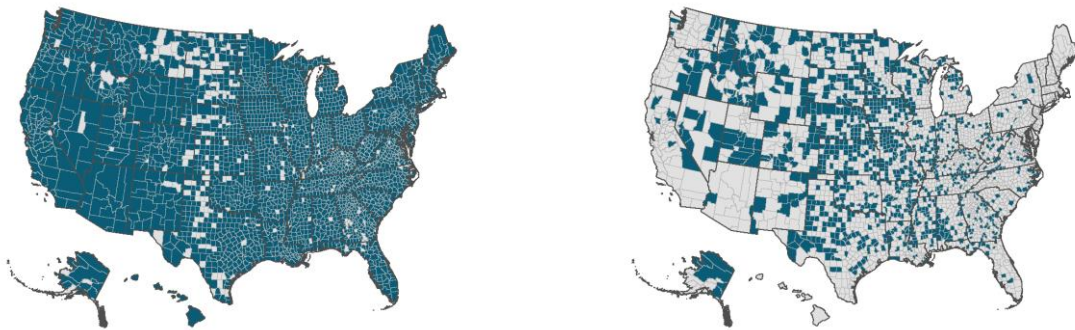


## Family Physicians play a crucial role in youth COVID-vaccination

**What is known:** As of November 10, 2021, 58.5% of the US population were fully vaccinated against COVID-19, far short of our Canadian neighbors (74.0%).<sup>1</sup> Vaccine hesitancy is a major cultural barrier to getting vaccinated against COVID-19, especially in rural U.S.<sup>2</sup> A recent report found that just 27% of parents of children 5-11 years old are eager to have their child vaccinated.<sup>3</sup> Family Physicians have played a major role in routine vaccination for decades.<sup>4</sup> Family Physicians were eager to help with the rollout of the adult COVID-19 vaccine but were not included early enough. With the approval of the COVID-19 vaccine for children and adolescents, Family Physicians are, again, eager to help out; educate and recommend, and deliver COVID-19 vaccination to their patients, young and old.

**New finding:** Family Physicians practice in nearly every county in the United States and are the only Primary Care Physicians in more than 1/3 of US counties. Family Physicians provide care to children in nearly every county and are the only physicians for nearly 3 million children. Family Physicians are community leaders that kids and parents know and trust<sup>5</sup>.

**Family Physicians serve children exclusively in 1 of every 3 counties throughout the United States.**



Above (L): Counties with pediatricians & family physicians

Above (R): Counties with only family physicians

**Implication:** About 28 million kids live in a county where a Family Physician practices. 2.9 million kids under 15 years live in a county with only a Family Physician. Regardless of where a child gets their vaccine: the clinic, pharmacy, or school, the family physician is perfectly positioned to offer education, support, guidance, and recommendations for childhood vaccination. The societal cost of not engaging Family Physicians in the operational planning includes delayed vaccination, preventable COVID infection, morbidity, and deaths.

<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. COVID data tracker. Available online at: [https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#vaccinations\\_vacc-total-admin-rate-total](https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#vaccinations_vacc-total-admin-rate-total)

<sup>2</sup> Ratzan, S, Schneider, EC, Hatch, H, Cacchione, J. (2021). Missing the Point—How Primary Care Can Overcome Covid-19 Vaccine “Hesitancy”. *New England Journal of Medicine*.

<sup>3</sup> Hamel, L, Lopes, L, Sparks, G, Kizinger, A, Kearney, A, Stokes, M, Brodie M (2021). KFF COVID-19 vaccine monitor: October 2021. Available online at:

<sup>4</sup> Wilkinson, E, Jetty, A, Petterson, S, Jabbarpour, Y, & Westfall, JM. (2021). Primary Care’s Historic Role in Vaccination and Potential Role in COVID-19 Immunization Programs. *The Annals of Family Medicine*. Online first; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1370/afm.2679>.

<sup>5</sup> Fact sheet: Biden Administration announces update on operational planning for COVID-19 Vaccinations for Kids 5-11. October 20, 2021. Available: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/10/20/fact-sheet-biden-administration-announces-update-on-operational-planning-for-covid-19-vaccinations-for-kids-ages-5-11/>

**Methodology:** Using the American Medical Association’s Masterfile, 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, 2021— comprised of nearly all physicians practicing in the United States — we subset by physician specialty equal to Family Physicians and Pediatricians, Primary Care physicians responsible for the care of children and among those, only those who self-reported being in active practice (ID=020). We generated 3 mutually exclusive categories based on specialty and street address of their medical practices and aggregated to county-level summary statistics: 1) counties with both family physician/s and pediatrician/s (n=2,968) and 2) counties with only family physicians (n=1,105). A total of 253 counties (8%) are not covered by neither Primary Care specialty. The maps were generated in ArcGIS, version 10.8, using WG84 map projection.

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