

Immunizations & High-Value Care

Identifying Opportunities for Employer Action in Uncertain Times



BACKGROUND

To learn about approaches employers are using to encourage high-value preventive care and immunizations, both pandemic and non-pandemic, and strategies they are considering for the next few years, the National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions (National Alliance) brought together three of its regional coalition members. The Florida Alliance for Healthcare Value, Houston Business Coalition on Health, and Memphis Business Group on Health developed and disseminated a member survey. The survey, which garnered responses from 25 companies of various sizes, focuses on better understanding what actions these employer members are taking in the following areas:

1. Changes enacted or under consideration to strengthen overall preventive care strategies, especially for vaccinations.
2. Types of incentives offered for vaccination completion.
3. Measures to enhance employee vaccine confidence and increase employer understanding of common concerns regarding all immunizations.
4. Messages about continued coronavirus spread and safety measures—and how results can inform subsequent education about flu, pneumonia, and other non-pandemic vaccinations.
5. Tools and resources to help employees make informed choices.

This report highlights the employer survey results, key observations, and additional recommendations, as well as resources employers can use to enhance their preventive care and vaccine strategy over the next several years.



Participating Coalitions



Using the power and influence of Florida’s leading employers, the Florida Alliance for Healthcare Value has accomplished impactful, groundbreaking work in improving the quality of health care. To reflect its statewide reach and influence, the organization changed its name to the Florida Health Care Coalition in 2004. In 2019, the organization became the Florida Alliance for Healthcare Value, a name that demonstrates its commitment to driving value in health care and prevents confusion with first-responder “healthcare coalitions” charged with overseeing Florida’s disaster preparedness and response efforts.



Houston Business Coalition on Health (HBCH) is the leading resource for Houston employers and their health services providers dedicated to providing health benefits at a sustainable cost while improving the quality and employee experience of their delivery through effective benefits design. With 60 members, HBCH represents approximately 500,000 local and more than 1 million national employer-sponsored lives.



Memphis Business Group on Health (MBGH) is a coalition of member employers sharing solutions, providing connections, and offering tools to its members so they can better manage the cost and quality of employee health benefits in an ever-changing environment. MBGH is the only organization in Memphis representing the employer’s voice—fighting to help them manage the rising cost of healthcare, improve the quality of workforce medical care, and empower employees to choose healthier lifestyles.

NATIONAL EMPLOYER SURVEY RESULTS

The National Alliance brought together three regional coalition members—Florida Alliance for Healthcare Value, the Houston Business Coalition on Health, and the Memphis Business Group on Health—to reach out to its employer members via a national survey. The survey covered such concerns as high-value preventive care, immunizations, vaccine hesitancy, and plans to improve access to vaccines.

Key Observations

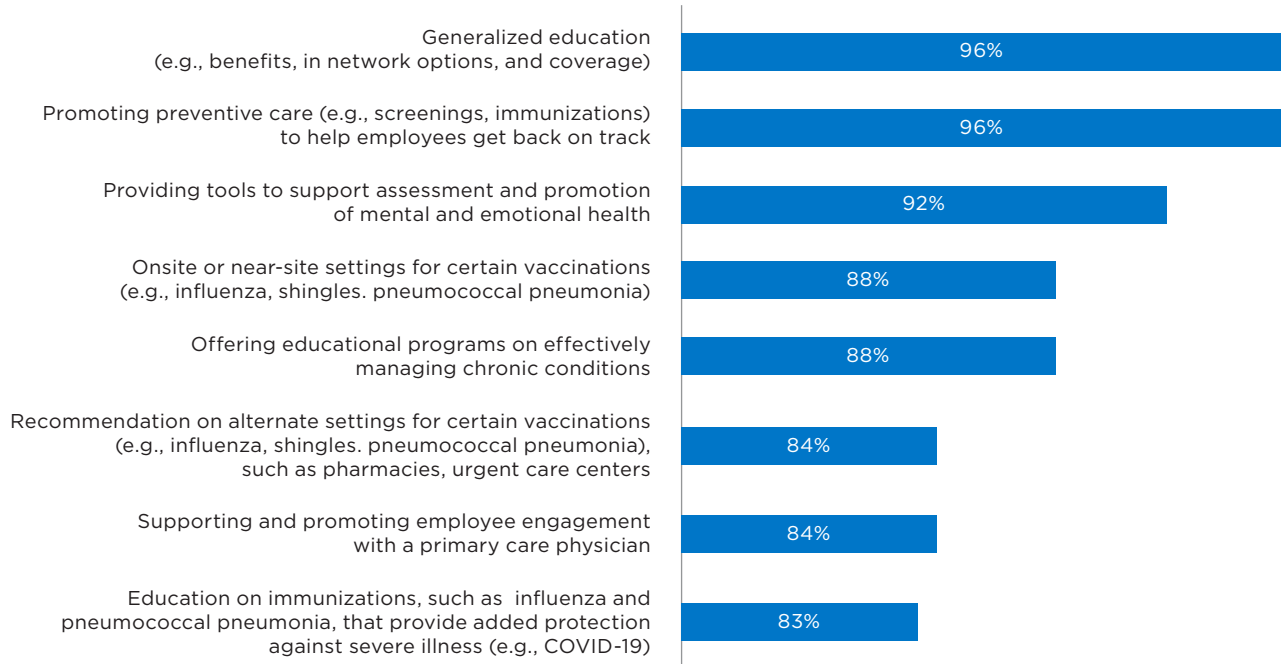
- ▶ Employers generally rely on broad education to communicate about preventive care benefits, including vaccines. A majority (88%) are offering onsite or near-site settings for certain vaccinations—such as flu, shingles, and pneumococcal pneumonia—while 84% of employers are recommending alternate settings, such as community pharmacies.
- ▶ About 30% of employers are not sure how to address immunization gaps. This highlights an opportunity for employers to engage with health plans and vendors to review current data across various subpopulations to determine how to best measure and monitor improvement.
- ▶ About 26% of employers are either considering or currently have in place value-based incentives that encourage providers to improve vaccination rates among their patients. This reveals another opportunity for employers who are not yet doing so to work with their health plans to assess outreach to providers, ensuring that pandemic and non-pandemic vaccinations are accessible and needed follow-up with patients is appropriately delivered.
- ▶ Only 24% of responding employers currently tailor communications to employee subpopulations with disparately low vaccination rates; however, 16% are considering this approach in the next year. This reveals an opportunity for many employers to review and enhance employee health support strategies as they move into the new year. Employers could include new health plan measures and metrics to ensure that immunization rates stay high and that preventive services are appropriately utilized.
- ▶ Employers are still learning the best ways to engage certain subpopulations. For employees at higher risk for certain diagnoses, the outreach approach should be comprehensive. The majority of respondents (58%) don't know their current approach, but some are partnering with trusted community leaders (33%) and others offer educational programs or webinars (33%).
- ▶ Most employers are focused on providing information on vaccines and how to get vaccinated (96% for COVID and 75% for non-COVID), while 79% of employers are offering on-site vaccinations and increasing vaccine accessibility for employees. Many offer incentives for both pandemic (67%) and non-pandemic (25%) vaccines. About half of employers are offering culturally specific messaging for high-risk or vaccine-hesitant populations.
- ▶ Many employers offer incentives for both pandemic (67%) and non-pandemic (25%) vaccines. However, about half of employers are offering culturally specific messaging for high-risk or vaccine-hesitant populations. Employers may need to allow time for vaccine confidence to grow. Employees who are hesitant now may become more confident after seeing coworkers get vaccinated.

High-Value Preventive Care

The initial survey questions focused on the broader preventive care strategy employers have in place.

Strategies Employers Currently Have in Place

Promote High-value Preventive Care

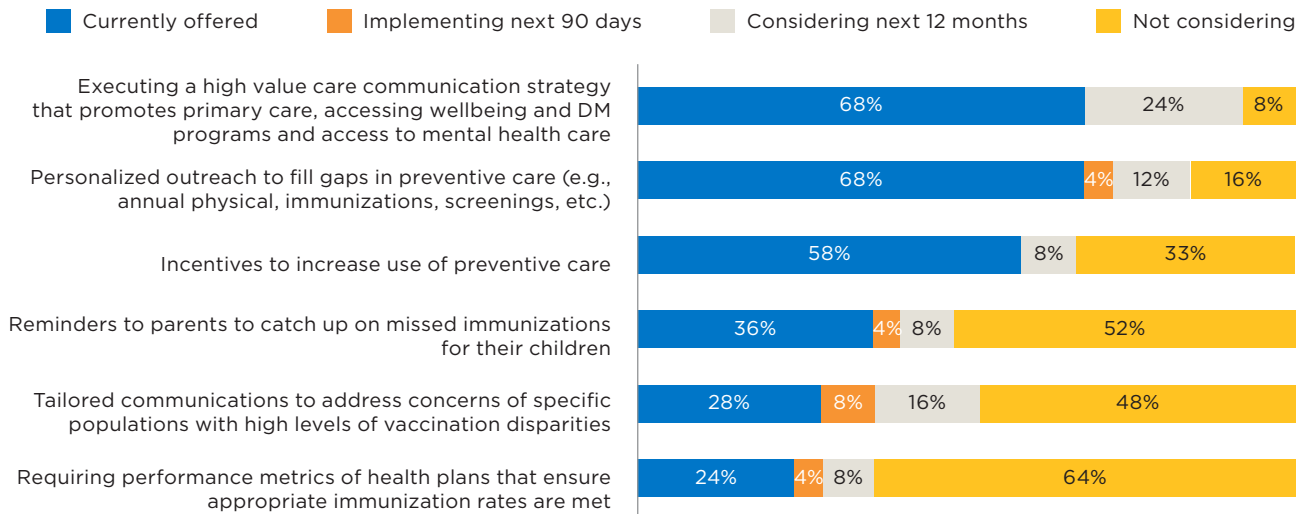


For most respondents, the main strategies to promote high-value preventive care include generalized education and promoting screenings and immunizations (96% each). While 92% provide tools to support mental and emotional health, 88% are offering on-site or near-site vaccinations, such as those for the flu, shingles, and pneumococcal pneumonia. In addition, 84% of employers are recommending alternate settings, such as pharmacies, for certain vaccines.



Additional Strategies Employers Are Considering

Promote High-value Preventive Care



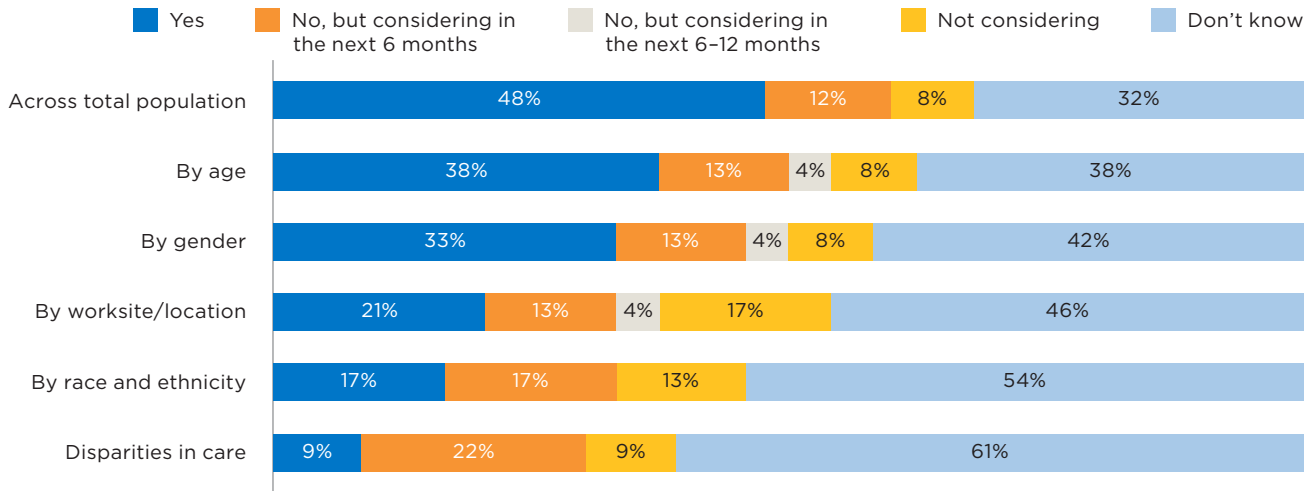
The top strategies employers either have in place or are considering include executing a high-value care communications strategy that promotes primary care and access to wellbeing, disease management, and mental health programs (68% currently in place; 24% considering) and personalized outreach to fill gaps in preventive care (68% currently in place; 12% considering). At this time, only 28% of employers have tailored communications to address the concerns of specific populations with disparately low vaccination rates, with only 8% of employers implementing a strategy in the next 90 days and 16% considering one for the next year.



Immunizations

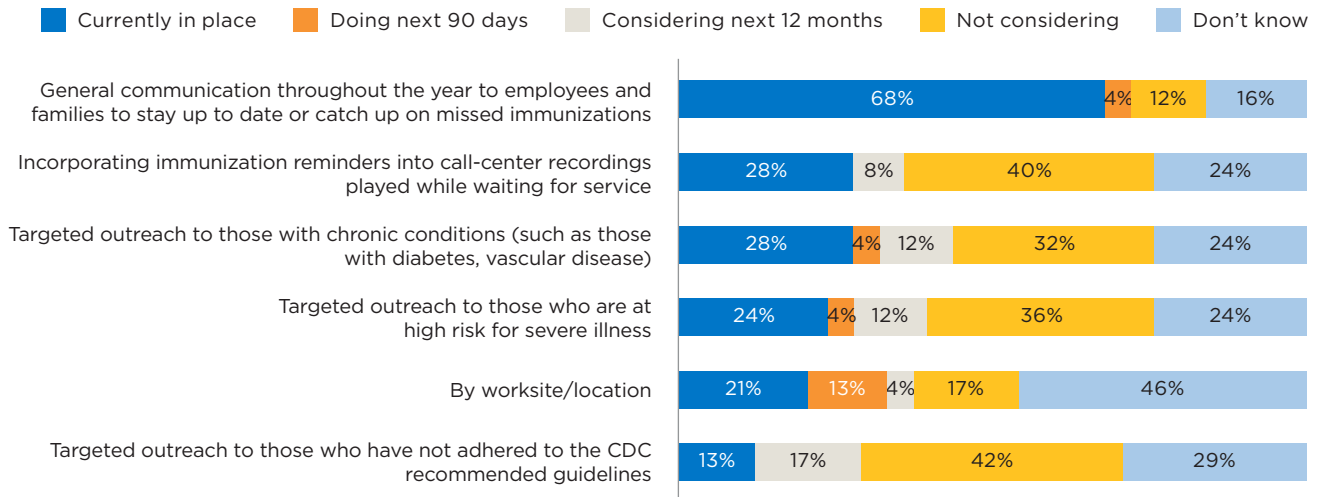
The survey asked employers to explain more specifically their approach to COVID-19 and other immunizations. This section explored their understanding of vaccination awareness gaps, as well as strategies health plans and vendors are using to close identified gaps.

Immunization Gaps: Level of Awareness



Although the top response was “across total population,” only 48% of employers are currently aware of gaps in immunizations. Across all response options, more employers are considering learning about their gaps in immunizations by age, gender, location, race and ethnicity, and disparities in care.

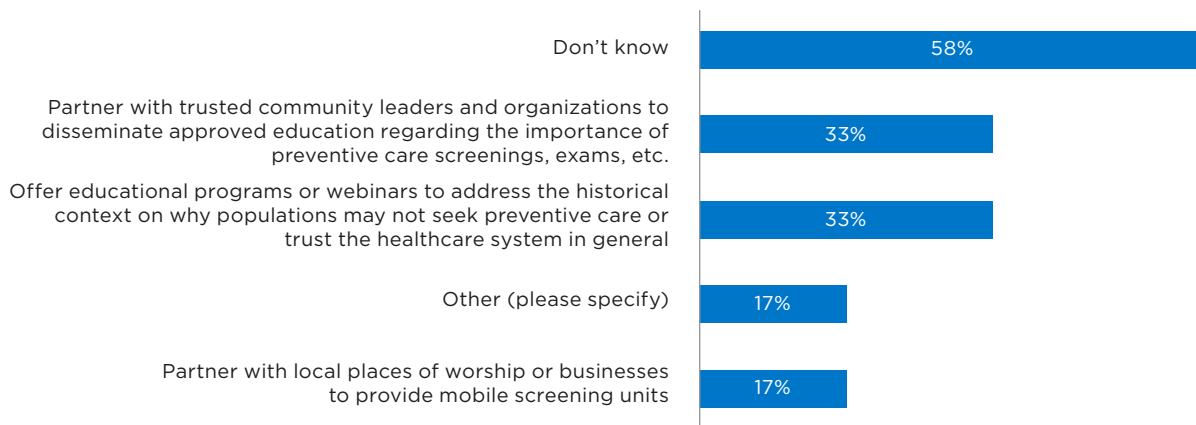
Strategies Employers Are Using with Health Plans or Vendor Partners



Again, the top response from most employers is that they are using general communications through health plans and vendor partners (68%). This is followed by targeted outreach to those with chronic conditions and those at high risk for severe illness (at 28% and 24%, respectively). A significant number of employer respondents (30%) are unsure how to address immunization gaps. This suggests an opportunity for employers to engage with health plans and vendors to review current data, enhance their strategy for outreach to employees and their dependents, monitor progress, and determine whether additional measures are needed.

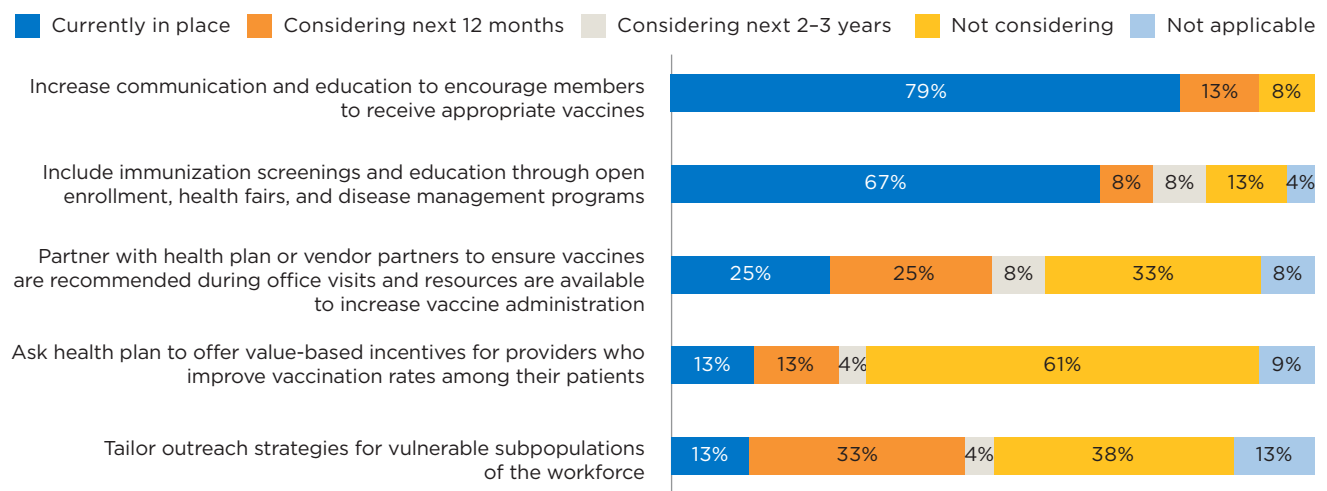
Outreach to Black and Brown Populations

Higher Risk for Certain Diagnoses, Less Likely to Get Preventive Care



Employers are still learning the best ways to engage certain subpopulations. For employees at higher risk for certain diagnoses, the outreach approach should be comprehensive. The majority of respondents (58%) don't know their current approach; however, some are partnering with trusted community leaders (33%) and others offer educational programs or webinars (33%).

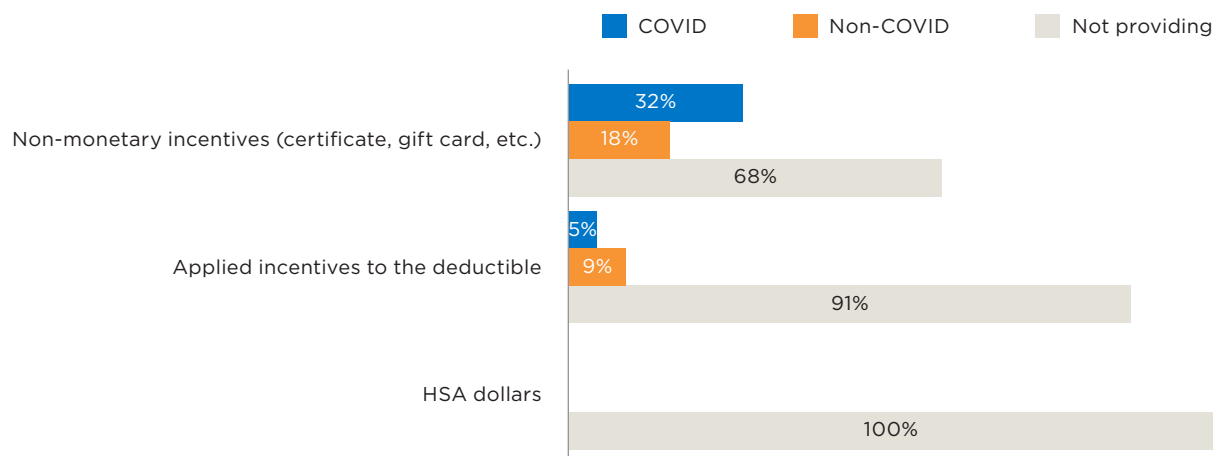
Current Employer Strategies to Promote and Increase Vaccination Rates Over the Next 1-3 Years



Although communication continues to be a key approach for employers, 67% of employers are interested in increasing promotions for immunizations through health fairs, wellness programs, and disease management programs. About 26% of employers are either considering or currently offer value-based incentives for providers who improve vaccination rates among their patients. *This highlights an opportunity for more employers* to work with their health plans to encourage providers to offer vaccinations and conduct needed follow up with patients. Employers should also consider instituting incentives to encourage employees and their family members to get needed vaccines. According to survey results, some employers are providing paid time off for vaccination or reimbursing employees for necessary expenses associated with vaccination.

Types of Incentives Offered Upon Vaccine Completion

Pandemic or Non-pandemic Vaccines



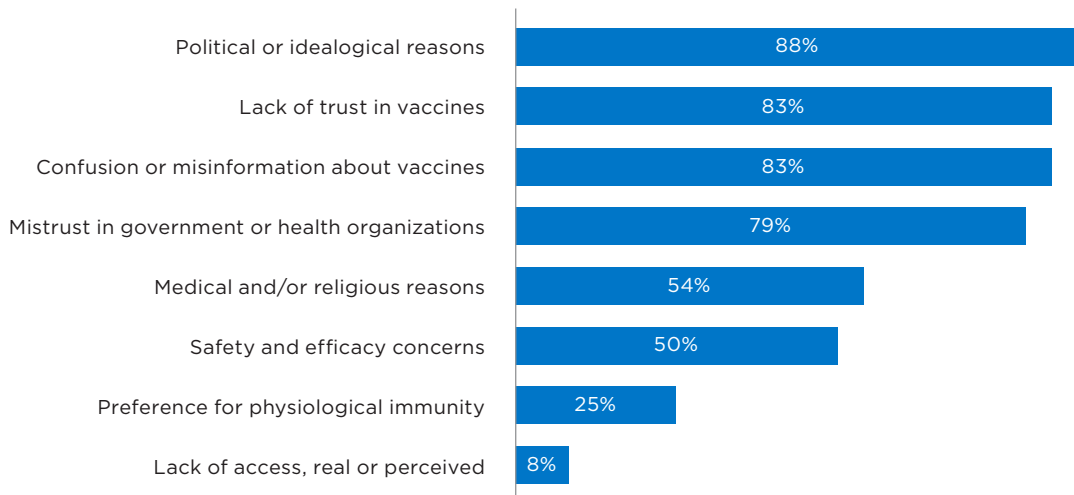
For both pandemic and non-pandemic vaccine completion, the majority of employers are not considering rewards for their workforce. Those that are use non-monetary incentives, such as gift cards, or will apply an incentive toward individual deductibles.



Vaccine Hesitancy

Vaccine hesitancy has always existed, but the COVID-19 vaccine and the current environment have brought this issue to the fore. Employers are interested in addressing hesitancy to keep employees and their families safe and healthy.

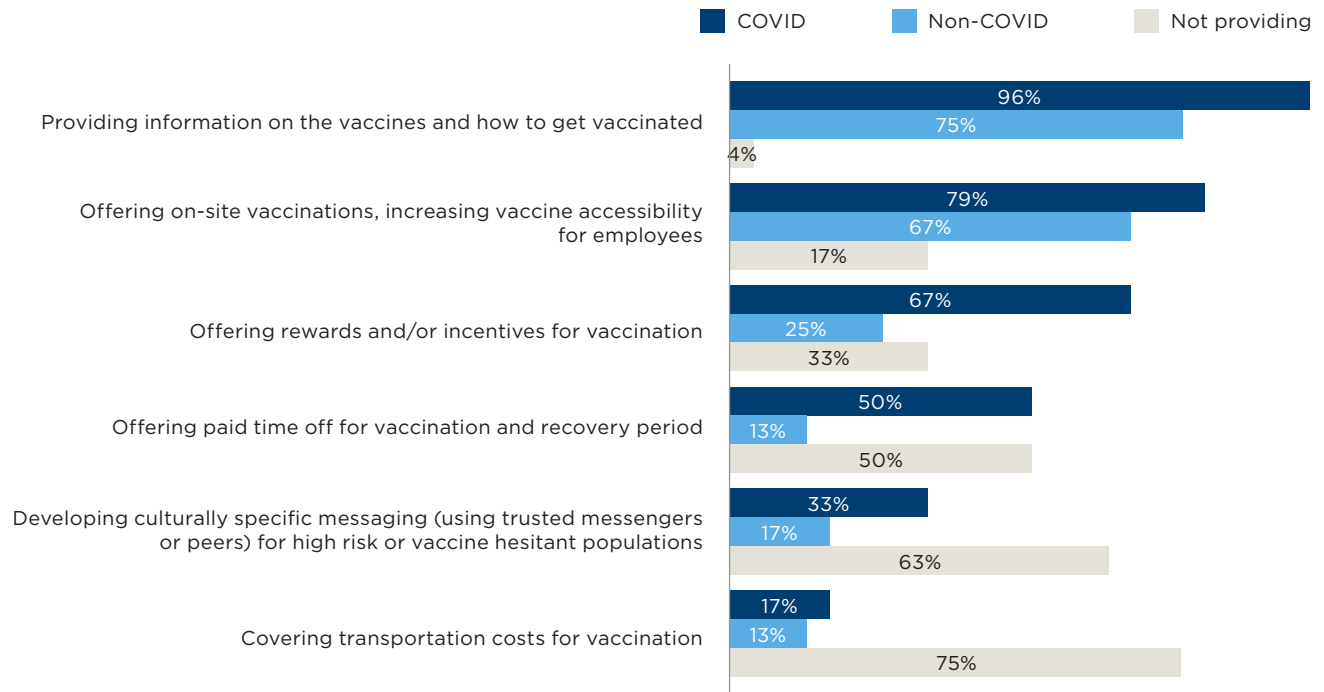
What Is Contributing to Vaccine Hesitancy



Top responses include political or ideological reasons (88%), lack of trust in vaccines (83%), and confusion or misinformation about vaccines (83%). In addition, 54% of employers say medical and/or religious reasons contributed to vaccine hesitancy, while 50% cited safety and efficacy concerns.



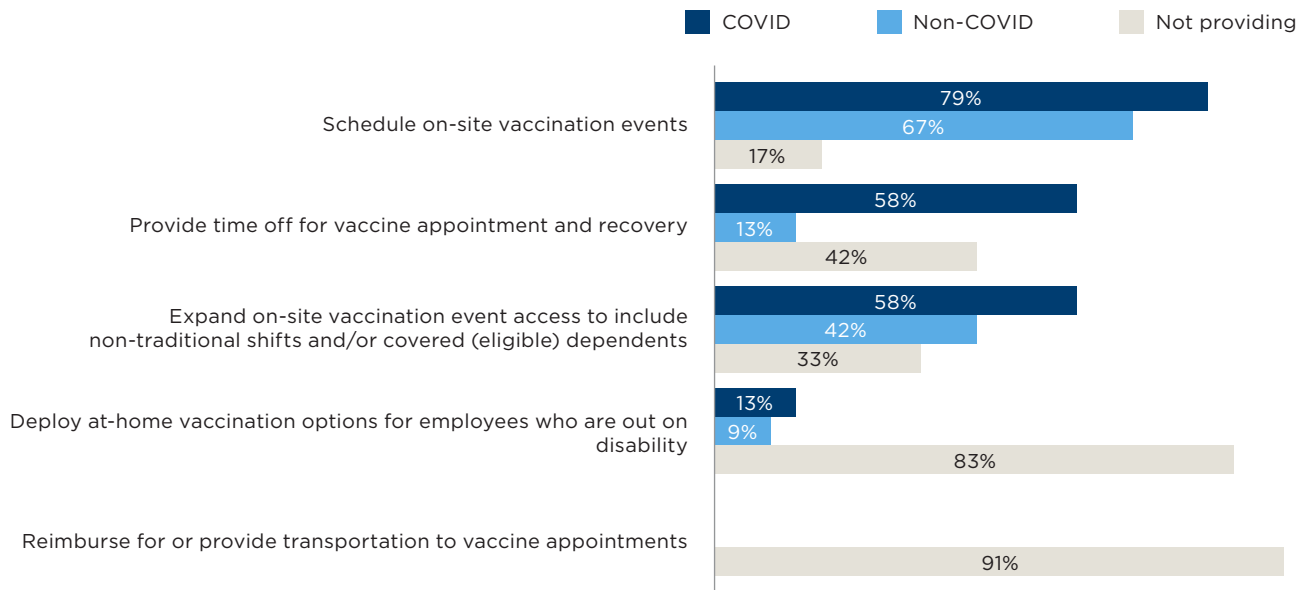
What Employers Are Doing: Outreach to Vaccine-hesitant Populations to Promote Equitable Access to Vaccines



Most employers are providing information on the vaccines and how to get vaccinated (96% for COVID and 75% for non-COVID), while 79% of employers are offering on-site vaccinations and increasing vaccine accessibility for employees. Many employers are offering incentives for both pandemic (67%) and non-pandemic (25%) vaccines. About half of employers are offering culturally specific messaging for high-risk or vaccine-hesitant populations.



Future Plans to Improve Access to Vaccines



The majority of employers plan to schedule on-site vaccination events for both pandemic (79%) and non-pandemic (67%) vaccines over the coming months. A little over half of employers will provide time off to enable employees to obtain the COVID-19 vaccine, and fewer (13%) will also adopt this measure for non-pandemic vaccines. Although some employers are expanding on-site vaccination events to non-traditional shifts, they are not considering at-home options for employees who are out on disability, nor are they considering reimbursement for transportation—a measure with the potential to increase vaccine access, especially for low-income workers.



Recommendations to Enhance an Employer’s Immunization Strategy

- ▶ Assess the preventive care needs of the workforce and dependents to understand why some may not get vaccinated. Work with health plans, on-site clinics, or appropriate vendors to identify what percentage of this population plans to get pandemic and non-pandemic vaccines; determine what percentage of employees are currently up to date on vaccinations.
- ▶ Work with health plans to develop a dashboard that highlights company achievement goals for vaccines and other related health-focused concerns. Be sure to share this with the workforce (e.g., monthly) to encourage employees and their dependents to improve over time.
- ▶ Be sure that health plan design provides vaccines schedules, such as that from the [US Preventive Services Task Force](#). Be sure to include recommendations for pneumococcal pneumonia, shingles, etc.
- ▶ Develop a consistent communication campaign that conveys to employees *and their families* the benefits of all vaccines:
 - Share clear, complete and accurate messages about vaccines (e.g., flu, pneumococcal, COVID-19) and take visible actions to build trust and vaccine confidence.
 - Consider including information on the value of getting more than one vaccine (e.g., “COVID plus 2”).
 - Communicate in languages that are culturally appropriate.
 - Highlight a company’s “call to action” that encourages keeping everyone healthy, whether they work at the office or remotely.
 - Use community resources (e.g., [Employer Vaccine Program Strategies](#) from the CDC).
- ▶ Coordinate with local agencies and community partners to offer vaccines at company on-site or near-site clinics at different times of the year, not just during open enrollment.
- ▶ Consider providing access to a qualified healthcare professional who can help with outreach to individuals who need more assistance. Make sure this professional can also engage with individuals who, for disability and religious reasons, are unable to take vaccines and may have questions or concerns.
- ▶ Review and revise employment policies and processes to address any health equity challenges related to vaccines access or important follow-up care.

Other Areas to Address in Future Work

- ▶ Identify which messages are useful for employers to include in their vaccine strategy.
- ▶ Help employers effectively combat vaccine hesitancy.
- ▶ Educate employers about the importance of vaccinations for high-risk and other vulnerable populations.
- ▶ Support employer efforts to help employees rebuild trust in primary care physicians.

Resources

These employer resources have been distributed to regional coalitions and their employer members:

- ▶ National Alliance Action Brief: [High-Value Preventive Care During COVID-19, Special Focus on Immunizations](#)
- ▶ National Alliance “[The History of Vaccines](#)” video
- ▶ CDC: [Interim Guidance for Routine and Influenza Immunization Services During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- ▶ [Guidance for Planning Vaccination Clinics Held at Satellite, Temporary, or Off-site Locations](#)
- ▶ [Vaccination Tools and Resources for Employers](#)
- ▶ [How to Increase Flu Vaccinations During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- ▶ [The 7 Benefits of Flu Vaccination](#)

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