

COVID-19

VACCINE CONFIDENCE

ASSESSMENT RESULTS

MARCH 2022



BACKGROUND

Rede Group assisted Polk County Public Health (PCPH) to develop and conduct an assessment of community knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to receiving COVID-19 vaccinations.

Priority populations identified for data collection included those with preexisting or historical distrust of government-promoted health initiatives, such as people who:

- Identified as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- Identified as American Indian/Alaska Native
- Identified as Black
- Identified as Latino/a/x
- Identified as unvaccinated
- Lived or worked in a rural community
- Lived or worked in a zip code with highest COVID-19 case rates
- Lived or worked in zip code with lowest COVID-19 vaccination rates

Across data collection methods, a total of 348 people participated in the assessment between November and December 2021.

Rede Group summarized key findings from emergent themes across surveys, focus groups, and interviews on the following pages.



287

Survey participants



44

Focus group participants



15

Interview participants

COMMUNITY MEMBER BELIEFS

1. Community members expressed a range of beliefs regarding COVID-19 vaccines. In general, there were more who supported COVID-19 vaccines than those who didn't.
2. Many of those who participated in this assessment believed the science behind COVID-19 vaccines, that vaccines were effective against COVID-19, and that vaccines were safe.
3. Many participants worried about the unknown side effects of COVID-19 vaccines and how quickly they were developed.
4. Assessment participants felt that there were too many potential unknown side effects of the COVID-19 vaccines.

COVID-19 PREVENTION

5. Many participants who were both vaccinated and unvaccinated were willing to wear a mask and take other precautions such as social distancing to limit the spread of COVID-19.
6. Polk County community members were strongly motivated to take precautions or vaccinate to protect their personal health or the health of those around them, including loved ones.
7. Participants felt that vaccinating and taking precautions was the duty of a responsible member of society.
8. A lack of willingness to vaccinate did not equate to a lack of willingness to take precautions, such as masking.

ABILITY TO VACCINATE

9. Focus group participants had general fear of COVID-19 vaccines/government involvement. Interviewees felt it was difficult for members to get COVID-19 vaccines because of vaccine event locations, limited event hours, accessing transportation, and a lack of available appointments. Most survey respondents said it was not difficult, they were not sure, or this wasn't applicable to them.

COMMUNICATION

10. Survey respondents indicated most frequently they received medical information they trusted from their primary care physicians then the local public health department (LPHD), while focus group participants utilized social media and friends and family, and interviewees indicated their members used social media, person to person interactions, then word of mouth.

“Some people I’ve talked to say they’re embarrassed that they haven’t gotten the vaccine yet. They don’t want people to know that they haven’t gotten it or that they are going to get it.”

—Community leader

“I believe in the vaccination itself, and would like more people to get vaccinated. However, I strongly believe in the freedom to choose and am against it being mandated.”

—Survey respondent

“I’m very grateful for the vaccine and for the hard work of medical providers and public health workers to make it available.”

—Survey respondent

FEELINGS ABOUT PUBLIC HEALTH

11. Many survey respondents trusted LPHDs, while focus group participants and interviewees indicated that the community was unaware of PCPH and the services they offered.

SIMILARITIES/DIFFERENCES ACROSS METHODS

12. Major differences included rural versus urban vaccination rates and plans to receive a booster, specific beliefs and concerns about COVID-19 vaccinations, preference in communication methods about COVID-19 vaccinations, and the level of knowledge about LPHDs.
13. Major similarities included certain concerns and beliefs about COVID-19 vaccinations, such as unknown side effects and effects on other health conditions, a willingness to take precautions like masking to prevent the spread of COVID-19, and the level of difficulty to vaccinate, such as finding appointments.

“They really don’t know what resources are out there. If it wasn’t for the culturally-based organizations like the one I’m involved with, they really don’t know.”

—Community leader

“I don’t think that [PCPH] advertises well enough the services that they provide.”

—Focus group attendee

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Work with different political parties to create a shared message for the community about COVID-19 vaccines.
- ▶ Develop new and use existing relationships with churches in the community to share information about COVID-19 vaccinations and host vaccine clinics.
- ▶ Widely share reputable, vetted information about the COVID-19 vaccines’ interactions with health conditions and the vaccines’ side effects with community members.
- ▶ Openly recognize and communicate an individual’s right to decide whether to vaccinate or not in communications.
- ▶ Provide information about vaccines and boosters to community members through trusted community-based organizations (CBOs).
- ▶ Continue to have vaccines available in trusted spaces and visible locations on consistent days at consistent hours.
- ▶ Better advertisement of transportation options that are available to vaccination locations and generally make transport easier to use.
- ▶ As PCPH capacity allows, begin to build relationships with community members by working with trusted CBOs and attending community events.
- ▶ Expand strong community relationships to build community knowledge about PCPH and the services they offer.
- ▶ Continue to pursue a partnership with the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde or other Native American/Alaskan Native community partners to understand vaccine perceptions for this community.