

# Perceptions of Zika Virus Among USF Students

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## Introduction:

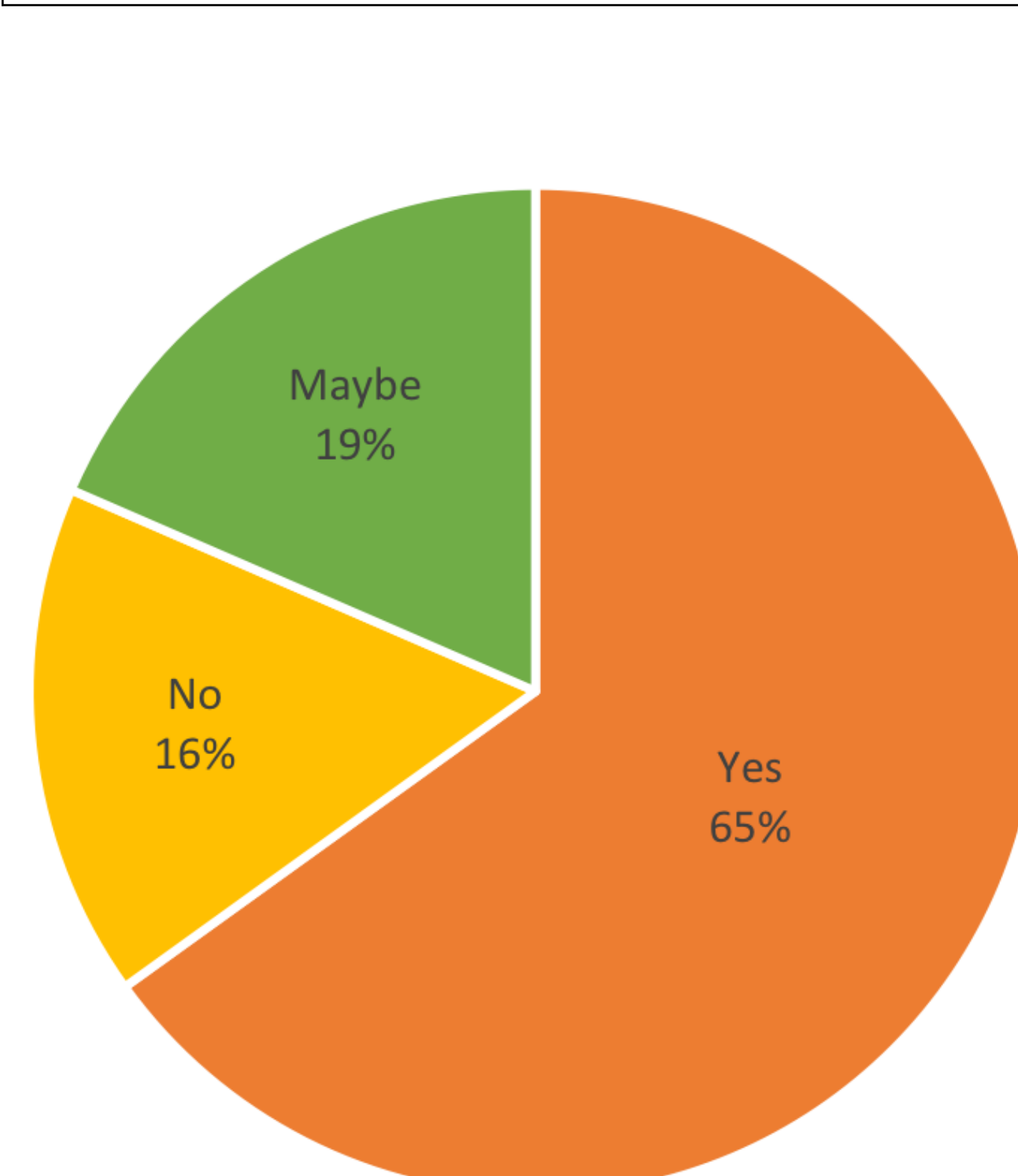
Over the past 3 years, Zika virus has emerged as an epidemic with serious public health implications due to Zika's various forms of transmission and ability to cause severe birth defects. The presence of both travel-associated and locally-acquired cases in Florida is especially relevant to our study population, students at the University of South Florida. The aim of this study was to determine the perceptions of USF students regarding the transmission of Zika and the risks associated with it. This exploratory study aimed to evaluate student perceptions of Zika.

## Methods:

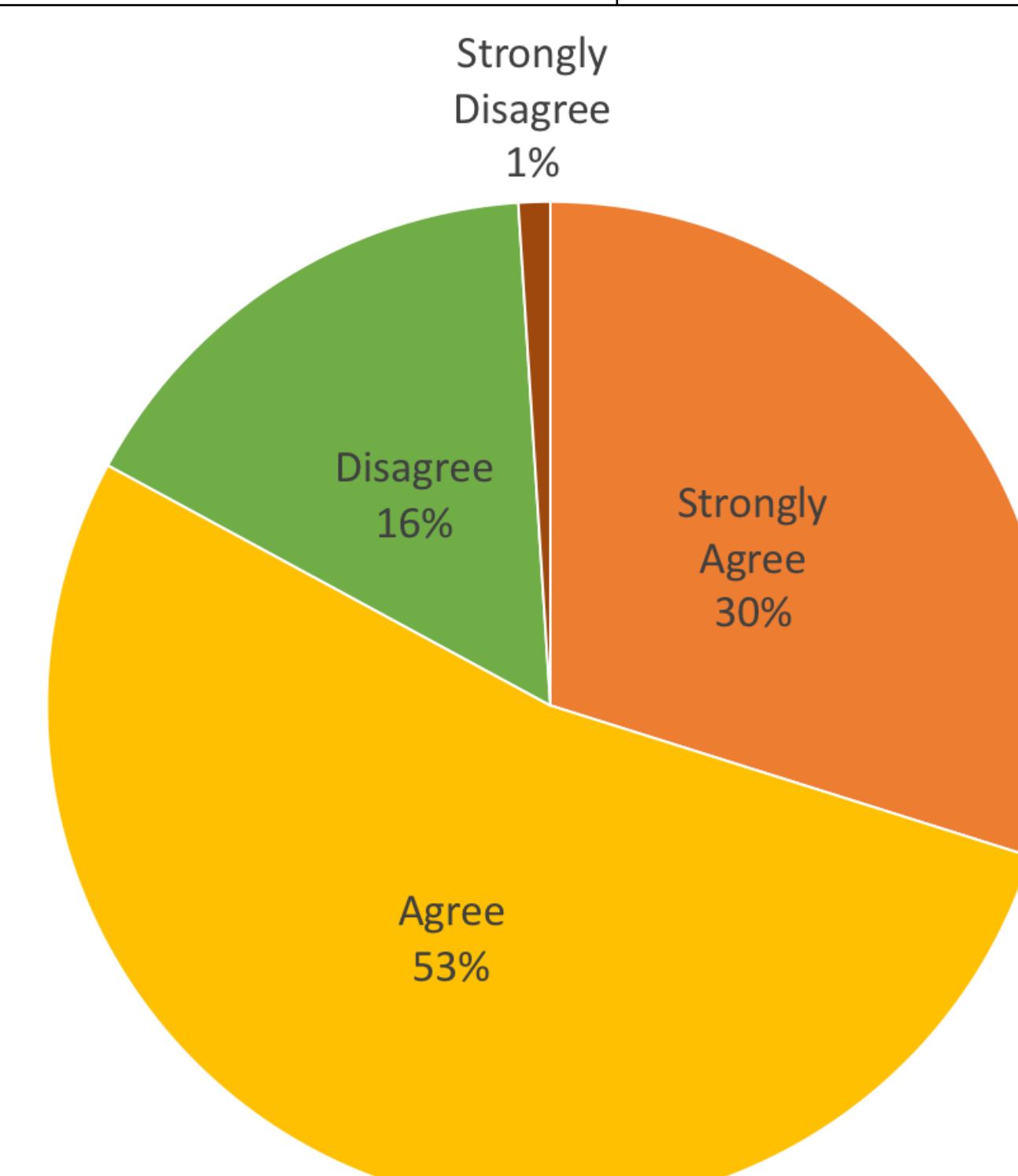
A convenience sample of students were recruited in areas of campus with high foot traffic. Interested students completed a two-page survey composed of questions developed by the WHO. Candy was given as an incentive. After surveys were collected, data was entered and analyzed using SPSS.

## Results:

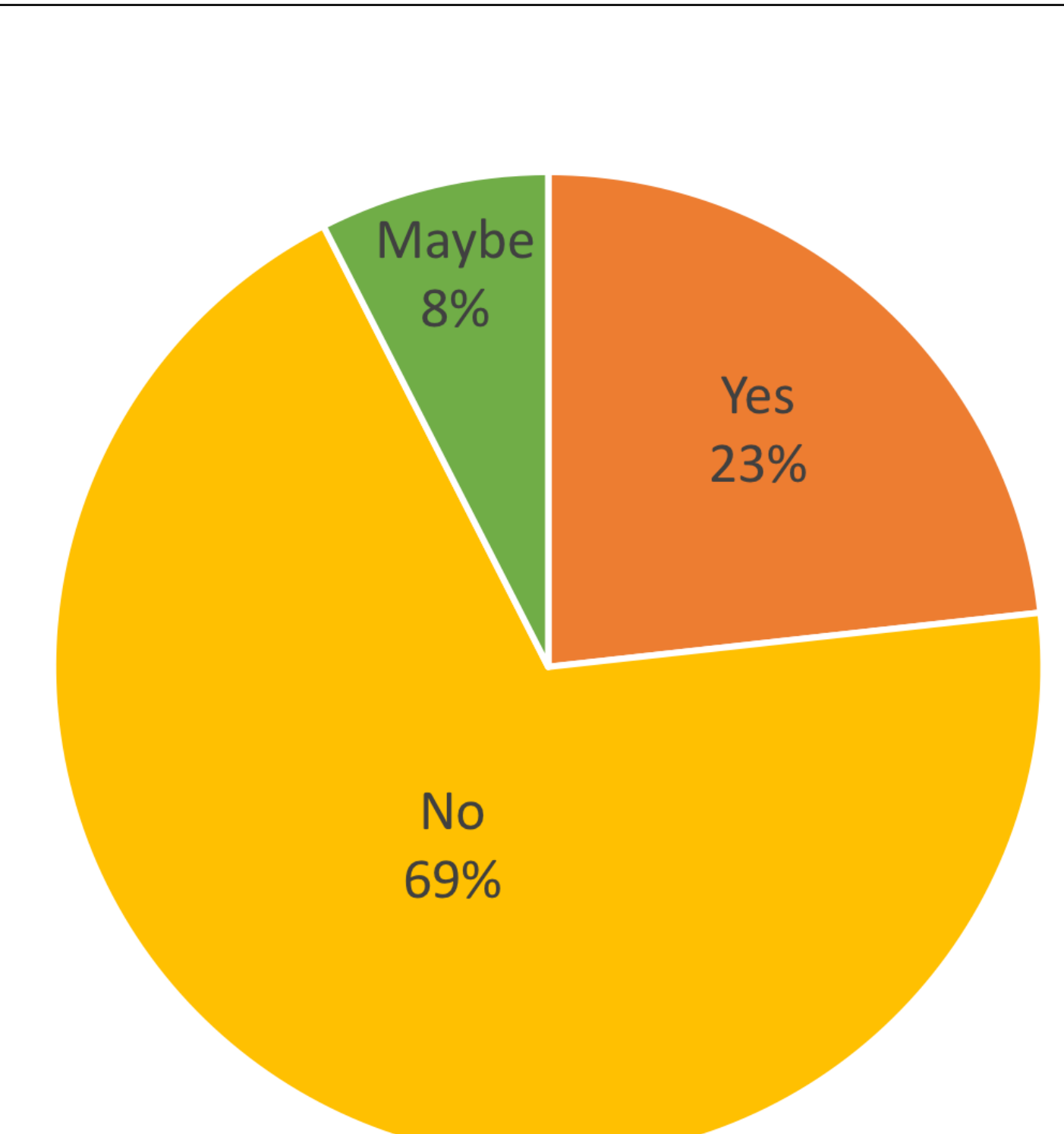
Demographics (n = 403)					
<b>Gender</b>		<b>Age</b>		<b>Academic status</b>	
Male	46.15%	18 – 22	75.87%	Undergraduate	83.33%
Female	53.35%	23 - 35	16.17%	Graduate	15.42%
Prefer not to answer	0.5%	26 - 30	6.47%	Non-degree seeking	1.25%
		31 - 64	1.49%		
<b>International travel during past year</b>			<b>Study abroad experience</b>		
No	58.79%			No, and I do not plan to	52.65%
Yes	41.21%			No, but I plan to	31.42%
<b>International status</b>			<b>Yes, as a USF student</b>		
Domestic students	78%			Yes, but not as a USF student	6.73%
International students	22%				



If there was a vaccine against Zika, would you consider having it?



All pregnant women should be tested for Zika.



Do you think you have enough information about Zika?

From where / whom do you get information about Zika?	Percentage
Electronic media	89.3%
Media	77.2%
Government organizations	37.2%
Family / Friends / Neighbors	51.9%
Healthcare providers	13.6%

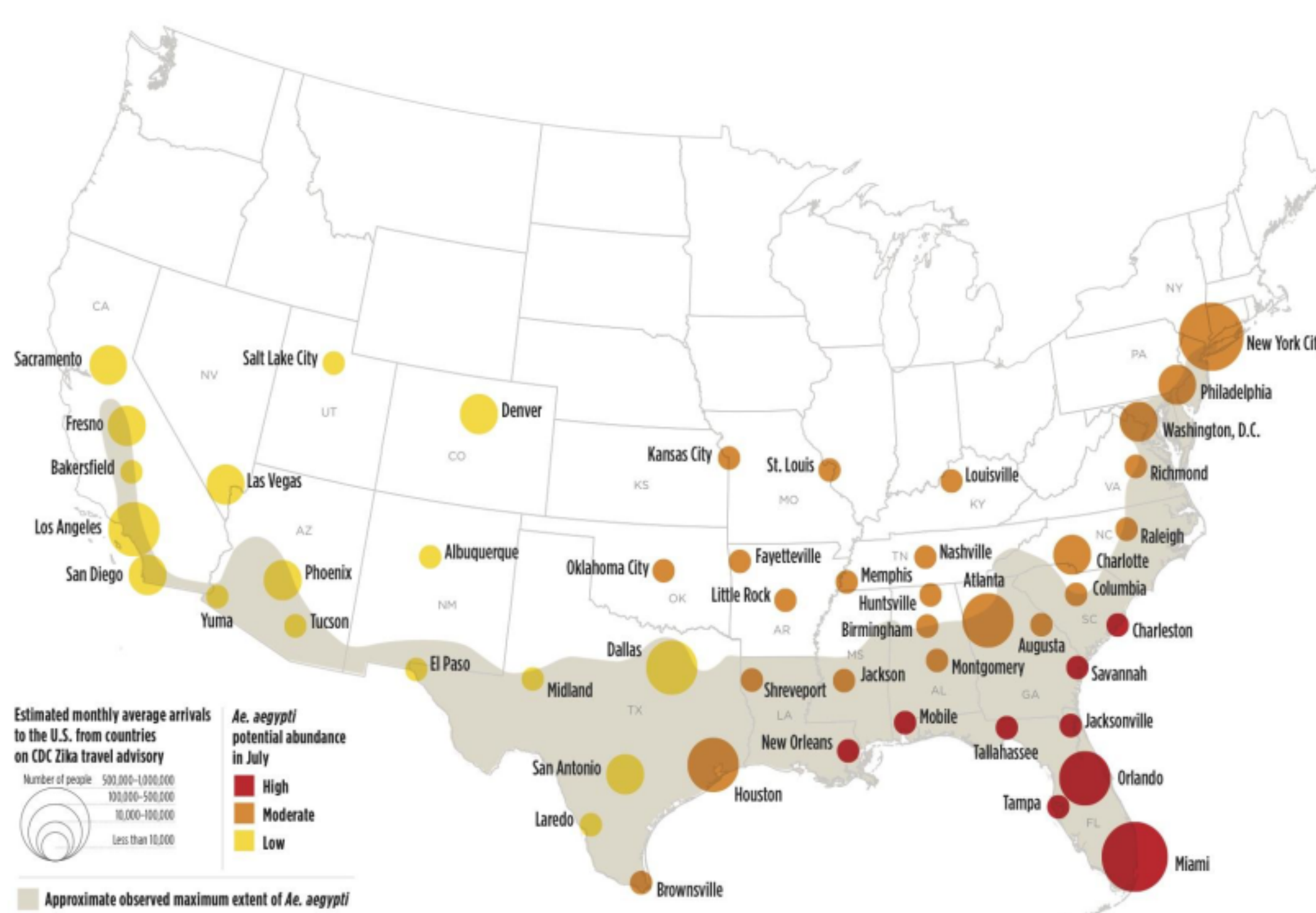
What are the signs and symptoms of Zika?	Answered correctly	Answered incorrectly
	0 (0%)	403 (100%)

## Discussion:

The majority of students think that they do not have enough information about Zika. Less than half of students responded that Zika is an important issue in their community, and two-thirds reported that they would not consider having a test for Zika if they had fever now. However, almost two-thirds of students would consider getting a Zika vaccine once one is available. International students were more likely to believe that Zika is an important issue in their community ( $X^2[2, N = 396] 7.48, p = 0.024$ ) and perceived a higher risk of contracting Zika ( $X^2[3, N = 393] 11.65, p = 0.003$ ). Male students were more likely to correctly identify that not everyone who contracts Zika shows symptoms ( $X^2[2, N = 399] 11.99, p = 0.002$ ).

## Conclusion:

Students at USF are relatively uninformed about aspects of the Zika virus. We recommend that more educational programs about Zika be conducted among university students, especially during mosquito season in southern Florida, where Zika virus poses a high threat.



*Ae. aegypti* potential abundance and average arrival from countries on CDC Zika travel advisory<sup>1</sup>