



Media Information:

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Yellowstone County COVID-19 vaccination survey shows encouraging results

Billings, MT – The great majority of Yellowstone County residents definitely or probably plan to get a COVID-19 vaccination as soon as it becomes available to them, according to responses RiverStone Health received from its online COVID-19 vaccination readiness survey.

The survey was open from December 18 to January 15. Among 4,003 respondents, about 69% said they “definitely” will get a vaccine and about 10% more said they “probably” will get the vaccine as soon as it is available to them. Only 16% said “definitely not” or “probably not” when asked about getting a COVID-19 vaccination. Just over 4% are “not sure” about getting vaccinated.

“The results from the community COVID-19 vaccination survey are promising,” said John Felton, Yellowstone County Health Officer and President/CEO of RiverStone Health. “Our local survey mirrors a December 2020 Kaiser Family Foundation national survey that found 71% of Americans would ‘definitely or probably’ get a COVID-19 vaccination when it was available to them. Our results are slightly better at 79% saying they would ‘definitely or probably’ get vaccinated.”

The most common concern among those who were unsure or reluctant to be vaccinated were side effects, then concerns about safety and whether the vaccine has been tested in enough “people who are like me” with respect to age, race, ethnicity, and other characteristics.

The online survey wasn’t representative of the general Yellowstone County population, as just over 68% of respondents identified themselves as female and 92% identified as white. Among those stating their race, 3% said American Indian or Alaska Native and 2% said Hispanic or Latino. Other races were less than 1%.

Survey respondents tended to be older than the general county population. Nearly one-third said they were 65 or older. (Among Yellowstone County’s 161,000 residents, only 17.4% are age 65 or older, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.) More than half of survey respondents were age 55 or older; only 14% were under age 35.

Nearly 70% of survey respondents said they are members of vaccination priority groups because of their age, health history or because they are healthcare workers.

Responses will help RiverStone Health and Unified Health Command partners with current vaccination clinics and in planning community vaccination clinics. For example, the survey found that about 73% of people preferred to get their second-dose COVID-19 vaccination reminder by text. Thirteen percent want an email reminder, and 7% prefer a phone call.

Asked how much of a threat, if any, the pandemic poses, 78% said “major threat” for nation’s health, 76% said “major threat” for Yellowstone County health, 56% said “major threat” for my personal health, 89% “major threat” for U.S. economy, and 32% said “major threat” for my personal financial situation.

Survey participants expressed pessimism about the pandemic trends, with 61% saying the worst of the pandemic problems for the United States is still to come. Thirty-nine percent said the worst is behind us.

About 68% of respondents were very concerned or somewhat concerned about getting the virus themselves. Even more (89%) were very or somewhat concerned they might spread the virus to others without knowing they were sick.

In addition, the survey also asked questions about mask wearing. Among the findings:

- 91% wear masks all or most of the time when in stores and other businesses.
- 3% wear masks some of the time in stores and other businesses.
- 2% hardly every wear masks.
- 2% never wear masks.
- 1% said they have not gone to stores or other businesses.

The majority (72%) are bothered a lot when people around them in public don’t wear masks, while just 15% are bothered a lot when stores and other businesses require customers to wear masks for service.

Charts and more information from the RiverStone Health vaccination readiness survey are posted at covid.riverstonehealth.org.

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