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LGBTQ+ HEALTH EQUITY & COVID-19:

BUILDING TRUST AND CONFIDENCE FOR THE HEALTH OF OUR COMMUNITIES

Very little is known about the health toll of the coronavirus pandemic on the LGBTQ+ community. New HRC Foundation data on roughly 1,500 LGBTQ+ adults, conducted by Community Marketing & Insights and supported by the Rockefeller Foundation, explore the health impact of the pandemic on LGBTQ+ people, experiences with getting vaccinated and concerns with the Delta variant.

- Data come from a national nonprobability sample (July 2021) of LGBTQ+ adults in the United States. Sampling quotas were used to recruit a sample that closely resembled the race, age, and education level of LGBTQ+ adults.
- Data are weighted by sexual orientation to account for the variation in respondents who identified as bisexual or something else besides lesbian, gay or straight.
- Comparisons of data in the Household Pulse Survey and other polling data are not exact comparisons due to differences in methodological approaches of both studies.

While the data suggest that LGBTQ+ adults are much more likely to have been vaccinated, data also shows that earlier in the pandemic, LGBTQ+ adults may have been more likely to get COVID-19 compared to all adults in the United States. This lends support to [previous research](#) by HRC Foundation which detailed the health risk of the LGBTQ+ community as the pandemic began to unfold.

Similar to previous analysis by [HRC Foundation](#) and the [Census Bureau](#), the research suggests that the vast majority of LGBTQ+ adults have received a COVID-19 vaccine and have some trust in the development of the vaccines. However, there are still lingering concerns for some in the community. When the vaccine rollout began, initial [research](#) by HRC Foundation and PSB Insights suggested that many LGBTQ+ people were not sure whether they would choose to receive a vaccine. Some of the initial concern was largely held by Black LGBTQ+ adults, Latinx LGBTQ+ adults and bi+ women. The data analyzed below found similar vaccination rates for LGBTQ+ adults across demographics such as education, race, gender and sexual orientation. Regardless, many communities in the United States, particularly communities of color, have not had the information and resources to access vaccines available to them. According to an [analysis by the Kaiser Family Foundation](#), 64% of Latinx and 61% of white people in the U.S. ages 12 and older had received at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose, compared to 55% of Black people.

For the first time, the following research also presents data on concerns with the vaccines among people who undergo hormone replacement therapy or take medication for the treatment or prevention of HIV. Most notably, Black and Latinx LGBTQ+ adults have expressed some of the highest rates of concern with how the vaccines may interact with their medication for treating or preventing HIV. The concern held by Black and Latinx community members is not surprising given the disproportionate impact of HIV on these communities. CDC [data](#) suggests that most new cases of HIV are Black and Latinx gay and bi+ men, and Black and Latinx transgender women are more likely to be living with HIV.



Even with many LGBTQ+ adults saying they have received a COVID-19 vaccine, the community as a whole is very concerned about the Delta variant. Unfortunately, COVID-19 and its variants will continue to be a critical public health issue for the coming months -- or even years. Vaccinations are one of the most important steps in ensuring that every person can live healthy and thrive and get to the other side of the pandemic. The research presented here is a call to action for every individual to get vaccinated, for policymakers to act and make vaccination efforts evermore inclusive, and for health professionals to better serve their communities.

COVID-19 ILLNESS AND LGBTQ+ PEOPLE

Little is known about how many LGBTQ+ people have been infected or died from COVID-19, yet this analysis now shows the extent to which COVID-19 has had a health toll on our community. One in five LGBTQ+ adults say they have tested positive for COVID-19 or are “pretty sure” they have had it despite not receiving an official diagnosis. The rate at which LGBTQ+ adults reported COVID-19 illness is significantly higher than previously reported by all adults in the United States (14%), even when observed by different demographics.

- + Entire Population
 - **14%** of all U.S. adults
 - **21%** of all LGBTQ+ adults
 - **22%** of all transgender adults
 - **22%** of all Bi+ adults

While BIPOC LGBTQ+ adults and white LGBTQ+ adults say they have tested positive for COVID-19 or are “pretty sure” they’ve had it at similar rates, Black LGBTQ+ adults were most likely (24%) to report this. Non-binary, genderqueer, genderfluid adults and LGBTQ+ women say they’ve tested positive for COVID-19 or are “pretty sure” they’ve had it at similar rates of LGBTQ+ men.

- + By Respondent Race
 - **19%** of Asian LGBTQ+ adults
 - **22%** of white LGBTQ+ adults
 - **23%** of Latinx LGBTQ+ adults
 - **23%** of Native American LGBTQ+ adults
 - **24%** of Black LGBTQ+ adults
- + By Respondent Gender
 - **20%** of LGBTQ+ women
 - **22%** of non-binary, genderqueer and genderfluid adults
 - **23%** of LGBTQ+ men

TRUST AND CONFIDENCE

A majority of LGBTQ+ adults (60%) said they have a great deal of confidence in the research and development process for the COVID-19 vaccines. These rates are far higher than reported by all adults (33%) in the United States. However, confidence in the vaccine development process



changes significantly based on the race of respondents. On the one hand, only 42% of Black LGBTQ+ adults and 53% of Latinx LGBTQ+ adults have a great deal of confidence in the process for the development of the vaccines. On the other hand, 63% of Asian LGBTQ+ adults, 67% of Native American LGBTQ+ adults and 67% of white LGBTQ+ adults said they have a great deal of confidence. Furthermore, 30% say they have a fair amount of confidence and 8% say they aren't too confident or aren't confident at all in the process. Transgender adults (56%) and Bi+ adults (56%) are somewhat less likely than LGBTQ+ adults to have a great deal of confidence.

The high levels of confidence in the vaccine research and development process expressed by the LGBTQ+ community are a good sign, even though LGBTQ+ people might not be able to see themselves in the vaccine development process. Methodologies and reviews of the protocol established for the [Moderna](#) (mRNA-1273), [Pfizer](#) (BNT162b2), and [J&J](#) (JNJ-78436735) vaccines, for example, do not include demographic or health measures such as sexual orientation, gender identity, gender beyond a binary, use of hormone replacement therapy or HIV status. However, 45% of LGBTQ+ adults say they are likely or very likely to participate in a future COVID-19 vaccine trial.

Non-binary, genderqueer and genderfluid adults (54%) are less likely than LGBTQ+ adults to have a great deal of confidence in the process. Such confidence was similarly shared by LGBTQ+ women (58%), compared to LGBTQ+ men (68%).

Because LGBTQ+ adults have high levels of trust in the scientific development of the vaccines, it is no surprise that two-thirds are very confident in vaccines available in the U.S. Even most transgender adults, bi+ adults and BIPOC LGBTQ+ adults share similar levels of confidence. However, Black LGBTQ+ adults (52%) are significantly less likely to feel very confident in the vaccines. Despite this gap within the community, we are all generally more likely to be very confident in the vaccines than all adults in the U.S. have [reported](#) (37%).

Another area where disparities in confidence exist is when looking at specific COVID-19 vaccine brands, such as Moderna, Pfizer and Johnson & Johnson. Two-thirds of LGBTQ+ adults are very confident in the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines, yet only 29% of LGBTQ+ adults are very confident in the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. In fact, 27% of LGBTQ+ adults are not really confident, if at all, compared to only 8% who feel this way about the Moderna vaccines and 6% who feel this way about the Pfizer vaccines.

HOW HORMONE REPLACEMENT THERAPY, HIV PREVENTION AND HIV TREATMENT CAN IMPACT TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IN VACCINES

Rare cases of blood clots forming in recipients of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine have been reported, and may cause concern for people, especially if they are already at higher risk of blood clots. This includes people [undergoing hormone replacement therapy](#), such as many cisgender women, transgender people and non-binary people. It also [includes](#) people taking medication for treating or preventing HIV. Overall, 93% of LGBTQ+ adults have heard something in the news about these rare cases. One in five LGBTQ+ adults undergoing hormone replacement therapy have concerns about how a COVID-19 vaccine could affect them and their therapy. Furthermore, 32% of LGBTQ+ adults are concerned that a COVID-19 vaccine will negatively interact with their medication for treating or preventing HIV, regardless of their status. These concerns regarding HIV medication are especially heightened for Black (39%) and Latinx (34%) LGBTQ+ adults.



ABOUT THE VACCINATED

According to this survey data, 91% of LGBTQ+ adults surveyed were fully vaccinated, with an additional 3% having received their first dose of a two-dose vaccine. This compares similarly to previous [research](#) by HRC Foundation and Community Marketing & Insights. Other data by the Census Bureau's [Household Pulse Survey](#) suggests that 86% of LGBT adults were vaccinated.

- ✚ A plurality (30%) of LGBTQ+ adults received their vaccine at a mass vaccination site. Following mass vaccination sites LGBTQ+ adults received their vaccines at a wide array of locations:
 - **23%** received their vaccine at a pharmacy
 - **12%** received their vaccine at a mobile vaccination site
 - **11%** received their vaccine at a hospital
 - **5%** received their vaccine at their place of work
 - **3%** received their vaccine at their doctor's office
 - **3%** received their vaccine at a health facility focused on people with specific illnesses
 - **2%** received their vaccine at a health facility that primarily serves LGBTQ+ people
 - **1%** received their vaccine at their church
 - **1%** received their vaccine at a health facility that primarily serves people of color
 - **1%** received their vaccine at their own home

CONCERNS AMONG THE VACCINATED

Most LGBTQ+ adults (79%) have personally arranged an appointment to receive their COVID-19 vaccine, and 94% of these individuals were able to schedule their appointment. When scheduling an appointment at a doctor's office, patients are commonly asked to provide health insurance information, usually in the form of a card, and even a government-issued identification document such as a driver's license. Overall, 68% of LGBTQ+ adults said they had to show a government-issued identification when they showed up to get their vaccine. Fewer LGBTQ+ adults showed an insurance card (35%) or provided their social security number (15%) when they showed up to get their vaccine. Many LGBTQ+ people, especially transgender people, may not have access to fully accurate identity documents, which could pose problems for individuals receiving their vaccine or returning for a second dose. In fact, 15% of LGBTQ+ adults said their correct name does not appear the same on all of their identity documents.

Specifically, 40% of transgender adults did not have their correct name on all of their documents.

Even though many LGBTQ+ adults have been vaccinated, some received vaccines despite having concerns about their safety and efficacy. Among the small portion of vaccinated LGBTQ+ adults who were very concerned about getting vaccinated, side effects were the concerns most often cited even though few cited these concerns.



- + When getting vaccinated, vaccinated LGBTQ+ adults were very concerned about...
 - Minor or mild side effects (11%)
 - Major or severe side effects (11%)
 - Missing work due to side effects (9%)
 - Out of pocket expenses (8%)
 - Missing work to go receive the vaccine (5%)
 - Being unable to get vaccinated at a trusted place (5%)
 - The vaccines are not as safe as claimed to be (5%)
 - Being required to get the vaccine even if they didn't want it (4%)
 - Travel needed to get vaccinated (4%)
 - It may impact future fertility (2%)
 - Having to provide a social security number or government-issued ID (2%)
 - It might affect a their own or a family member's immigrant status (2%)

CONCERNS AMONG THE UNVACCINATED

While many LGBTQ+ adults had concerns, they still received their vaccines. However, some LGBTQ+ adults say they're unvaccinated (6%) without intention to receive a vaccine in the future. Similar to the general population, most of the unvaccinated LGBTQ+ adults had education levels below a Bachelor's degree (70%). Roughly two in five (39%) had no higher than a high school degree, one-quarter (24%) had no higher than an associate's degree or professional certification and 7% had less than a high school degree.

Many LGBTQ+ unvaccinated adults have concerns about the vaccines. A feeling of lack of choice, concerns with side effects and overall safety concerns are the most cited reasons for those who were not yet vaccinated. Many LGBTQ+ adults also cited fear of side effects and how those side effects may cause them to miss work. Other concerns that many unvaccinated LGBTQ+ adults noted were concerns with out of pocket expenses, fertility, missing work or concerns with providing government issued identity documents. A small portion of LGBTQ+ adults reported concerns that getting vaccinated might affect their own or a family member's immigrant status or with having to travel to receive the vaccine.

- + Unvaccinated LGBTQ+ adults are very concerned about...
 - Being required to get the vaccine even if they didn't want it (60%)
 - Major or severe side effects (60%)
 - The vaccines are not as safe as claimed to be (59%)
 - Mild or minor side effects (43%)
 - Missing work due to side effects (37%)
 - Out of pocket expenses (28%)
 - It may impact future fertility (21%)
 - Having to provide a social security number or government-issued ID (20%)



- Missing work to go receive the vaccine (15%)
- Being unable to get vaccinated at a trusted place (11%)
- Needing the vaccine if they already had COVID-19 (10%)
- Travel needed to get vaccinated (9%)
- It might affect a their own or a family member's immigrant status (8%)

CONCERN WITH THE DELTA VARIANT

The LGBTQ+ community has endured significant illness throughout the pandemic, and concern with the Delta variant is top of mind for the community. A whopping nine in ten (91%) LGBTQ+ adults were very (55%) or somewhat (36%) concerned about the Delta variant. These rates are significantly higher than has been reported by all adults in the United States (72%). While the LGBTQ+ community is not a monolith, on this issue no significant differences in views were observed even across education level, race, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity.

A CALL TO ACTION

Unfortunately, COVID-19 and its variants will be an ongoing public health issue for our communities. Getting vaccinated is one of the most important steps in ensuring that all of us can live healthy and thrive and get to the other side of the pandemic. The data are a call to action for every individual to get vaccinated, for policymakers to act and make vaccination efforts evermore inclusive, and for health professionals to better serve their communities.

- + For more information about the COVID-19 vaccines, please view our additional resources:
 - [Frequently Asked Questions About Accessing the COVID-19 Vaccination](#)
 - [Frequently Asked Questions About COVID-19 Vaccine Benefits and Safety](#)
- + Everyone should follow the latest guidance from the CDC for knowing when and where to socially distance and wear a mask.
- + Policymakers must act to improve data collection on LGBTQ people. Very little is known about the health toll of the pandemic on LGBTQ+ people because of incomplete or inaccurate data collection.
- + Health professionals leading clinical trials and other research experiments must explicitly include and report findings about LGBTQ+ people, people undergoing hormone therapy and people living with HIV.