

CDC: New England tops in swine flu vaccinations

April 1 2010, By MIKE STOBBE , AP Medical Writer

(AP) -- New England leads the nation in swine flu vaccinations, while the South has the lowest rates, U.S. health officials said Thursday in the first state-by-state report on turnout.

Tiny Rhode Island has the highest rate of about 39 percent - three times higher than Mississippi, which has the lowest percentage of residents vaccinated, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

The CDC also reported that a record number of health care workers - nearly two-thirds - got seasonal flu vaccines last summer and fall, but the turnout for [swine flu](#) shots was much lower, more than a third.

The reports offer the first look at how the swine flu [vaccination campaign](#) played out around the country.

About 86 million Americans have been vaccinated since October. At first, doses were hard to come by because of supply limitations. But as flu cases dropped, so did demand and now there are tens of millions of unused doses.

Health officials last week renewed their push for vaccinations, citing a recent uptick in hospital cases in Georgia.

The CDC calculated state rates from two telephone surveys that included about 140,000 adults and nearly 75,000 children. The surveys covered vaccinations through January.

Overall, about 24 percent of Americans have been vaccinated, the report said.

Rhode Island's high rate of 39 percent was followed closely by five other states - Massachusetts, Maine, South Dakota and Hawaii.

Mississippi came in with the lowest rate of 13 percent. Many of the 13 other states with rates at or below 20 percent are in the Southeast and South Central regions, including Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Alabama and Georgia.

Experts have said it's difficult to compare state vaccination rates because situations vary from place to place.

For example, the Southeast was hit earlier in the large wave of illness last summer and fall - before vaccines were available. In late November, when vaccine was finally becoming plentiful, swine flu was widespread in the Northeast but easing in some Southeastern states.

Also, the way state and local health departments organized clinics and distributed vaccine differed.

The reports also found:

- 37 percent of children were vaccinated. Again, the rate was highest in Rhode Island, about 85 percent. Georgia had the lowest rate, about 21 percent.

- 33 percent of people in priority groups got the vaccine. That includes children and young adults, health care workers, pregnant women and those with medical conditions that put them at higher risk for complications.

- 62 percent of health care workers got seasonal [flu vaccinations](#), according to an Internet-based survey of about 1,400 health care workers. The highest previous rate for health care workers was just shy of 50 percent.
- 37 percent of health care workers got swine flu vaccinations.

Since it was first identified last April, swine flu has sickened about 60 million Americans, hospitalized 265,000 and killed about 12,000. The U.S. death toll from the new H1N1 virus, declared a global epidemic, is about one-third of the estimated deaths from a regular flu season.

More information: CDC report: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr>

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