

COVID-19 Vaccine Confidence and Uptake Survey Results from Minnesota Jail Staff

Our approach: UMN's project team emailed jail leadership in 87 Minnesota counties, asking them to share with their staff a 5-10 minute web-based survey about vaccine confidence and uptake. Participants completed this optional survey between August 3, 2021 and August 17, 2021 and could also choose to be entered in a drawing to win a \$200 gift card.

The survey: It posed multiple questions to assess individuals' vaccine confidence and uptake. The questions varied depending on participants' responses and included short answer opportunities to gather detailed information about why or why not they were willing to receive the COVID-19 vaccination. We also asked for input on how to increase vaccine confidence and uptake among jail staff.

Participant demographics: Of the 189 survey respondents, the majority identified as men (59%), and white (81%). The average age of survey participants was 41.6 years. Staff participated from 26 different counties; of the participating counties, Ramsey County had the highest turnout (16%).

The survey findings:

1. Vaccine uptake and intentions. Of the 189 respondents, 69% said they had already received the COVID-19 vaccine. Most (98%) who had already received it were fully vaccinated.

Of those who had not received the vaccine, the majority (79%) did not intend to.

2. Reasons for getting or planning to get the COVID-19 vaccine. Of those who had gotten or planned to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, the most cited reason was to protect the health of family and friends (79%).

Many also wanted to protect their own health (69%) and the health of co-workers (57%). Half reported wanting to resume their social activities (50%).

3. Reasons for not getting or hesitating to get the COVID-19 vaccine. The two most cited reasons for refusal or hesitation were concerns over vaccine side effects (39%) and a lack of trust in the healthcare and public health systems recommending the vaccines (39%).

Nearly a third of participants reported a belief that vaccination is not necessary (28%). Other responses cited concerns about the vaccine causing fertility issues (23%), doubt about vaccine efficacy (23%), and general vaccine safety (23%).

4. Jail staff's suggestions to decrease hesitancy. Many participants (36.5%) felt that having more information about the health effects of the vaccine would help them make a more informed decision about vaccination.

One-fourth wanted more information about how the vaccine was approved (25%). Nearly one-fifth wanted more details on how the vaccine works (18.5%).

5. Perceptions of employer's role in increasing vaccine uptake Participants were split on whether having information from their employer about resources on the COVID-19 vaccine (such as fact sheets or lists of nearby vaccination clinics) would help them overcome vaccine hesitancy, with

43.5% saying they would find it helpful, 42% saying they wouldn't find it helpful, and 14% being unsure.

When asked whether their employer gave paid time off for vaccination, 76% of respondents said no or were not sure. When asked whether their employer provided incentives for vaccination, 99% of respondents said no or were not sure.

The most common questions about the COVID-19 vaccine.

1. **Boosters and length of vaccine effectiveness.** Jail staff had questions about the need for COVID-19 vaccine boosters, how often, and how long immunity lasts.
2. **Long-term effects of vaccination.** Many respondents had questions about whether long-term health issues can result from COVID-19 vaccination.
3. **Vaccine development.** Respondents reported concern about the speed at which the vaccine was developed and concerns about vaccine ingredients.
4. **FDA approval.** Several respondents had questions about when the vaccine would get full FDA approval and why it was administered without full approval.
5. **Effectiveness against variants and breakthrough infections.** Some respondents had questions about whether existing vaccines protected people from new variants and why vaccinated people still get breakthrough COVID-19 infections.
6. **Motives behind vaccination.** Many respondents reported wondering why they are being pushed so hard, why the government cares, and why they need to get vaccinated.
7. **Vaccine after infection.** Several respondents asked about the importance of getting vaccinated after having had a COVID-19 infection.

Possible strategies for improving vaccine confidence among jail staff.

1. **Provide information and counter misinformation.** Ideas included having healthcare professionals come speak to staff members, having training sessions on the science behind vaccines, and having a Q&A with public health professionals.
2. **Mandate vaccines in correctional facilities.** Several respondents were strongly in favor of COVID-19 vaccine mandates. A handful of respondents felt just as strongly opposed to COVID-19 vaccine mandates, stating that “people will quit work before being forced to take a vaccine.”
3. **Offer incentives for vaccination.** Some feel that incentives could help “those who are on the edge of whether to do it or not.” Several respondents also felt strongly against using incentives to increase COVID-19 vaccination. One respondent stated, “you could offer me a thousand dollars and I still would not get it.”
4. **Increase vaccine access.** Suggestions included bringing the vaccine directly into communities via mobile clinics, offering vaccines onsite more frequently, and bringing in the vaccine for all shifts, including day, evening, and night shifts to ensure everyone has the opportunity to get vaccinated. A few respondents noted that paid time off to get vaccinated and paid sick leave for vaccination would also be a helpful strategy.
5. **Leadership cooperation and testimonials.** A few respondents wanted to see leadership and line staff getting shots, sharing testimonials about why it's important to them, and telling personal stories of how they or family members were impacted by COVID-19. Respondents also mentioned that leadership could share publicly how getting vaccinated aligns with each facility's code of ethics. Some respondents believe that making these endorsements personal would help downplay political aspects of vaccination.

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