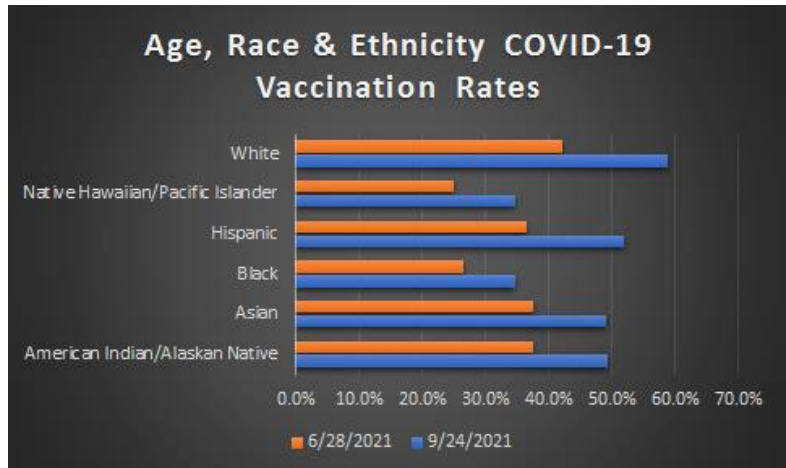
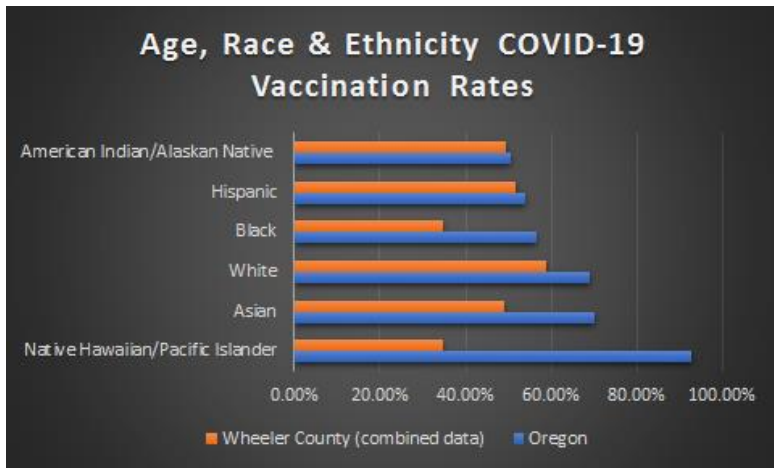


1. Please review the jurisdiction's response to questions #1 and #2 in the accepted equity documentation, as well as recent race/ethnicity data. Describe any improvements in equity gaps as evidenced in the data. Provide a status update on progress the LPHA and its partners have made to eliminate vaccine access barriers and implement plans to close vaccine equity gaps among specific racial and ethnic populations. Please be specific, provide an example of work about which the LPHA and its partners are particularly proud, and describe any tangible impacts in the community.



As stated in our equity plan, it should be noted that Wheeler County racial/ethnic data is in combination with Crook, Gilliam, Grant, Hood River, Jefferson, Morrow, Sherman and Wasco Counties and may not reflect true population size.

Since September 24, 2021, Wheeler County Public Health has administered 1827 doses of COVID-19 vaccines. The charts above contain data most current as of September 24, 2021. The chart on the left compares vaccination rates among different racial/ethnic groups within Wheeler County in orange with vaccination rates throughout the State of Oregon in blue. Wheeler County has significantly lower vaccination rates among our BIPOC communities. However, our Hispanic and American Indian/Alaskan Native groups trend closely with Oregon with less than 2% difference. The chart on the right compares Wheeler Counties vaccination rates from June 28, 2021 in orange to most recent vaccination rates on September 24, 2021 represented by a blue bar.

As evidenced by the charts above, we have seen small improvements in vaccine equity gaps with the largest increase of 4.2% among our Hispanic population with a total of 51.8% vaccinated. This was followed closely by whites at a 3.9% increase in vaccine uptake and Asians at 3.5% increase.

We have worked closely with many partners and have slowly progressed in eliminating vaccine access barriers. We have implemented different plans to close vaccine equity gaps among different racial and ethnic populations with examples listed below.

Barrier 1: Limited Staffing

Although our staffing has been limited, we have found ways to maximize our outreach by working closely with ACHC in coordinating walk-in availability for COVID-19 vaccines in Fossil, Mitchell and Spray clinic locations. This has been very successful in increasing the rates of vaccines we have administered since June 2021. We have also started to schedule second doses during patient's first vaccine administrations to prevent failure of miscommunication leading to prolonged wait times. We have also chosen to offer COVID-19 vaccines in schools during lunch hours and have been successful in reaching our youth in Spray and Mitchell High Schools.

Barrier 2: Transportation

Transportation barriers within our community include the lack of access to reliable transportation as well as the inability to take time off of work to travel to Fossil to get a vaccine before closing hours. We have been able to reduce this barrier by working with Wheeler County Transportation to transport patients to and from appointments as well as offering vaccines in both Spray and Mitchell Tuesday through Friday and at local events. Providing more outreach to patients has proven to be very successful in increasing our vaccination rates. The Movie Night event that was held on July 16 was successful in educating community members about who we are as well as vaccinating our youth groups who attended.

OHA also hosted two mobile vaccine clinics for a total of 6 days, two days in each Fossil, Spray and Mitchell. The first event was not successful, however, the second one was. OHA was able to vaccinate community members who were unable to leave town as well as provide us with more vaccines which were all used prior to expiration.

Some of the place's vaccines have been administered include ACHC in Fossil, Mitchell and Spray. Fossil Mercantile, Tiger Town Brewing CO., Mitchell Campground, Mitchell and Spray High School, Isobel Edwards Hall, Haven House, and many more.

Barrier 3: Vaccine Hesitancy

Recently there has been a stark increase in the uptake of COVID-19 vaccinations with new OHA requirements regarding state employees, teachers and healthcare workers needing to be fully vaccinated by October 18, 2021. We have also received more phone calls in regards to people wanting to know more about the vaccines since we have also experienced multiple COVID-19 outbreaks throughout the communities. Many of the community members were unaware there were multiple types of COVID-19 vaccines, unsure of the side effects, and wanted to know how effective they were. After speaking with those who inquired we received 100% follow up with those members getting vaccinated.

Wheeler County Public Health felt it was most proud of the Movie Night Event that was hosted in July 2021. Many community members, including many BIPOC community members were present and chose to receive their first or second COVID-19 vaccinations while they were there. It was very casual and the LPHA was able to provide vaccinations where people were sitting so they didn't have to miss any parts of the movie or wait in a line. Many people were very happy with the event and said they would like to see another one in outlying cities of Mitchell and Spray.

- 2. Please review the jurisdiction's response to question #6 and provide an update on the LPHA and its partners' work to address the vaccine needs of migrant and seasonal farmworkers in the jurisdiction and share the outcomes of these efforts.**

Wheeler County Public Health worked with OHA to provide a mobile vaccine van in Fossil, Spray and Mitchell. The services were offered within central locations but for anyone who was unable to leave home, could request their service at their house. This was primarily targeted towards our BIPOC communities as well as our agricultural workers. The van was successful in vaccinating community members, but was never called out to a local farm or ranch.

In continued efforts to address the vaccine needs of our agricultural workers, we are currently working on creating and distributing pamphlets that contain specific information geared towards farmers and ranchers and the benefits of them receiving COVID-19 vaccinations. It also compares the benefits COVID-19 vaccines have with the prophylactic vaccines they give their livestock.

We are also collecting questions from CDC's Vaccine Confidence Survey Question Bank for our rapid community assessment to better obtain relevant data from these community members. This will allow us to better serve these populations and decrease any barriers they experience in getting vaccinated for COVID-19.

- 3. The pandemic has demonstrated and elevated the structural barriers that perpetuate health inequities. To dismantle those structural barriers in the long-term so that health equity can be achieved across all populations statewide, transforming how public health works with communities to engage in multi-directional communication and dialogue with, share power with and center in decision making communities most affected by those inequities is essential.**

- a. Please provide an example of feedback the LPHA and its partners received from a community experiencing vaccine inequities, how the LPHA and its partners worked collaboratively with the community to address the feedback and then shared back with the community the outcome or resolution.**

As stated in our equity plan, we have been unable to develop an authentic relationship with our local CBO. This in turn has prevented us from being able to obtain and receive needed community feedback regarding vaccine inequities. Wheeler County Public Health is currently working on developing a Rapid Community Assessment in which a detailed survey will be sent out to community members including local schools, employers, farmers and ranchers, landlords,

tenants, people with disabilities and faith groups to name a few. This assessment will aim to target our BIPOC communities to better determine their barriers they experience in getting vaccinated as well as ideas on how we can improve our outreach. We will work closely with OHA to provide financial incentive to our community members for completing these surveys as the information provided may provide us with the ability to drastically increase vaccination rates within the County.

b. Please provide an example of how the LPHA and its partners have shared power with and centered the communities experiencing inequities in decision making to determine strategies to increase vaccine access for communities.

Wheeler County understands that in order to best protect the community from communicable disease and the burden it can cause, it is critical to deliver vaccines fairly and equitably allowing everyone the same level of access to COVID-19 vaccines. In order to do this, we must identify and partner with our BIPOC community leaders. As the current LPHA is still new, this partnership is still developing and more partners continue to be identified. Wheeler County plans to meet regularly with identified partners such as school administrators, teachers, landlords, faith leaders, employers of local businesses, community counseling solutions, etc. to listen to BIPOC leader and community members thoughts around COVID-19 vaccinations. We also plan to involve our BIPOC leaders into campaigns geared towards promoting vaccination to create trust within the community and further increase the percentage of vaccinated individuals who are at risk for developing complications from COVID-19 or be most affected economically.

One of the ways we have already integrated our BIPOC communities into making decisions is by allowing the community to identify barriers they experience from our system and work closely with them to determine the best way to vaccinate their peers.

For example,

By partnering with schools and parents, we were able to identify different barriers they experience in vaccinating their BIPOC youth groups, including foreign exchange students. This partnership and identification of barriers provided us the opportunity to change our appointment system, greatly increasing the rates of vaccinations among our BIPOC youth before 2021-2022 school year started.

Wheeler County Public Health plans to work closer with our BIPOC communities to bring our County vaccination rates closer to the 80% goal. The more our vaccination rates increase, the less of a health and economic burden COVID-19 can cause on our community, moving us closer to recovering from the Pandemic.