

DATA AS OF  
October 6, 2021

# Promoting COVID-19 Vaccine Equity in North Carolina

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Longstanding racial and ethnic injustices contribute to disparities in the impact of COVID-19 among historically marginalized populations (HMP). The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) is building equity into every aspect of our COVID-19 prevention and response and using lessons learned in order to close the inequities between white, Asian or Pacific Islander populations, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, and American Indian populations in North Carolina. Our efforts to promote equity in COVID-19 vaccination, prevention, testing, and treatment are focused in three areas:

### 1. Earn trust from historically marginalized communities

- Identify and work with trusted messengers to share information about vaccines, testing, and treatment with people in historically marginalized communities.
- Provide educational and instructional messages that reach all audiences at an easy-to-understand level featuring trusted messengers, including community and business leaders.
- Offer educational materials and webinars in Spanish and other languages spoken by North Carolinians.

### 2. Embed equity in vaccine operations

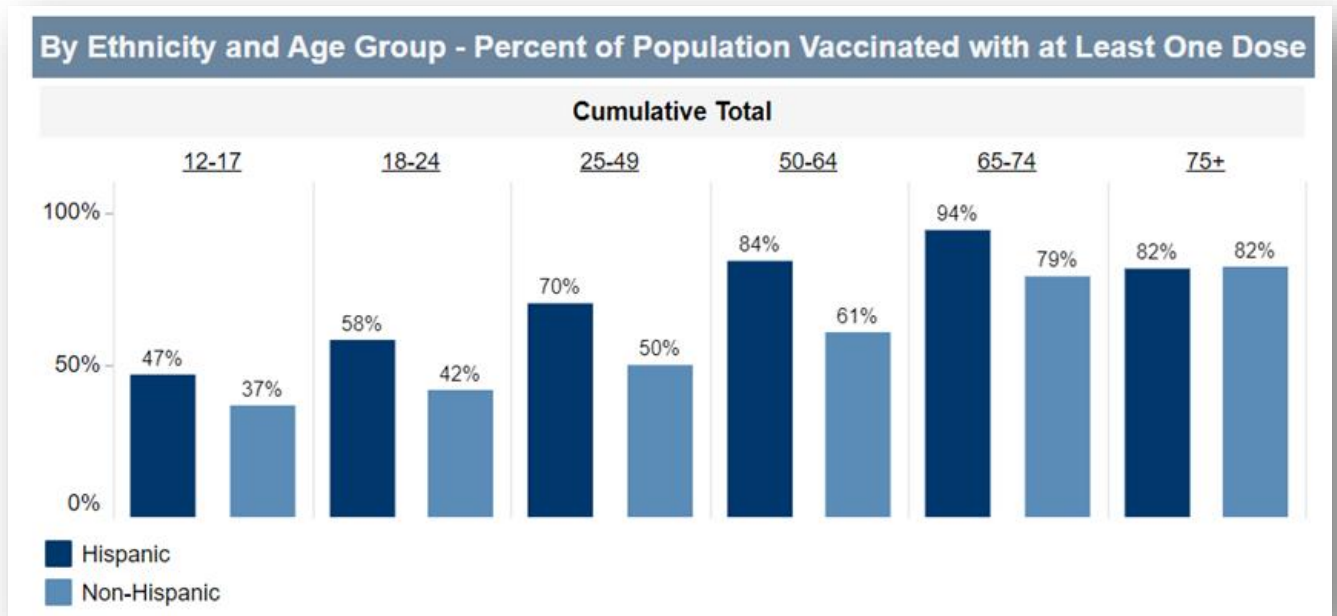
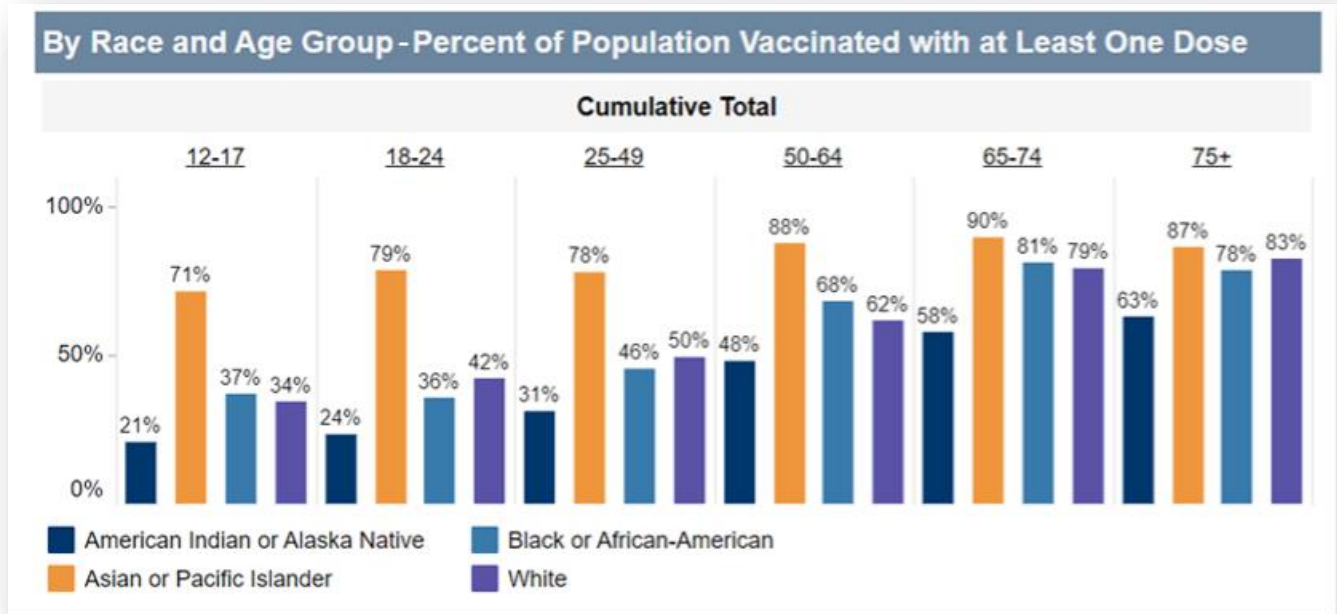
- Outline clear expectations that vaccine, testing, and treatment providers reach out to historically marginalized populations and serve them at or above their representation in their communities.
- Make it easy for individuals to get vaccinated, tested, or treated by matching them with providers from historically marginalized populations and locating sites in trusted places within communities.
- Deploy vendor resources for vaccination, testing, and treatment in areas with the highest rate of social vulnerability.

### 3. Promote accountability through data transparency and use of data

- Require all vaccine and treatment providers to collect and report data on race and ethnicity.
- Publish an online public dashboard with vaccine rates by race/ethnicity and age group at the state and county levels.

## DATA AT A GLANCE:

Data comes from [Public Dashboard](#) and is reflective through November 1, 2021.



# 1. Earn trust from historically marginalized communities

## Vaccines

**COVID-19 vaccines are available to everyone ages 5 and older, and free everywhere in North Carolina, with no government ID or insurance required.** Everyone can be vaccinated, regardless of their immigration status. To find a vaccine provider near you, visit [MySpot.nc.gov](https://MySpot.nc.gov)

- Trusted messengers have been equipped with resources about COVID-19 vaccines, including presentations, testimonials, and customized [toolkits](#) to address concerns heard in historically marginalized populations. They can answer questions about vaccine safety and provide easy-to-understand educational information.

**Hispanic Heritage Month:** [Cafecito](#)

**COVID-19 Fireside Chat:** [NC Medicaid and COVID-19 Testing, Treatment and Prevention](#)

**Communications:** [How to look up your vaccine record](#)

**COVID-19 Fireside Chat:** [Boosters](#)

- **More than 150 North Carolinians** have been interviewed on camera about their experiences with COVID-19 and vaccinations.
  - **59 additional interviews have been collected from the UNC System:** Those interviewed reflected the diversity of the state, our stakeholders, and partners.
  - Out of 143 interviews, our subjects are 51.7% female, 48.3% male, 39.9% white, 35.7% Black, 17.5% Latinx, 6.3% American Indian, and 0.7% Asian American.

Key Metrics – Paid Media Metrics	Past 4 weeks	Overall
Number of attendees at community events (including Fireside Chats and Cafecitos)	24,855	162,138
Paid media reach*	2,677,064	28,244,188
Paid media impressions*	72,616,488	359,022,976

*\*Note: Paid media has been running since the week of March 8<sup>th</sup> 2021, targeting all demographics, but reaching HMPs through accessible language access.*

## Testing

**Community testing allows North Carolinians to stay informed about their health and help slow the spread of COVID-19.** Testing is available throughout the state, with many no-cost options. NCDHHS has several activities in place to reach to historically marginalized communities to offer **safe, affordable, and accessible testing where needed.**

- Community-based organizations like Latin-19, El Centro Hispano, and Triangle Empowerment are trusted partners and support and provide testing.
- Over **50,000 antigen tests have gone to organizations serving historically marginalized populations groups**, including community based organizations like LATIN-19 and Triangle Empowerment Center, farmworker camps, federally qualified health centers, tribal health centers, rural health clinics, and NC Free and Charitable clinics.
- **100,000 BinaxNOW tests have gone to state-funded vendors** to support free community testing for historically marginalized groups.
- **20+ local health departments and community-based organizations have distributed at-home testing kits** to historically marginalized communities through the [NCDHHS At-Home Collection Kit Program](#). Partners include Stevens Center, Haywood Vocational Opportunities, Inc., Martin Enterprises, and Disability Advocacy Center.
- **There are more than 1,000 testing sites statewide**, searchable through the [Find My Testing Place](#) page.
- **There are 525 no-cost Community Events held** each week.

## Treatment

While vaccines provide the best protection from COVID-19, treatment options such as monoclonal antibodies are available for people who have had symptoms of COVID-19 for 10 days or less, or have been exposed to COVID-19. **If taken early, they can reduce the risk of severe disease, hospitalization, and death.** (Learn more at [covid19.ncdhhs.gov/treatment](https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/treatment).)

- Our COVID-19 101 presentation has been updated to include information about treatment. Community-based organizations use this presentation to provide key information to people across the state.
- Trusted messengers have been trained on how to share this information, including [Healthier Together](#) regional staff, [community health workers](#) (CHWs) and the [HMP Connections Advisory Group](#) at NCDHHS.

## 2. Embed equity in vaccination testing, and treatment operations

**Focus workstreams and partnerships for special populations to facilitate vaccinations, testing, and treatment including for individuals who are homebound, incarcerated, experiencing homelessness, in long-term care, and working as migrant farmworkers:**

- Coordinated migrant farmworker Reception Hub Vaccination Clinics in Vass, NC from April 7 – October 22, 2021 **provided education, vaccinations, and testing when requested to farmworkers arriving from Mexico, and provided close to 4,800 vaccines.** We also pivoted efforts to become a Departure/Transfer Hub to provide education, boosters, and testing to workers who are transferring from farms in the East to Christmas tree farms in the West and those departing NC.
- People who have limited mobility to be vaccinated at home can call a hotline at 866-303-0026 to request an at-home vaccination, or can use the [online database](#) to request an appointment directly.
- State-vendor Ottendorf continues to work in marginalized communities to offer testing and vaccinations, engaging with homeless shelters, tent cities, housing authorities, and many others.
- Optum, another state vendor, supported vaccine events at Smithfield Foods, providing over 200 vaccines to workers and their families.

**Placing vaccination, testing, and treatment sites in places trusted by the communities:**

- State vendors that are providing testing prioritize testing in communities with larger historically marginalized populations. For tests provided through these vendors, more than half of the tests (56%) have been for historically marginalized populations.
- NCDHHS partnered with FEMA providers to make monoclonal antibody treatment more accessible in areas with a higher strain on local hospitals due to low vaccination/high case rates, as well as those areas with larger historically marginalized populations, including in Robeson, Johnston, and Harnett counties. NCDHHS made it easier to find mAb treatment sites by posting an updated list of medical providers.
- NCDHHS encourages providers to offer walk-in vaccinations and testing with extended hours at nights and on the weekends.

**Facilitating partnerships between vaccination, testing, and treatment providers and community-based partners:**

- A partnership with Mecklenburg Health Department, United Providers of Health (UPOH), and Resourceful Clinical Laboratory will **vaccinate more than 650 guards, sheriffs, and staff members as well as provide almost 800 tests at the County Sheriff's Office.** UPOH has also offered COVID-19 services along with **integrated health care in Bethel, Ahoksi, and Eastern NC communities.**

- Old North State Medical Society is partnering with **non-traditional providers, such as dentists, in Forsyth County to extend their vaccination, testing, and educational reach** in communities.
- State vendor Optum has worked closely with **Historically Black Universities and Colleges to provide vaccines to students, staff, and the community**, including the University of North Carolina – Pembroke (1,600+ vaccines), Fayetteville State University (1,300+ vaccines), and Elizabeth City State University (1,400+ vaccines).
- LatinX community-based organizations were connected with the FEMA site administering monoclonal antibodies in Greensboro since early analyses showed an **equity gap in Hispanic versus non-Hispanic individuals**.
- **NCDHHS has trained 500+ individuals** who perform case investigation and contact tracing to promote treatment when calling individuals with a positive COVID-19 test result, which helps connect individuals more quickly to treatment options.

Vaccine Equity	Share of Vaccinations in the Past 4 Weeks	Share of Total Vaccinations to Date	Share of Overall NC Population
Black/African American vaccinations	23.1%	18.3%	23.1%
Asian or Pacific Islander vaccinations	2.73%	4.11%	3.52%
Hispanic/Latinx vaccinations	12.0%	8.6%	9.8%
American Indian vaccinations	1.2%	0.9%	1.7%

Adolescent Vaccinations (age 12-17)	Share of Adolescent Vaccinations in the Past 4 Weeks	Share of Total Adolescent Vaccinations to Date	Share of Overall NC Adolescent Population
Black/African American vaccinations	24.6%	20.4%	25.7%
Asian or Pacific Islander vaccinations	2.89%	6.01%	3.77%
Hispanic/Latinx vaccinations	18.7%	15.8%	15.7%
American Indian vaccinations	1.2%	0.9%	2.1%

*\*Includes all vaccinations to 16 and 17 year-olds from 12/14/2020 – present and administrations to 12-15 year-olds from 5/13/2021 – 10/06/2021.*

### 3. Promote accountability through data transparency and use of data

- All vaccine and monoclonal antibody providers are **required to collect and report data on race and ethnicity for those accessing vaccines and treatment**. This data has enabled NCDHHS to hold itself and its partners accountable for providing equitable access.
- The NCDHHS [public dashboard](#) is updated Monday through Friday and shows **vaccine rates by race/ethnicity at the state and county level**. The demographics, including race/ethnicity and language spoken, of contact tracers hired by the Carolina Community Tracing Collaborative are also posted on the public dashboard.
- NCDHSS also publishes vaccines and social vulnerability by [census tract map](#) to highlight areas with high social vulnerability and low vaccination rates alongside the location of vaccine providers. This may have helped identify and address gaps.
- Data is being monitored and **used to drive action**:
  - Early analyses in September showed equity gaps in race (cases in Black individuals less likely to be treated with monoclonal antibodies than white) and ethnicity (cases in Hispanic individuals less likely to be treated with monoclonal antibodies than non-Hispanic). Actions were taken to promote equity, which included distributing equity tips to mAb providers.
  - The vaccine [Frequently Asked Questions](#) page is routinely updated and dozens of questions are tracked for analytics. We periodically count how often each question is viewed, and change and add questions based on what is most important to North Carolinians.

Key Metrics – Reported Race/Ethnicity Data	Past 4 weeks	Overall
Share of people vaccinated in the state for which race data is publicly reported	88.9%	93.7%
Share of people vaccinated in the state for which ethnicity data is publicly reported	77.8%	88.0%

#### Partner Spotlights

**Community-based organizations work to increase vaccine equity throughout North Carolina.**

**Healthier Together:** A public private partnership between the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services and the NC Counts Coalition to increase COVID-19 vaccinations among Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) populations.

- **Craven County** - Peletah Ministries conducted a Back to School vaccination event in New Bern on August 21<sup>st</sup>. 134 individuals were vaccinated. In addition, over 200 backpacks and 80,000 pounds of food were distributed.
- **Edgecombe County** - A vaccination event at Metropolitan Baptist Church – born out of the collaboration of other churches, community stakeholders, community health workers, and Healthier Together – led to the vaccination of 120 individuals.
- **Vance County** - Gang Free, Inc. was able to coordinate with a school open house in Vance County and offer vaccinations to students, parents, and the community. 49 individuals were vaccinated.
- **Jackson, Graham, Cherokee, and Macon counties** - Community-based organization Vecinos, Inc.'s outreach and mobile clinic strategy resulted in the vaccination of 790 community members across the four counties served.
- **Graham County** - By utilizing relationships with NCDHHS COVID-19 testing vendors, we were able to provide regular support to the Graham County Health Department to supplement their testing efforts and increase capacity for the county.

### Community Leader Highlights

**Executive Director of Peletah Ministries, Dr. Dawn Baldwin Gibson**, used materials provided by NCDHHS to reach out to more than 220 churches in six Eastern North Carolina counties (Carteret, Craven, Jones, Lenoir, Pamlico, and Pitt counties), serving them valuable COVID-19 information and materials over the span of three days in September 2021. “We logged hundreds of miles to deliver masks, hand sanitizer, COVID-19, and flu vaccine information, along with vital Trillium Health Resources! Thanks to all of our partners, Community Health Workers and COVID-19 Health Ambassadors, we have already had requests for vaccinations.”



*(Pictured: #StayHealthy bags were packed by community health workers and Jr. Vaccine Ambassadors at Peletah Ministries in New Bern. Included in the bags were COVID-19 vaccine and flu shot information, NCDHHS MySpot materials, masks, hand sanitizers, Trillium Health resources, and other outreach materials like fans and postcards with COVID-19 information.)*



*(Pictured: Malika J. Baldwin at Craven Corner Missionary Baptist Church in Havelock. Malika helped hand out materials to Eastern NC churches.)*



### **Dr. Karyn Hargett, Old North State Medical Society (ONSMS)**



The Healthier Together team works with many great organizations and providers to increase vaccine equity among historically marginalized populations. Dr. Hargett has made a huge impact while working on COVID-19 mitigation in Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities since last year – first in testing and education, and now in vaccinations.

Healthier Together’s operations manager for Region 6, Chris Suggs, had this to say about Dr. Hargett and ONSMS:

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*"Hey team - just wanted to share some praise for Old North State Medical Society and Dr. Karyn Hargett. We had an event that was supposed to end at 5:00 p.m., however, there has been a steady flow of individuals wanting the vaccine and Dr. Hargett volunteered to stay until 7:00 p.m. or until the last person gets vaccinated. I'm heartened that Dr. Hargett recognizes the urgency of this public health crisis and has been so flexible and willing to serve."*

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When it comes to vaccinating their children, Dr. Hargett says that some parents are hesitant to do so because they are afraid of possible side effects. She always emphasizes to them that the vaccine is the best protection for their child. "If a child contracts COVID, they could die or get intubated. I don't think this information is played up enough in the news to not cause a frenzy, but children can get very sick and they do also have long-term effects. This is not a game and not a joke and children are affected."

## Resources: Help North Carolina achieve Vaccine Equity

- Share information about the COVID-19 vaccine with friends, family, and community members using our COVID-19 Vaccine Communications Toolkit.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) highlighted North Carolina's Success in Vaccine Equity in a report that shows that the state's outreach and data strategies led to substantial increase in vaccination rates among Black and Hispanic people.
- North Carolina was named the only state to collect and publicly report race and ethnicity data for nearly 100% of vaccinations from early on in the vaccination efforts.
- North Carolina's equity work was highlighted in a Policy Brief from the National Governor's Association and Duke-Margolis Center for Health Policy on reducing racial and ethnic disparities.