

Adult Vaccines

June 2024

A Full Year Without Cost Sharing for Vaccinations Under Medicare: Adult Vaccinations Trending Toward Pre-Pandemic Levels in 2023

Data from *Vaccine Track* for the full year of 2023 continue to show a broad upward trend in adult vaccinations compared to the years immediately following the pandemic, suggesting that soon, the number of vaccination claims could consistently equal pre-pandemic levels.¹ In 2023, overall adult vaccination claims were 7% lower than the claims in 2019, whereas vaccination claims in 2022 were nearly 15% lower than in 2019. Of note, for the first three quarters of 2023, vaccination claims exceeded 2019 levels by 1%.

Although average claims for the year were still below 2019 levels, monthly trends seem to suggest that adult vaccinations are more evenly distributed throughout 2023, signaling a shift toward more consistent year-round vaccination. The 2023 data show that we made valuable strides for public health.

Medicare Part D in the Lead

It appears Medicare vaccinations are driving many of the gains. Medicare claims jumped 32% from 2022 to 2023, helping to close the gap seen since the pandemic. Compared to 2019 levels, 2023 Medicare claims were 6% lower, a marked improvement from 2022, when the claims were 29% lower than those in 2019. *Vaccine Track* data show that Part D claims in 2023 were up 45% from 2022, while Part B vaccination claims fell 8%.

Vaccinations in the Medicare population may be rising, at least in part, due to the “Protecting Seniors Through Immunization” provision of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which eliminated cost sharing for adult vaccines covered under Part D that are recommended by the CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP).

HHS Study Reinforces Medicare Part D Trends, Documents Cost Savings

The favorable impact of the “Protecting Seniors Through Immunization” provision of the IRA on vaccination trends has also been documented by researchers in the HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) in their [report](#) issued on May 3, 2024. The study reviewed vaccination trends for Medicare beneficiaries enrolled in Part D in 2023 and compared the vaccination numbers to beneficiaries enrolled in 2021, finding increases in the number of beneficiaries receiving vaccines across several ACIP-recommended vaccines. *Vaccine Track* showed similar vaccination trends to the ASPE study.

The trends below were observed:

- According to the ASPE report, 10.3 million Part D enrollees—out of 50.5 million Part D enrollees and 65.8 million total Medicare beneficiaries—received at least one vaccine with no out-of-pocket costs in 2023. In 2021, only 3.4 million enrollees received vaccines.
- Drilling down to specific vaccines, the ASPE study showed that between 2021 and 2023, there was a 42% increase in shingles vaccine utilization.
 - o *Vaccine Track* showed a comparable trend in Part D claims, with shingles vaccinations increasing by 58% from 2021 to 2023.
- Additionally, the ASPE analysis showed that the number of Medicare enrollees receiving the Tdap vaccine more than doubled (114% growth) from 2021 to 2023.
 - o Again, *Vaccine Track* showed a similar trend, with Part D claims for Tdap vaccines rising by 140% from 2021 to 2023.

The ASPE study also showed that the “Protecting Seniors Through Immunization provision” of the IRA had a significant impact on beneficiary costs. ASPE estimates that as a result of this legislation, Part D enrollees saved approximately \$400 million in out-of-pocket vaccination costs in 2023 (not counting the new RSV vaccines). The report also suggests that yearly direct medical costs of \$1.7 to \$3.4 billion—and 10,000 lives—could be saved if people aged 60 and older all received the RSV vaccine, and \$2.4 billion could be saved if all persons not yet vaccinated for shingles received the Zoster vaccine. In an earlier March 2023 [study](#), ASPE showed that the 3.4 million people who received vaccines under Part D in 2021 had annual out-of-pocket costs of \$234 million.

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Although the elimination of cost sharing has helped improve vaccination rates and saved out-of-pocket costs for those covered by Medicare, the ASPE study importantly highlighted how vaccination rates continue to lag behind for Black and Hispanic populations—each comprising about 10% of all Part D enrollees—indicating that more needs to be done to improve vaccine equity. Policy change is a necessary part of the solution.

Medicaid Growing, Though Enrollment Swings are Confounding

As a first step, the “Protecting Seniors Through Immunization” provision of the IRA eliminated cost sharing for ACIP-recommended vaccines to all Medicaid-enrolled adults starting in October 2023. *Vaccine Track* data show that Medicaid vaccination claims rose in 2023, though this change could be associated with the spike in Medicaid enrollment that was spurred by pandemic-era job losses.

Additionally, the February 2020 to March 2023 freeze on Medicaid eligibility redeterminations allowed for continuous eligibility in the Medicaid program. During that period, the number of Medicaid beneficiaries rose from 71 million to almost 94 million. With the lifting of the freeze, Medicaid enrollment has fallen back to 74 million as of April 2024.²

Commercial Claims Holding Steady

Commercial vaccination claims showed no change from 2022 to 2023 and remained 10 % below 2019. With the end of continuous Medicaid coverage provided during the pandemic, former Medicaid beneficiaries may be moving to commercial plans offered through the ACA Marketplace. According to the HHS, 2.4 million of the record five million new enrollees in Marketplace plans were previously enrolled in Medicaid.³ Also, as jobs have rebounded, many people may have gained employer coverage.

Looking Ahead

Because *Vaccine Track* provides a comprehensive snapshot of adult vaccination trends across payers and states, the platform enables stakeholders and policymakers to better understand trends in adult vaccination uptake and interpret the data in a meaningful way.

Vaccine Track will soon provide more insights, incorporating data on respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccination trends for adults. RSV vaccines were first available in June 2023 and recommended for adults ages 60 and older in consultation with their health care provider.

In future readouts, *Vaccine Track* will continue to be a valuable tool to assist crucial stakeholders and policymakers in answering the following key questions about vaccination trends:

- Will adult vaccination claims continue their upward climb toward pre-pandemic numbers, and will that growth be sustained beyond 2019 vaccination levels?
- Can growth in vaccination claims indeed be attributed to the elimination of cost sharing for recommended vaccines under Medicare and Medicaid?
- Does the evidence continue to show that vaccination uptake is being spread more evenly across each year?
- What can be done to improve equity in the access and uptake of vaccines?

¹All figures presented here are for persons aged 19 and older and exclude influenza vaccines because of high seasonal bias. RSV vaccines also are excluded because they first came on the market in mid-2023.

²KFF, *Medicaid Enrollment and Unwinding Tracker* (April 19, 2024)

³USDHHS, *Historic 21.3 Million People Choose ACA Marketplace Coverage*