

Understanding Trends and Disparities in Recombinant Zoster Vaccine Coverage Across Rhode Island

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INTRODUCTION

Herpes zoster (shingles) is a common and often debilitating condition that can result in significant and prolonged pain. In 2018, a 2-dose recombinant zoster vaccine (RZV) was recommended in the United States for adults aged ≥50 years.

Understanding vaccination uptake and disparities is critical to ensuring equitable protection across populations.

OBJECTIVE

To assess trends and disparities in RZV uptake among Rhode Island adults aged 50–75 years.

METHODS

- Data Source: Rhode Island Child and Adult Immunization Registry (RICAIR)
- Population: Adults aged 50–75 years at the end of 2025
- Measures:
 - Series initiation and completion rates
 - Uptake by age group, gender, and race/ethnicity
 - Annual vaccination trends

RESULTS

Table 1. RZV series completion coverage by demographics in Rhode Island by December 31, 2025

	Series complete	p-value
All adults (50-75 Y)	21.6%	
Age		<.001
50-64	18.5%	
65-75	27.3%	
Gender		<.001
Female	22.4%	
Male	20.7%	
Racial and ethnic identity		<.001
Hispanic/Latino	14.0%	
Black (non-Hispanic)	14.7%	
Asian (non-Hispanic)	16.3%	
White (non-Hispanic)	23.0%	
All other identities	24.0%	

RESULTS

Figure 1. Number of doses of RZV administered between 2021 and 2025 in Rhode Island, by age

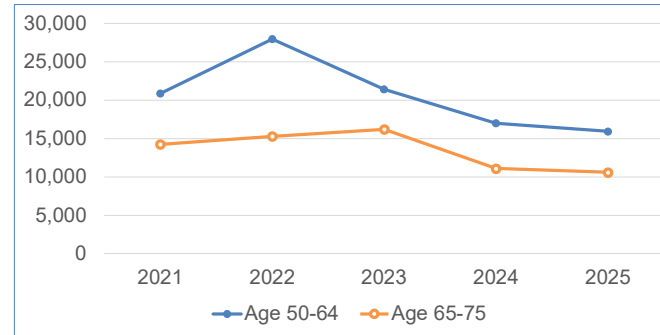


Table 2. RZV series completion among people who initiated series, by year of first dose

Year of first dose	% series complete*
2021	81.5%
2022	82.0%
2023	79.4%
2024	74.1%

* As of 12/31/2025. Given mean time from series initiation to completion.

KEY FINDINGS

- Rhode Island exceeds national coverage (18.1%) but remains suboptimal overall
- Significant age-based disparities, particularly among adults 50–64
- Declining completion rates suggest challenges in series adherence
- Persistent equity gaps require targeted interventions

DISCUSSION

While uptake of RZV was strong following the initial recommendation, recent trends indicate slowing momentum and declining completion rates. Lower coverage among younger eligible adults suggests gaps in awareness, prioritization, or access, and disparities by demographic characteristics highlight the need for more targeted and equitable approaches.

LIMITATIONS

RICAIR did not start including adult immunization data until October 2020 and is likely missing most from 2018-2019 and some from 2020 (i.e., true estimate might be slightly higher for people >55).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop equity-focused vaccination campaigns
- Target adults aged 50–64 years
- Leverage pharmacies and primary care settings
- Implement reminder/recall systems for second dose
- Use data-driven outreach strategies

CURRENT OUTREACH MATERIALS

Vaccines for older adults Stay protected!



As we age, our bodies may not fight off illnesses as well. Adults age 65 or older are at higher risk for getting very sick from diseases like the flu, COVID-19, RSV, and pneumonia.

Vaccines can help! Vaccines are a safe and effective way to protect older adults from diseases that can lead to hospitalization or death. To stay safe, it's important to keep your vaccinations up to date. The vaccines you need depend on your age, health, and possibly your job or travel plans.

Recommended vaccines

- **Flu vaccine:** Get this vaccine every year in the fall. If you are age 65 or older, ask about the enhanced flu vaccine.
- **COVID-19 vaccine:** Everyone age 6 months or older should get the latest version of this vaccine. Adults age 65 or older should get 2 doses, 6 months apart.
- **Pneumonia vaccine:** This vaccine protects against serious bacterial infections. Check with your healthcare professional about when to get it.
- **Shingles vaccine:** Adults age 50 or older should get 2 doses, 2-6 months apart to protect against shingles.
- **Tdap vaccine:** A one-time dose protects against tetanus, diphtheria, and whooping cough. You may need a booster every 10 years.
- **RSV vaccine:** One dose protects against respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). This vaccine is recommended for all people age 75 or older and for people age 50-74 at higher risk. Talk to your healthcare professional about what's right for you.

You may need other vaccines based on your health and lifestyle. Talk to your healthcare professional to make sure you're fully protected.

To get vaccinated

- Visit your healthcare professional or local pharmacy.
- If you don't have a provider, find information on free or low-cost vaccination clinics at health.ri.gov/immunization
- Most vaccines are covered by Medicare at no cost to you. Check with Medicare or your Advantage Plan for details at medicare.gov

Need more than one vaccine? Most vaccines can be given at the same time as others. Talk to your healthcare professional or pharmacist.



REFERENCES

Vaccination Coverage among Adults in the United States, National Health Interview Survey, 2022. <https://www.cdc.gov/adultvaxview/publications-resources/adult-vaccination-coverage-2022.html>

RIDOH - Adult Immunization Program
<https://health.ri.gov/immunization/ridoh-programs/adult-immunization-program>

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