments however it has not been easy. At my OB appointments I was not allowed to bring anyone with me including children (because of covid). I have a 2 year old as well as a newborn who exclusively breastfeeds so it is very inconvenient to leave her right now. Thankfully my husband was able to take off of work and watch the kids while I went to my appointment. I also had to introduce a bottle to my newborn because of these appointments which I didnt want to do because we were already having breastfeeding issues. My husbands mother has also helped me with the kids when I have appointments, if I didn't have family nearby I dont know what I would do. If I were unable to make it to my appointments I would reschedule or do a telehealth (facetime) appointment. I had a telehealth appointment at 4 weeks and an in person appointment at 6 weeks."

NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES

Disrespectful care:

"I would hope that maternity care in America continues to evolve and become better and more empowering for women. I was so discouraged at the beginning of my pregnancy because I felt as though I had an unsupportive provider and not much say in the care that I received. It was the worst feeling. If women are allowed to be actively involved in their care, I feel like the outcome is so much better."

Discrimination: Racism, weight stigma, rude translators, homophobia, Insurance (Medicaid)

"I have not experienced it during this particular pregnancy but one of the things that I want all Healthcare professionals to know is that treating us like humans and speaking to us in a manner that we understand is very helpful no matter what type of care it is. Basically saying even though sometimes you do have to dumb down the terms don't talk to us as if we are dumb. Also if you have any beliefs or prejudices that don't match our lifestyle don't take it out on us."

Lack of mental health and lactation support:

"Mother's mental health is extremely important and I feel based on both pregnancies and deliveries I've had, this has not been addressed appropriately. The mental health and stability of a mother is just as crucial as her physical health and NEEDS to be recognized and without judgement."

BARRIERS TO ATTENDING APPOINTMENTS

Pandemic worries

Lack of work flexibility

Long travel times

Not having childcare at home/Not being able to bring children to appointments

"I attended all of my appointments. Some were difficult to figure out scheduling for because not having child care for my other children and being able to bring them with me due to covid. My appointments went well, I felt very cared for by my midwives and nurses. I was always a little anxious going in with my mask on, bc I didn't go many places due to covid but always left at ease after a wonderful visit with my midwives."

"How to answer in answer number "1" I have gone to 4 of the 6 medical appointments because my delivery doctor's office is more than 30 minutes away by car and I don't like having to travel so much just to get a check-up, That is why I would like to find some other doctor who continues to treat me but closer to my place of residence"

REASONS TO TRUST PROVIDERS

Provider answers questions and shares information freely

Listens to patient concerns and takes them seriously

Makes patient feel respected

Treats patient as an individual, rather than “as a number”

Respects agency/empowers decision-making

Protects patient confidentiality

“Trustworthy care providers make recommendations based on evidence combined with considerable experience, as well as empathy. They are good listeners and include the patient in making decisions, and treat the patient with respect, making sure that the patient is informed and understands without being patronizing or condescending. Each of my encounters with a ___ midwife made me feel that the midwife was trustworthy. When I was being admitted to the hospital for a pregnancy complication, the physicians discussed how best to proceed and included me in the conversation, and I really appreciated that. Towards the end of a later hospitalization, a different physician was on service and while she didn't quite dismiss my concerns, she certainly made me feel unsure about what was going on. Five days after she discharged me I saw her on the maternity floor, after my son had been born at 33 weeks, and she didn't even recognize me when I said hello. It was a terrible feeling.”

REASONS TO DISTRUST PROVIDERS

Dismisses patient concerns

Ignores/minimizes problems

Does not respect agency/wishes

Rushing

Causes harm or unnecessary pain

Doesn't answer questions/withholds information

"I trust providers most when they walk me through the data, research, WHY they recommend what they do, and take my preferences into account and ask how I want to proceed. I found a provider untrustworthy one time when he seemed rush, dismissed my concerns, didn't explain why he was recommending certain next steps. Also, reading my chart in advance is huge for me, and if a provider is able to reference a previous diagnosis, concern, or procedure without me bringing it up I really appreciate that."

"I had an on-call doctor take extremely good care of me. She calmed my fears and worked with me to find a solution to the problem. She made me feel safe, cared for and relaxed in a worrisome situation. I also had a doctor that was extremely insensitive and pushy. She used scare tactics and insinuations to bully me into testing for COVID when I had had a sinus infection a week earlier that was completely gone. The test came back negative, as I stated it would, but there was no apology from said doctor. I will never see said doctor again as I do not wish to be treated as such."

TELEHEALTH EXPERIENCES

Convenient

Not “physical” enough

Impersonal

Safe

Solves transportation problems

Efficient

Complications: Personal medical equipment at home

“I had telehealth appointments leading up to delivery, and for my postpartum appointment after about 4 weeks. Not having to drive 30 minutes to the providers office, or find a babysitter for my two older children made the telehealth appointments very convenient. This also put some anxiety at ease regarding exposure to possible coronavirus during this time. I think as long as I am in good health and the baby is active, I would like to continue telehealth appointments for subsequent pregnancies for the convenience. I have a blood pressure cuff at home as well, which makes me more comfortable with the maternity telehealth appointments, because I am able to check this.”