

One-third of veterans have rejected COVID vaccines. This Veteran Affairs mobile van unit is trying to convert them, but it's not going well

The rugged communities that stretch from eastern Washington through the Idaho Panhandle into northwestern Montana include some of the country's highest concentrations of former service members. Mostly conservative and White, they are also highly suspicious of coronavirus vaccines.

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To counter the wariness, the [Veteran's Affairs] Spokane hospital embarked in January on a mission to convince the roughly 46,000 veterans under its care that whatever was holding them back was the real danger. The 45-foot bus previously used as a primary-care clinic — 10 feet longer than a Greyhound and the height of a tractor-trailer, with two exam rooms, a triage room with a hospital bed, and a centrifuge to spin blood — has since logged 2,500 miles in a carefully waged campaign against skepticism.

Nationally, about 3 in 4 Americans [have indicated a willingness](#) to accept a vaccine. Yet just 1 in 4 veterans contacted by the Spokane VA for an appointment on the bus have said yes.

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William Bishop, a 57-year-old Army veteran sitting nearby for 15 minutes of observation after his shot, said he had lost his father to covid last year. "It's a duty to myself and a duty to my community," he said, explaining why he was getting vaccinated. "I'm a veteran. Duty is what it's about."

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