The perceptions and experiences of people with disabilities with the COVID-19 vaccines: Evidence from a Texas statewide survey

TEXAS Social Work

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Abstract

Studies have shown that people with disabilities (PWDs) are more likely to be infected by the COVID-19 virus and have worse outcomes. Yet, specific data unique to the disability community remains largely unavailable. As part of a statewide effort to improve vaccination access for PWDs, we collaborated with public and community stakeholders to conduct a statewide survey to learn about the perceptions and experiences of adults with disabilities and their caregivers in Texas. Specifically, we aimed to identify 1) needs of PWDs when getting the vaccines; and 2) reasons and barriers that some PWDs have not gotten the vaccines.

Introduction

- Individuals are eligible if they: 1) identify as an adult (aged 18+) with a disability or a caregiver of a PWD; 2) lived in Texas at the time of the study. In total, 2,134 PWDs and their caregivers/care providers participated.
- We distributed our survey via multiple channels including social media, agency outreach, pamphlets, and in-person recruitment. Participants could participate online, via telephone interviews, or paper mailings. Data were entered into Qualtrics during 10/5/21-12/1/21.
- Measures used included demographics (e.g., age, sex, disability status), COVID-19 infection and vaccination statuses, accessibility issues, reasons for not receiving the vaccines, and geographic identifiers (ZIP Code and self-reported geographic locations).

Methodology

- We first ran descriptive analyses of demographic, and COVID-19 infection and vaccination related variables.
- We then examined quantitative and qualitative data on their self-reported barriers in accessing the vaccines; and for those who had not been vaccinated, reasons for not getting the vaccines.
- Multiple regressions were conducted to examine factors that contributed to COVID-19 infection and vaccination.
- Finally, we conducted a geospatial analysis of where our participants were from.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of PWDs (N=2,134)

Respondent role	n (%)		n (%)
PWD	1981 (92.8)		
Care provider	84 (3.9)		
Caregiver	69 (3.2)		
Mean age (SD)	33.6 (10.6)	**Race/ethnicity**	
18-29	871 (40.8)	White	1272 (59.6)
30-49	1096 (51.4)	Latino/Hispanic	262 (12.3)
50-64	117 (5.5)	Black/AA	408 (19.1)
65 older	49 (2.3)	Asian	77 (3.6)
		Other	115 (5.4)
Gender		**Education**	
Female	841 (39.5)	HS or less	908 (42.5)
Male	1288 (60.5)	Some college or more	1226 (57.5)
Marital status		**Household income**	
Married/Cohabitating	1111 (52.1)	$39,999 or less	917 (43.0)
Not married	1023 (47.9)	$40,000 or more	1214 (57.0)
Employment status		**Residential status**	
Employed, any kind	1312 (61.6)	Private home/apt	701 (33.0)
Fulltime homemaker	720 (33.8)	Living with family	1193 (56.2)
Unemployed	99 (4.6)	Living in institutions	229 (10.7)
Disability status		**Residential region**	
Have one disability	1834 (85.9)	Urban	1204 (56.4)
Multiple disabilities	300 (14.1)	Suburban	585 (27.4)
		Rural	345 (16.2)

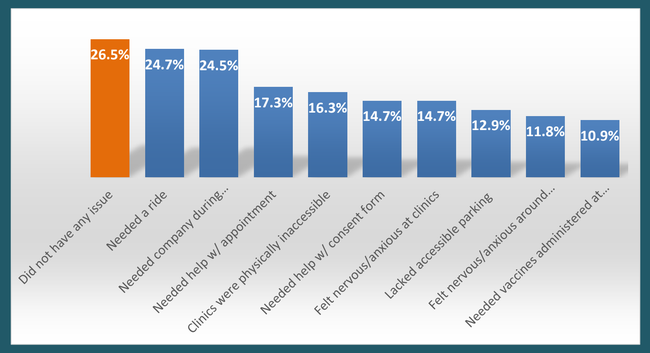
Table 2: COVID-19 infection and vaccination statuses

Ever diagnosed with COVID-19?	n (%)	If diagnosed, symptom severity?	n (%)
Yes	209 (9.9)	None	34 (16.3)
No	1898 (90.1)	Mild	108 (51.9)
		Moderate	58 (27.9)
		Severe	8 (3.8)
Received at least one dose of any vaccines?		**Vaccine Status**	
Yes	1650 (77.3)	One dose only (J&J)	331 (20.1)
No	483 (22.6)	First dose only (P or M)	258 (15.6)
		Two doses (P or M)	1036 (62.8)
		Do not know which type	25 (1.5)

Note: J&J=Johnson & Johnson; P=Pfizer-BioNTech; M=Moderna.

- For those who received at least one dose of any vaccines, 73.5% reported at least one accessibility issues when getting the vaccines.

Figure 1. Barriers in vaccine access (N=1650)



- For those who had not received any vaccines, most were concerned about side effects (45%) and vaccine effectiveness (27%).

Figure 2. Reasons for not getting the vaccines (N=483)

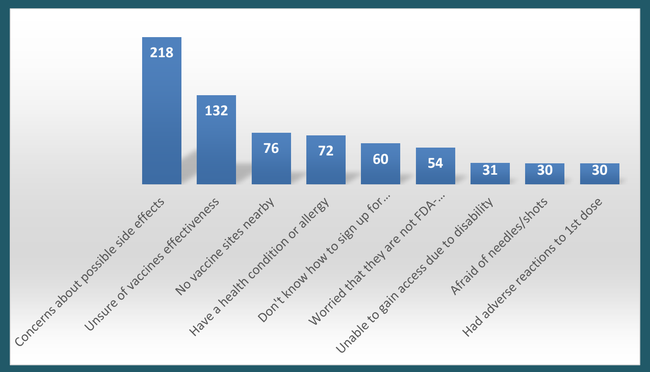
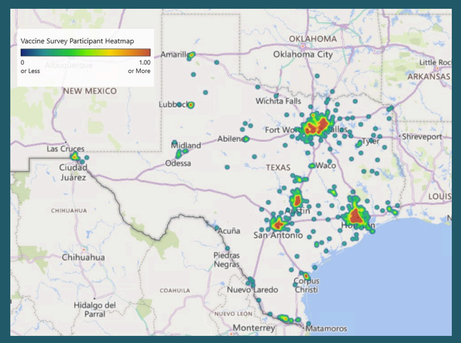


Figure 3. Geographic heatmap of the Participants



Results

- Results showed marked racial-ethnic disparities in COVID-19 infection and vaccination rates among PWDs in Texas.
- NL-Whites had the lowest COVID-19 infection rate (8.7%) which was significantly lower than any other racial/ethnic groups.
- Hispanics/Latinos had the highest 1st-shot and full vaccination rates, yet they also had the highest infection rate (14.9%).

Conclusion

Marked racial-ethnic disparities in COVID-19 infection and vaccination rates were found in this study. The data suggested a wide range of accessibility issues and negative experiences for PWDs during the vaccination process. Concerns about side effects and vaccine effectiveness, accessibility issues, and misinformation were the main reasons that prevented some PWDs from getting the vaccines. Public health authorities and researchers need to work together to deliver accurate information, improve communications with the disability community, and address widespread barriers in vaccine access especially the lack of reliable transportation and accessible facilities.

Acknowledgements

This project was supported, in part, by grant number 90DDC50023, from the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services. We sincerely thank Texas Partners for Inclusive Access, Texas A&M Center on Disability & Development, our statewide agency partners, and participants for the help with the study.