

# Allied Health Students' Attitudes and Practices Regarding Influenza and the Influenza Vaccine-Maricopa County, AZ October 2011



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## Background

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee recommends that all healthcare workers (HCWs) receive the influenza vaccine annually. Unvaccinated HCWs are cited as the leading cause of influenza outbreaks in health care settings.<sup>1</sup> Vaccinating HCWs effectively:

- Reduces HCW illness
- Reduces transmission to other health care workers, HCWs' families, and patients
- Reduces HCW absenteeism

U.S. vaccination coverage rates were 63.5% during the 2010-2011 influenza season with similar rates among HCWs – well below the *Healthy People 2020* target of 90%.<sup>1</sup>

## Objectives

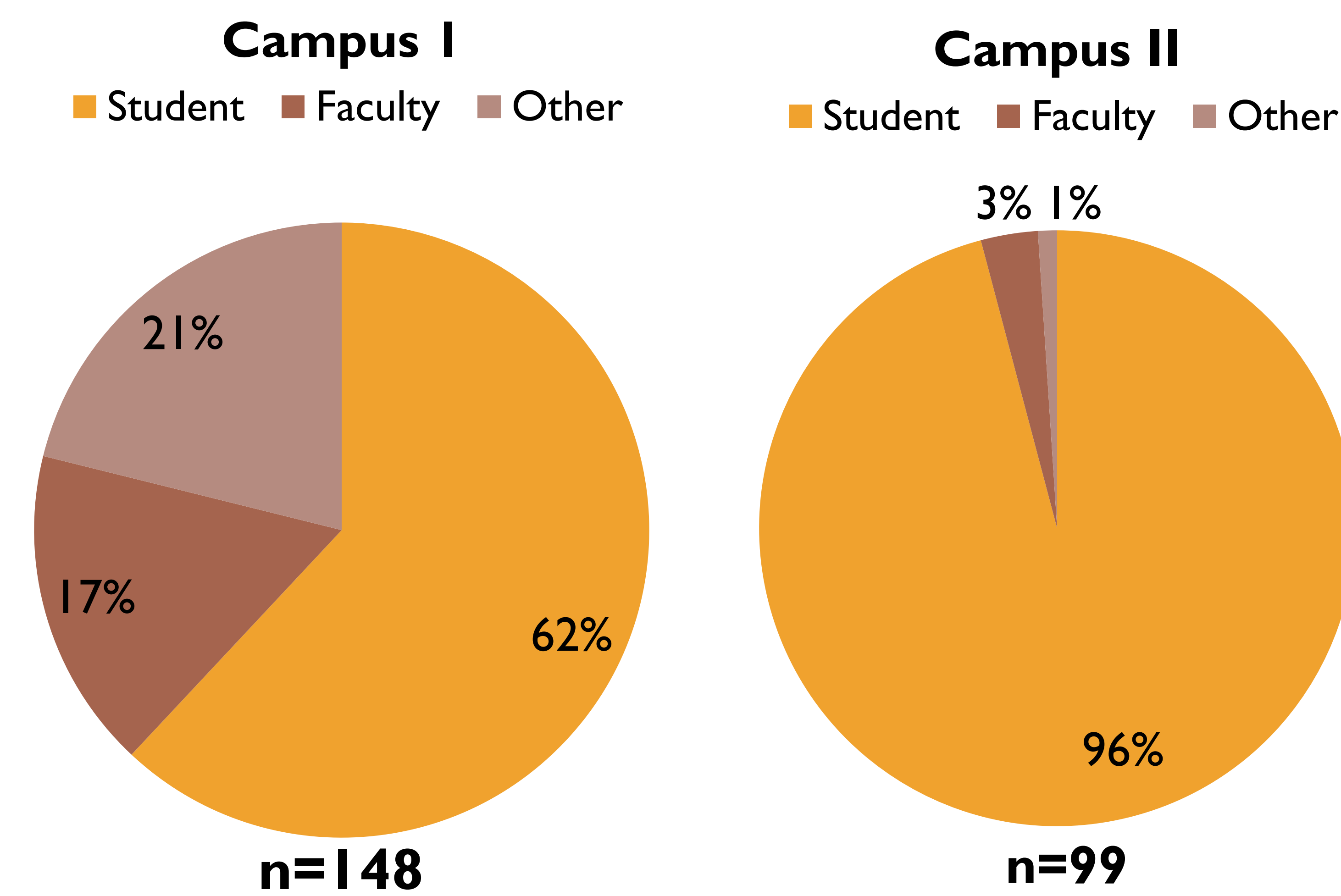
- Assess attitudes regarding influenza vaccine
- Assess prior vaccination history
- Plan and develop public health interventions related to influenza immunization education among allied health students

## Methods

Free immunization clinics were held in October 2011 at two academic campuses in the Phoenix metro area. Community health nurses screened clients for vaccine eligibility. Prior to vaccination, clients were also provided Vaccine Information Statements (VIS) and educational materials highlighting the importance of HCW vaccination. A total of 300 clients were vaccinated and asked to complete an 11-item survey.

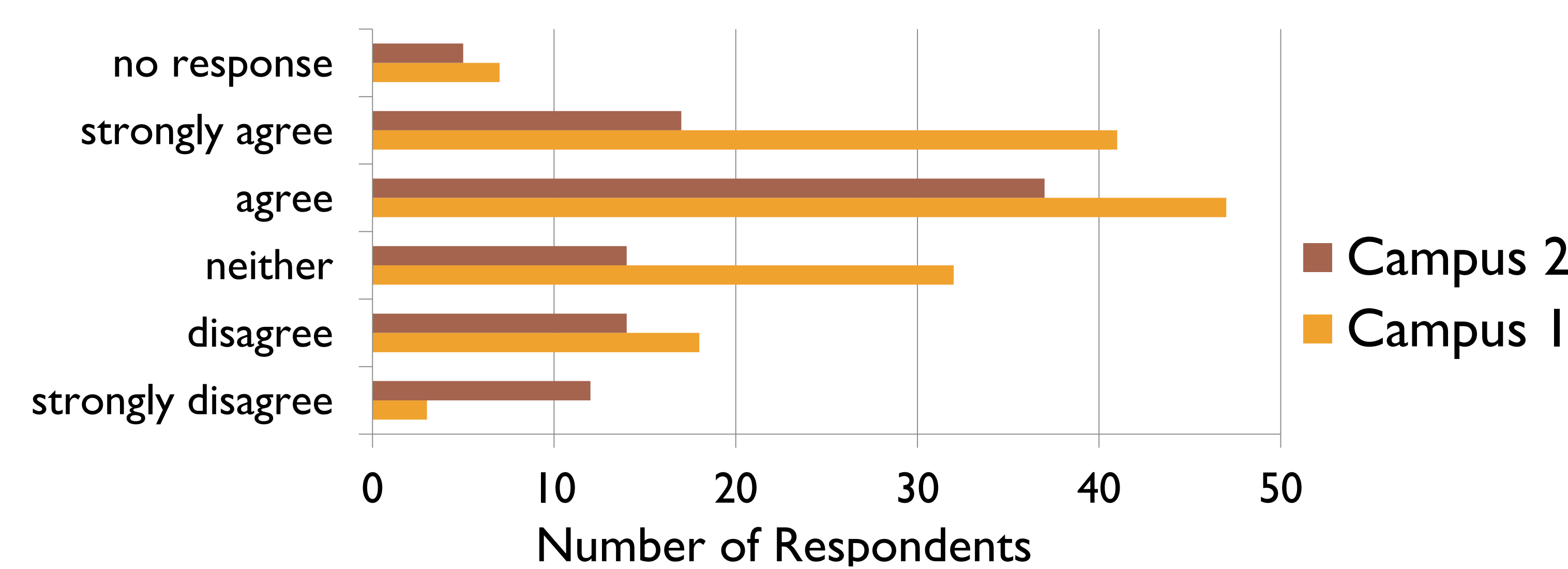
## Results

- 247 clients completed surveys
- 75% of respondents were students; 11% were faculty
- Areas of study for the majority of students: *nursing*(90), *respiratory therapy*(4), and *medical assistance*(37).
- Among respondents, 56 (22%) reported no prior history of influenza vaccination



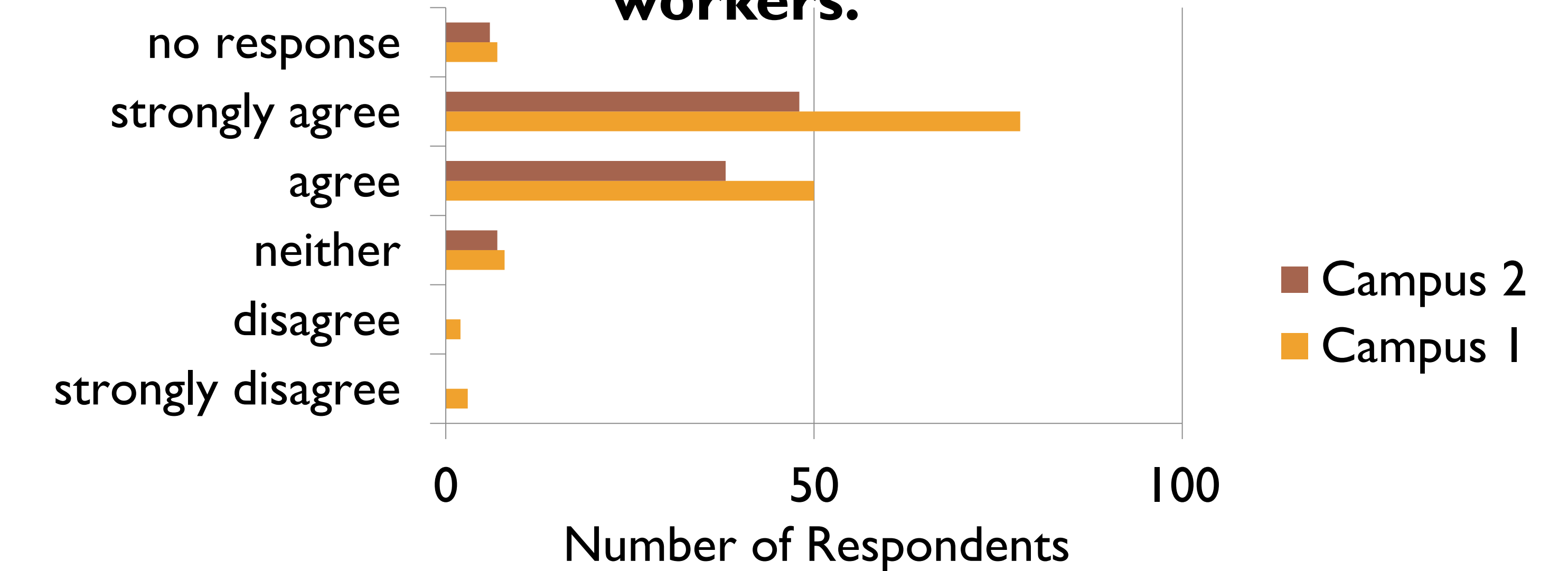
- Approximately 60% of respondents agreed that they were at risk for influenza infection.
- Only 20% of respondents did not believe that they were at risk for influenza infection.

Fig. 1 Respondent agreement with statement "I am at risk for influenza infection." n=247



- Approximately 92% of respondents agreed that the influenza vaccine was important.
- Only 1% of respondents did not believe that the influenza vaccine was important.
- Approximately 6% of respondents disagreed with the statement "Influenza vaccine is safe" despite consenting to vaccination.

Fig. 2 Respondent agreement with statement "The influenza vaccine is important for health care workers."



## Conclusions

- Nearly 1 in 5 respondents seeking vaccination at a free campus clinic had never received prior influenza vaccination.
- Our investigation supports evidence that increased access to immunizations increases influenza vaccination rates among health care workers.
- Respondent concerns regarding influenza vaccine safety suggests continued need for immunization education.
- Nearly 3 in 5 perceived themselves to be at risk for influenza infection despite probable frequent occupational exposures.

## Limitations

- Only respondents who consented to vaccination completed the survey, so results may not be generalizable.
- Influenza educational materials given to clients prior to filling out the survey may have biased respondents result, however 6% still expressed safety concerns despite accurate information.
- It is not known if either campus requires influenza vaccination for students or faculty.

### References

<sup>1</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2011, August 19). Influenza vaccination coverage among health-care personnel – United States, 2010-1011 Season. *MMWR*, 60(32).