



# Vaccine Confidence & Awareness Campaign

BASELINE RESEARCH SUMMARY REPORT  
Healthcare Providers



MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH &  
SENIOR SERVICES**

October 2023

## RESEARCH OVERVIEW

- The Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services (DHSS) partnered with Lambert, a national PR/marketing/research firm with an office in St. Louis, on a campaign to increase vaccine awareness and confidence among Missouri residents.
- To inform the campaign, Lambert conducted research examining Missouri healthcare provider experiences with vaccines.
- This research included:
  - In-depth interviews with physicians and pharmacists
  - Online survey of Healthcare Providers (HCPs)

## In-Depth Interviews (IDIs)

- Conducted 16 IDIs via Zoom/Teams
- 30-60 minutes in length
- Healthcare Providers (HCPs)
  - Physicians (PCP, Pediatrician, Internal Medicine)
  - Nurse/Nurse Practitioner
  - Pharmacists
- Metro and rural regions, including high SVI

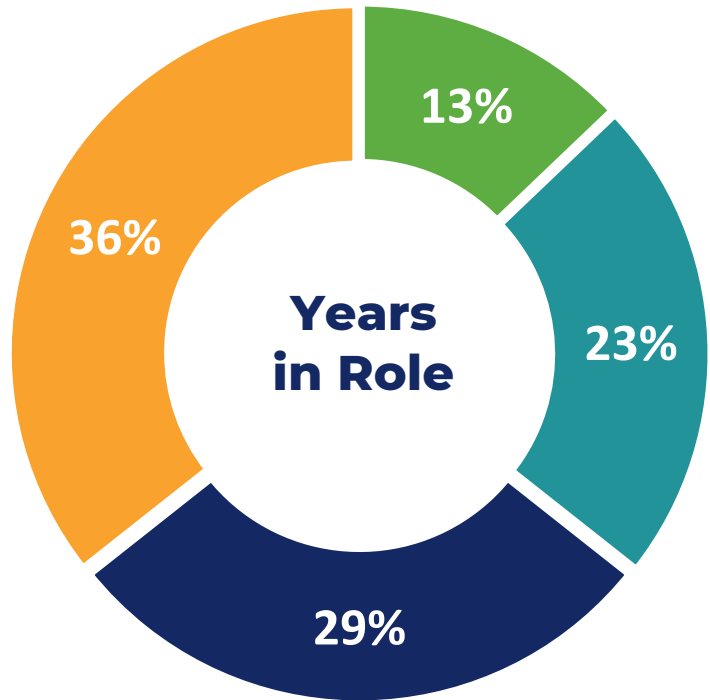
## Focus Groups

- Conducted 2 focus groups via Zoom
- 60-90 minutes in length
- 7-9 participants in each group
- Community Health Partners (CHPs) from Local Public Health Agencies
  - Administrators
  - Nurses
  - Nurse Supervisor/Director
  - Immunization Coordinator/VFC Coordinator
  - Assistant Director
  - Director of Health

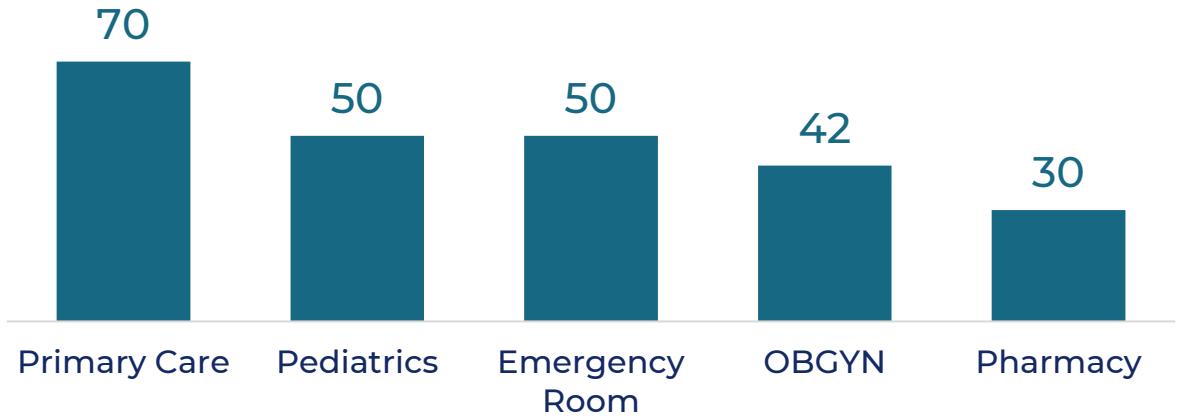


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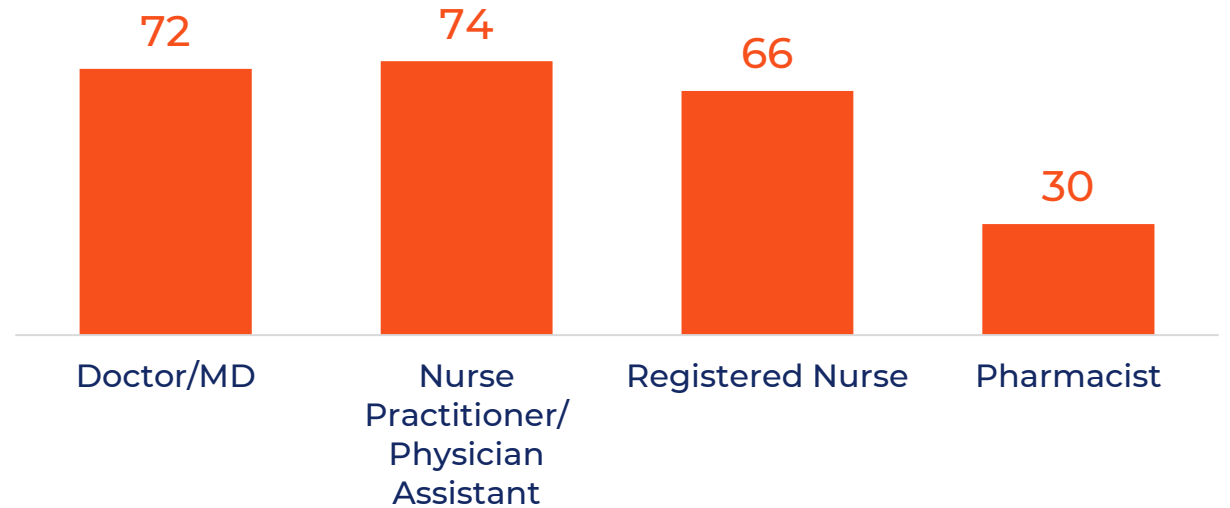
## Healthcare Providers (HCPs)



### Medical Field



### Position / Role



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# KEY FINDINGS





# HCPs SAY VACCINES ARE IMPORTANT TO PATIENT CARE

On average, HCPs rated the importance of vaccines as 8.2 on a scale of 1 (not at all important) to 10 (very important).

Pediatric HCPs rated most vaccines higher in importance than all other HCPs (except for Influenza, HPV, Zoster /Shingles, PPSV23, PCV20, & COVID-19).

The vaccines rated most important by HCPs were:

- DTaP (9.4)
- MMR (9.1)
- Meningococcal (8.8)
- Hepatitis B (8.6)
- Inactivated poliovirus (8.5)
- Influenza (8.5)
- Varicella (8.4)
- HPV (8.3)
- Zoster / Shingles (8.0)



## HCPs BRING UP VACCINES ON A REGULAR BASIS

- **Nearly 3 out of 4 HCPs said they discuss vaccines with patients daily.** Roughly half reported discussing vaccines 2+ times a day. One out of five mention vaccines at every appointment.
- **Nine out of 10 HCPs were confident recommending vaccines** across all medical practice types surveyed.

### PRACTICE TYPE DIFFERENCES

- **PCP and Pediatric HCPs reported having frequent vaccine discussions (at least multiple times a day)** more than other practice areas (64% vs. 40%+).
- **Pharmacists were 3 or more times likely to indicate that patients or patients' family members bring up vaccines** (47% vs. 16% or less) compared to other HCPs.
- **Pediatric HCPs reported highest level of confidence** (66% "very confident") and **ER HCPs the lowest** (46%).

**75%**

HCPs bring up  
vaccines

**1:5**

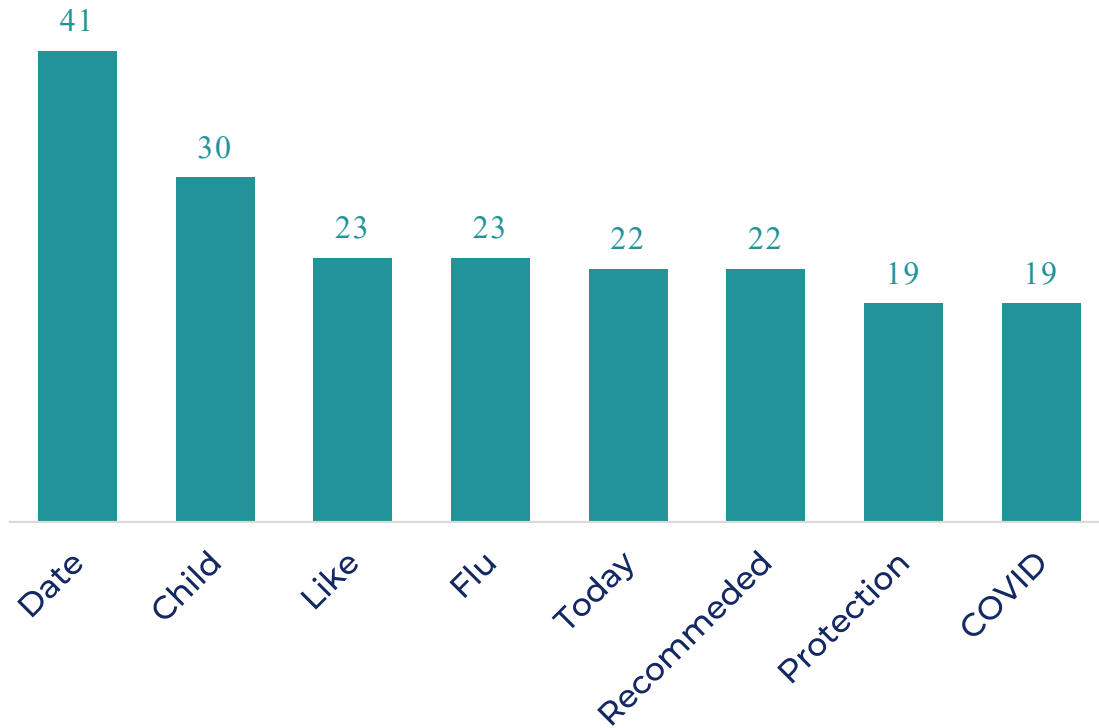
Bring up vaccines at  
every appointment

**90%**

Feel confident  
recommending  
vaccines

# WORDS/PHRASES USED BY HCPS BRINGING UP VACCINES

## HCPs: Most Frequent Words Used



## HCPs: Most Commonly Used Phrases

- *“Are you up to date on vaccinations/your vaccines?”*
- *“Have you had/did you receive (vaccines)/vaccinated for/immunized?”*
- *“Are you interested in a/receiving?” “a booster?”*
- *“Looks like/time for/due for the following vaccines”*
- *“Have you had/when was your last tetanus shot?”*
- *“Based on your age”*
- *“Let’s review your vaccines”*
- *“Has your child had/up to date on their vaccines?”*
- *“I recommend/CDC recommends/we recommend” “*
- *Side effects”*
- *“Flu/flu season/have you had flu vaccine”*
- *“Safe, effective”*
- *“Do you have any questions?”*
- *“High risk”*
- *“Help/protect against/protect yourself/make sure protected”*
- *“Preventative care/medicine”*
- *“COVID”*



## MISSOURI RESIDENTS SAY HCPs ARE MOST IMPORTANT RESOURCE FOR VACCINE INFORMATION

- 3 in 4 Missouri residents said they hear or see information about vaccines at doctor's offices. This is by far the top location, followed by healthcare clinics (51%).
- Most (82%) Missouri residents were comfortable talking with HCPs about vaccines, and believed HCPs are comfortable talking with them (86%).
- Family physicians/HCPs were the most trusted resource and the resource most Missourians (8 in 10) said they go to for information when they have questions about vaccines.
- However, only 1 in 5 said vaccines are discussed frequently with their HCPs. 1 in 10 say they are never discussed.

**74%**

Hear/see vaccine information at doctor's office

**77%**

Go to family physicians / HCPs to get vaccine information when they have questions



# VACCINES ADMINISTERED/DISCUSSED BY HCPs

HCPs that most often reported administering / discussing vaccines were (in order):

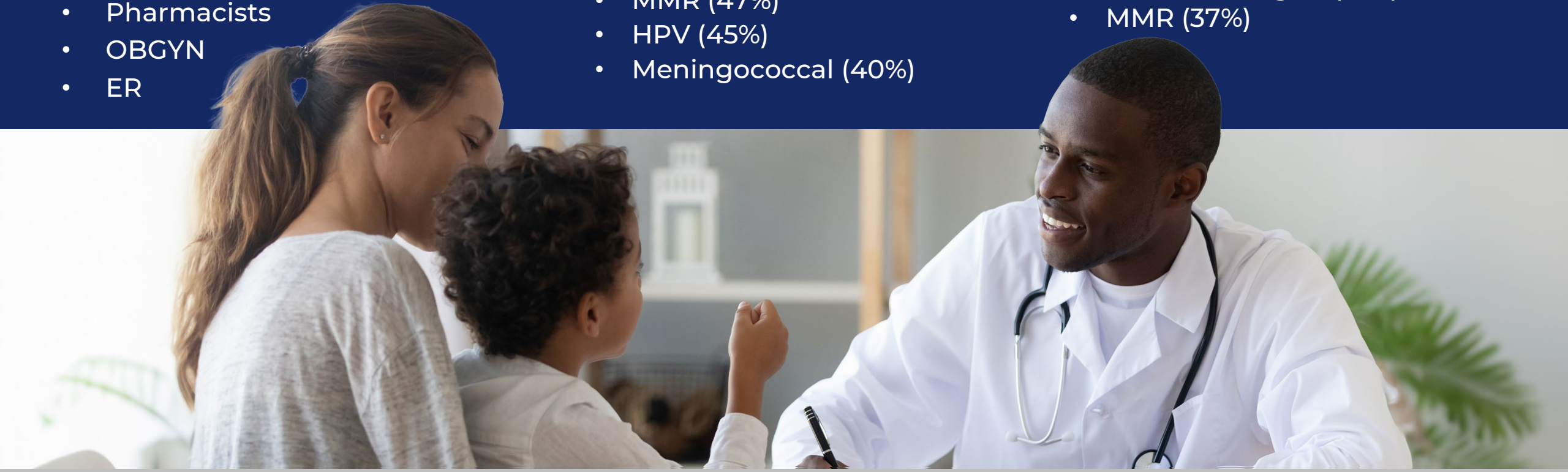
- Pediatric
- Primary Care
- Pharmacists
- OBGYN
- ER

Vaccines most often administered were:

- DTaP (82%)
- Influenza (79%)
- COVID-19 (53%)
- Hepatitis B (52%)
- MMR (47%)
- HPV (45%)
- Meningococcal (40%)

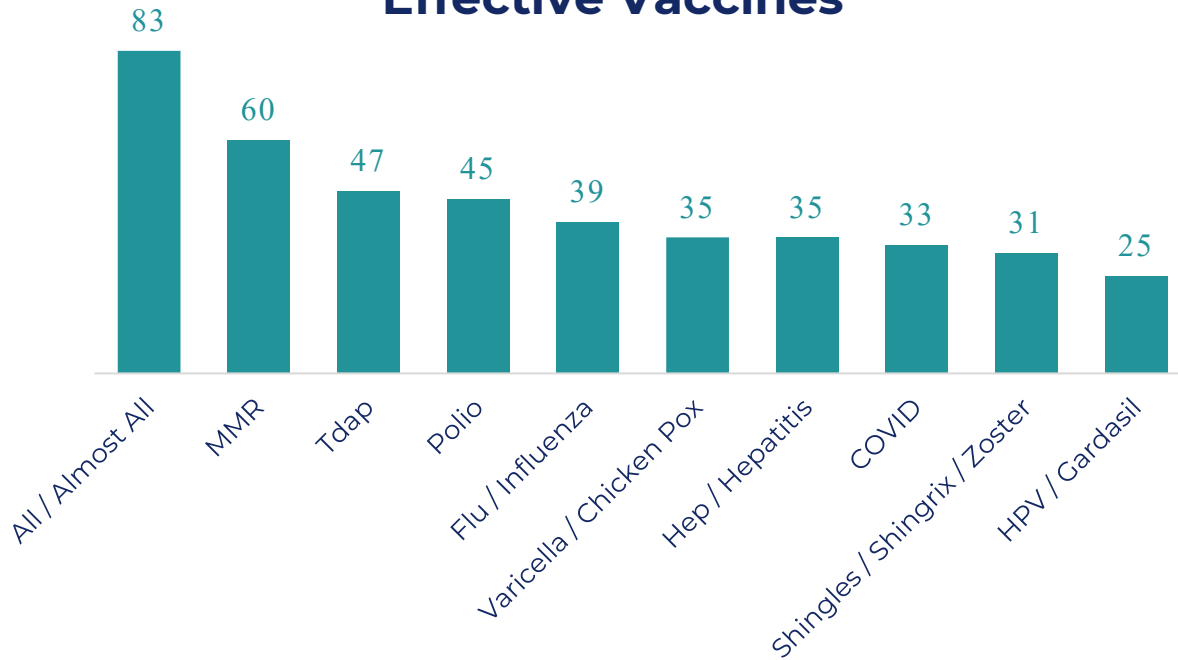
Vaccines most often discussed were:

- Influenza (72%)
- DTaP (72%)
- COVID-19 (61%)
- HPV (41%)
- Zoster / Shingles (41%)
- MMR (37%)

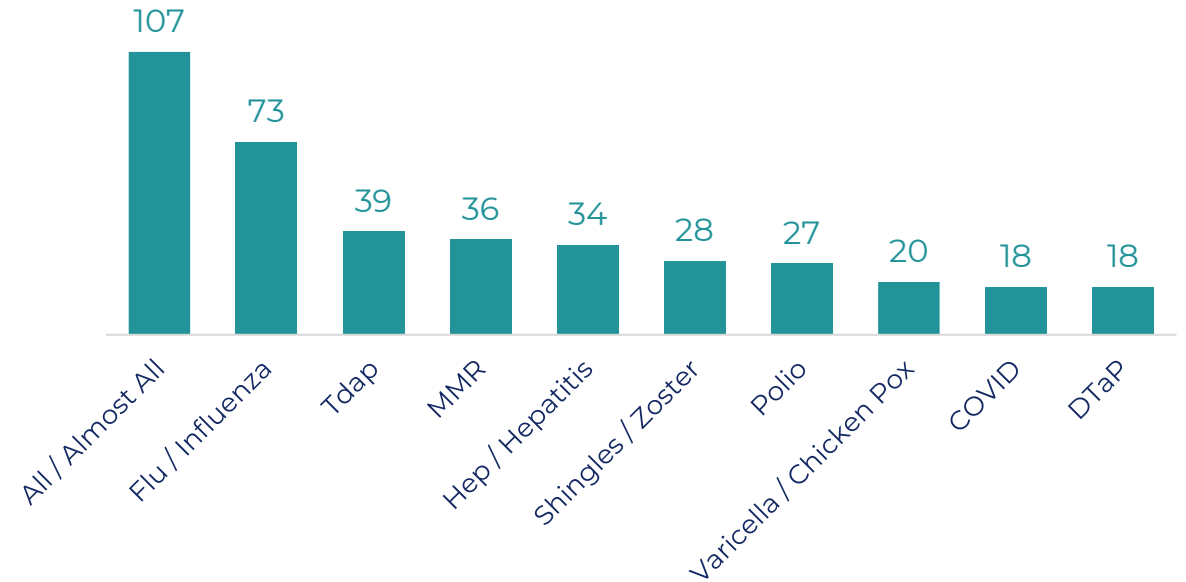


# VACCINES THAT COME TO MIND WHEN HCPs THINK OF:

## Effective Vaccines



## Safe Vaccines



*Note about efficacy: A number of individuals believed efficacy varies, especially for specific vaccines like influenza, COVID, RSV, Shingles. Some stated these are excluded from their list of "all" vaccines considered effective.*



## HCPs LESS KNOWLEDGEABLE/CONFIDENT ABOUT NEWER VACCINES

The 4 vaccines HCPs felt least knowledgeable about on average were:

- PCV 15 (54%)
- PPSV23 (45%)
- PCV20 (50%)
- Rotavirus (42%)

The vaccines HCPs felt least confident recommending were similar to those they felt least knowledgeable about:

- PCV15 (38%)
- PCV20 (36%)
- PPSV23 (31%)
- PCV13 (30%)
- COVID-19 (25%)
- Rotavirus (25%)



## MANY HCPs HAVE NOT RECEIVED RECENT VACCINE TRAINING

- Roughly half of Missouri HCPs surveyed have not received vaccine training in the past five years.
  - Pharmacists were most likely to receive training (individually - 80%; office staff - 73%)
  - OBGYN HCPs were least likely to receive training (individually - 29%; office staff - 50%)
- 70% of HCPs reported their offices received some vaccine training, but primarily focused on administration
  - Vaccine administration training (60%)
  - Vaccine safety training (40%)
  - Vaccine efficacy training (25%)

**49%**

HCPs have not received vaccine training in the past 5 years

## MANY HCPs ARE UNAWARE OF VACCINE INVOICING/PROGRAMS

- Almost half of Missouri HCPs were unaware they could bill for vaccine discussions.
  - 1 in 4 never bill for vaccine discussions even though aware of practice
- 54% of HCPs reported “little” / “no understanding” of vaccine error reporting rules.
- Roughly half of Missouri HCPs were not familiar with the ShowMeVax Registry.
  - About half of the HCPs aware of the registry did not use it.
  - HCPs in rural areas were more likely to be familiar with (54% vs. 28%) and use the system (81% vs. 50%) than Metro/Micro areas.
- 54% of HCPs with patients under 18 had “little”/“no knowledge” of the Vaccines for Children program.
  - Most (70%) reported not participating or being unsure if their practice participates in the program.

1:2

Were unaware they could bill for vaccine discussions

54%

Have “little” to “no knowledge” of Vaccines for Children

## HCPs REPORTED PATIENTS LESS RECEPTIVE TO VACCINE CONVERSATIONS POST-PANDEMIC

Six out of ten HCPs said people have become less receptive to vaccine conversations over the last two years.

- ER / Pediatric HCPs were most likely to say people have become less receptive (72% & 66%).
- More than half of PCP and OBGYN HCPs feel people are less receptive (59% & 55%).

One in five said people have become more receptive or are very open to these conversations.

- Conversely, roughly half (47%) of Pharmacists say people are more receptive - more than 2x that all other HCPs except OBGYN (29%)

Around a fifth of HCPs have shifted how they approach these conversations with patients. Yet, most said they handle these conversations the same way they had before the pandemic.

60%

Say people are less receptive to vaccine conversations

1:5

Pharmacists say patients are very open to vaccine conversations

81%

Handle vaccine conversations the same



## THE COVID-19 VACCINE GENERATES THE MOST PATIENT QUESTIONS/CONCERNS

8 in 10 HCPs across practice types say the COVID-19 vaccine generates patient questions/concerns, eclipsing other vaccines by a wide margin. Overall, 1 in 4 HCPs say they are least confident in recommending the COVID-19 vaccine.

Because there is reticence about the vaccine generating the most questions/concerns among patients, this creates a challenging communication environment.

The other vaccines HCPs say generate patient questions/concerns vary by medical practice type.





# HCP CONCERNS ABOUT PATIENT VACCINE DISCUSSIONS

Lack media lot public Time  
misinformation social  
parents information CDC  
side just MEDICAL concerns  
go vaccine false people  
political none often safety  
think questions patient like Im  
getting one trust Na safety  
get hostile vaccines Covid  
Many feel discuss dont

## HCPs' concerns about discussing vaccines with patients:

- lack of personal knowledge/access to updated information
- time constraints
- patient exposure to misinformation (particularly via social media)
- reluctance/resistance/hostility
- mistrust of vaccine manufacturers
- mistrust of medical professionals
- distrust generated by governmental management of COVID pandemic
- political views
- alienating the patient-doctor relationship

# 68%

- Of HCPs express concerns about having vaccine discussions with patients; 1 in 3 do not have any concerns.
- Many HCPs express exhaustion, frustration, discomfort, and worry as they engage with far more skeptical and distrustful patients.

# HCP CONCERNS ABOUT PATIENT VACCINE DISCUSSIONS

“That **I won't be able to accurately answer questions** about design of most vaccines, side effects.”

“Parents and patients are getting more info from **unreliable sources** than trusted sources. **Families do not trust the CDC, doctors and government like they did pre-COVID.**”

“(I am) **concern(ed) that patients will lose trust in me** based on my belief in vaccine effectiveness.”

“That **they'll get angry at me** for asking/talking about vaccines.”

“**Getting punched** in the face or shot.”

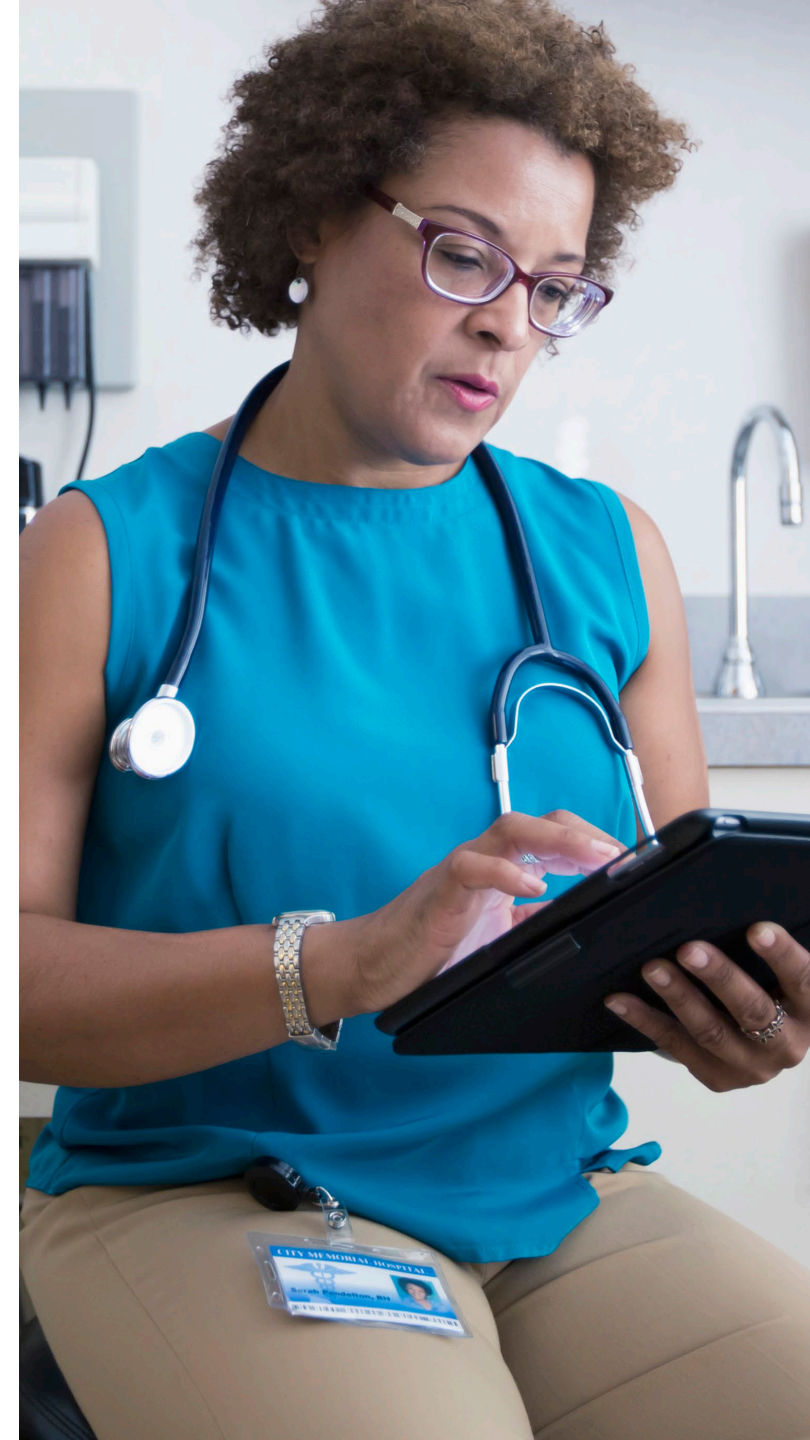
“Fear of **off-putting parents** who will then choose against vaccination.”

“How to address **the skeptical patient.**”

“**Being laughed at. Not trusted** about vaccines.”

“Dislike it **when it turns into a political conversation.**”

“**I am exhausted** trying to convince patients that they are not harmful. **Most information they read is misinformation** and vaccine benefits the individual as well as the overall population.”



# VACCINE INFORMATION SOURCES BY PRACTICE TYPE

Regardless of practice type, 9 out of 10 HCPs get vaccine information from the CDC website.

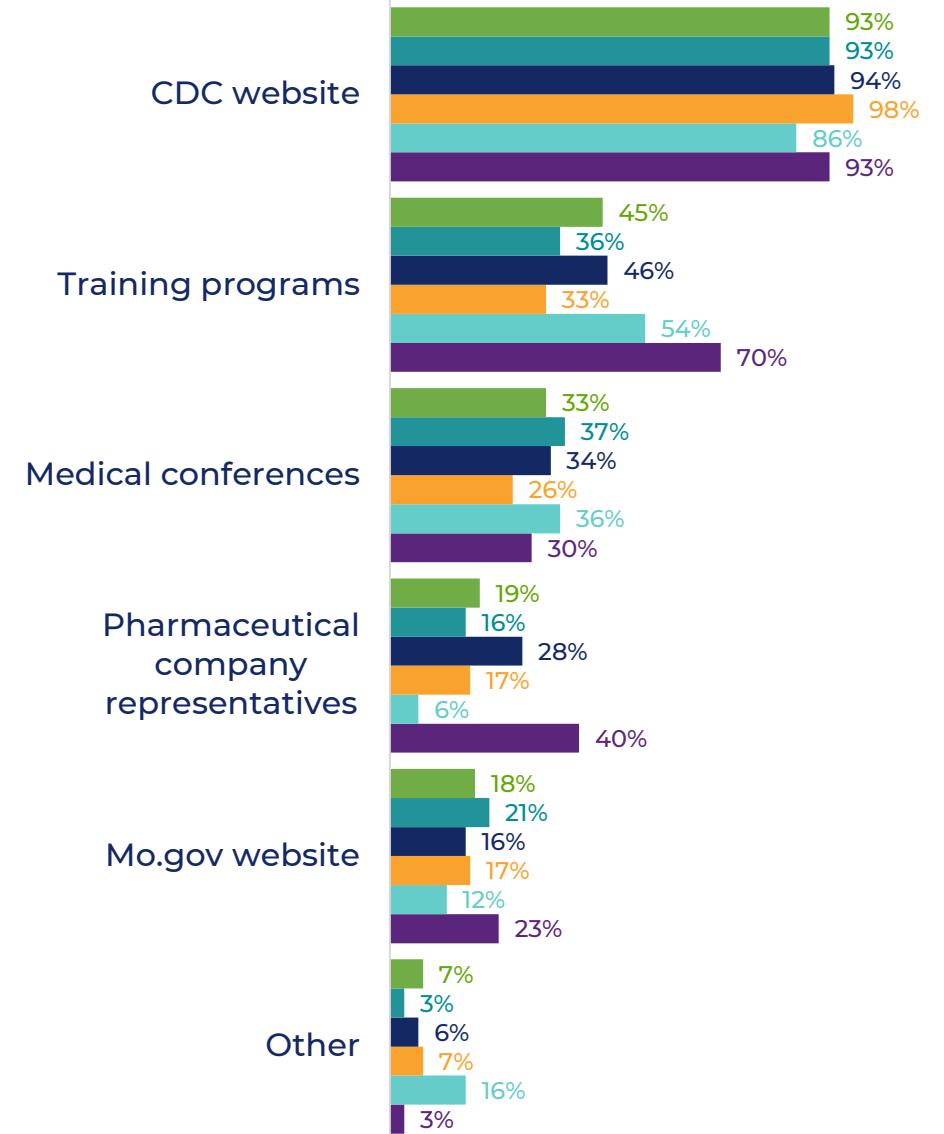
Most HCPs get their information from at least 2 sources overall.

## Medical Practice Differences:

- Pharmacists were most likely (70%) to get vaccine information from training programs.
  - This was followed by about half of ER/Pediatric HCPs and a third of PCP/OBGYN HCPs (36% & 33%).
- Pharmacists were 2x as likely to get information from pharmaceutical company reps than PCP, OBYGN, or ER HCPs (40% vs. 17% or less).
- Roughly 1 out of 6 HCPs use Mo.gov.

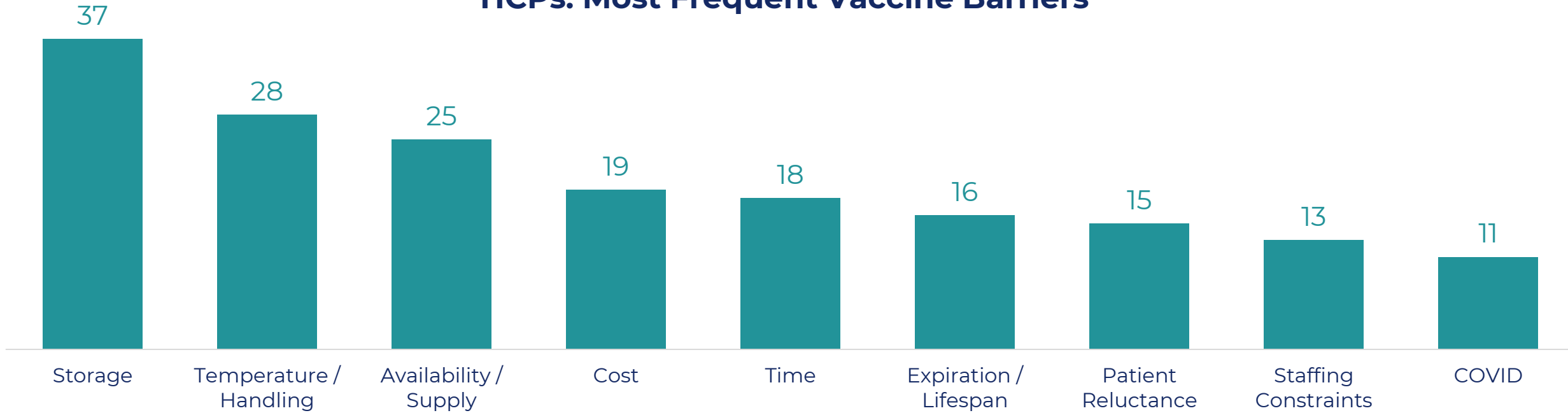
## Vaccine Information Sources

■ All HCPs ■ PCP ■ Pediatrics ■ OBGYN ■ ER ■ Pharmacist



# HCP BARRIERS TO PROVIDING VACCINES

HCPs: Most Frequent Vaccine Barriers



60%

Of HCPs experience barriers to providing vaccines

## Summary of HCP Responses:

Common barriers to providing vaccines include storage, temperature / handling requirements, availability / supply, cost, time, expiration / lifespan, patient reluctance, staffing constraints, and the COVID vaccine specifically.

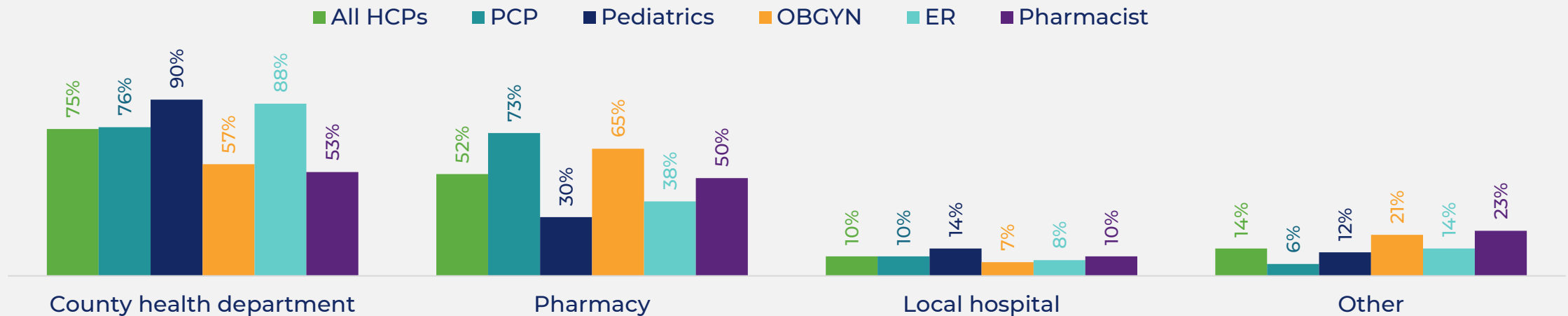
# VACCINE UNAVAILABLE AT PROVIDER LOCATION

3 in 4 HCPs will refer the patient to their county health department if they do not have the vaccine a patient needs/requests on hand. Around half will refer them to a pharmacy. But this varies by provider practice type.

- Pediatric & ER HCPs are the most likely to refer a patient to the county health department (90% & 88%).
- OBGYN and Pharmacists HCPs are least likely to refer to the county health department (57% & 53%).

- PCPs are equally likely to refer to the county health department or pharmacy (76% & 73%), as are Pharmacists (53% & 50%); OBGYN HCPs slightly favor a pharmacy (65% vs. 57%).
- Other write-ins mention referring a patient to their primary doctor or ordering the needed vaccine.

## Referral if Vaccine Needed/Requested by Patient Unavailable



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# KEY TAKEAWAYS for Healthcare Providers (HCPs)



# NORMALIZE VACCINE CONVERSATIONS AS PART OF STANDARD CARE

About half of HCPs reported discussing vaccines with patients at “every”/“most” appointments while only 20% of patients reported their HCP discusses vaccines at “every”/“most” appointments.

This discrepancy represents an opportunity, given patients rely on their HCPs for information and guidance on vaccines.

Though vaccine counseling competes with multiple clinical priorities, discussing vaccines at every appointment can help close these gaps.



## FROM PROVIDERS:

“When a kid goes in for a sore throat, I want a provider asking, ‘have you had your meningitis or HPV [shot]?’ If I can get providers on board [that would help] because when they come here, it’s almost like I’m a peer to them. If providers talk about it and I talk about it, that would increase numbers because they’d be exposed [to the information] more than once.”

“Rather than bring [them] back or wait another three months... if they were in for a sprained ankle or an abscess, I may pull their record and say, ‘While you’re here today, let’s get these shots done.’”

# STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE VACCINE CONVERSATIONS

HCPs noted their patients are more skeptical and less trusting of vaccine safety/efficacy and their expertise than in the past.

However, HCPs also described a helpful communication strategy: taking an empathetic, patient-centered approach to discussing vaccines, particularly COVID-19.

This included listening to patient concerns, providing information, and supporting the patient in their decision.

Several providers referenced the importance of an open-minded and non-judgmental perspective. Dismissing patient questions and concerns can cause further division.



## FROM PROVIDERS:

“I don't try to change [people's] minds in that moment, because I realize that's probably a losing battle. Usually, I ask them what concerns they have, what I can answer today. I [try to be] empathetic. I might say, ‘I'm probably going to ask you every visit about vaccines.’”

“You just have to keep being persistent.”



# Thank You!

## Contact Information

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