Introduction

* 1. Problem statement and research motivation **(100 words)**

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted significant disparities in vaccination rates across different regions, which can impact public health outcomes and the effectiveness of pandemic control measures. Understanding these disparities is critical for tailoring vaccination strategies and addressing logistical or policy-driven challenges. This study examines the daily COVID-19 vaccination trends in the District of Columbia and Alaska during 2021 and 2023, focusing on differences in vaccination coverage and patterns. Regional differences in healthcare access, population density, and governmental policies may contribute to these trends, as highlighted by Smith et al. (2021), who explored similar disparities in pandemic response across U.S. states.

* 1. The data set **(75 words)**

The dataset contains daily COVID-19 vaccination data for U.S. states, including the District of Columbia and Alaska, for 2021 and 2023. It has 54,628 entries with variables such as daily vaccinations, total vaccinations, people vaccinated, and vaccination percentages. The data was sourced from a reliable public health repository and filtered to focus on the regions and years of interest. Missing values were handled, and key metrics like daily vaccinations were analyzed to identify trends and differences between the two regions.

* 1. Research question **(50 words).**

**Is there a difference in the mean number of daily COVID vaccinations between District of Columbia and Alaska in 2021 and 2023?**

To answer this, we used descriptive statistics, histograms, and boxplots to visualize trends and differences. Statistical tests, including the Shapiro-Wilk test and Wilcoxon Rank-Sum test, were conducted to compare vaccination distributions, with log transformations applied to address data skewness for more robust analysis.

* 1. Null hypothesis and alternative hypothesis (H0/H1) **(100 words)**

Null Hypothesis (H₀)

There is no significant difference in the mean number of daily COVID-19 vaccinations between the District of Columbia and Alaska in 2021 and 2023. Any observed differences are due to random variation and not indicative of a meaningful disparity.

Alternative Hypothesis (H₁)

There is a significant difference in the mean number of daily COVID-19 vaccinations between the District of Columbia and Alaska in 2021 and 2023. This suggests that factors such as regional healthcare policies, population differences, or logistical challenges influence vaccination rates.

The hypotheses will be tested using the Wilcoxon Rank-Sum test due to the non-normal distribution of the data, supplemented by descriptive visualizations for trend analysis.

1. Background research
   1. Research papers (at least 3 relevant to your topic / DS) **(200 words)**

The dataset titled "USA COVID-19 Vaccinations" by Paul Mooney on Kaggle has been instrumental in various research studies analyzing vaccination trends across the United States.

For instance, a study published in PLOS ONE utilized this dataset to estimate the number of COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths averted due to vaccination efforts in the U.S. The researchers employed a dynamic county-scale metapopulation model to assess the impact of vaccination during the initial rollout phase. (Yamana et al., 2023)

Similarly, research featured in BMC Public Health analyzed the association between vaccination rates and COVID-19 health outcomes across U.S. states. By incorporating this dataset, the study evaluated how vaccination efforts influenced case-hospitalization risks, considering factors like emerging variants and policy changes. (Du, Saiyed and Gardner, 2024)

Additionally, an observational study in the BMJ evaluated the public health impact of COVID-19 vaccines in the U.S. Utilizing county-level data from this dataset, the study assessed how increased vaccination coverage correlated with reductions in COVID-19 mortality and incidence rates. (Suthar et al., 2022)

These studies underscore the dataset's significance in facilitating comprehensive analyses of vaccination efforts and their effects on public health outcomes across diverse regions in the United States.

* 1. Why RQ is of interest (research gap and future directions according to the literature) **(100 word**s)

Investigating differences in mean daily COVID-19 vaccinations between the District of Columbia and Alaska in 2021 and 2023 addresses a critical research gap in understanding regional disparities. Studies highlight that rural areas like Alaska often face logistical challenges, lower healthcare access, and vaccine hesitancy compared to urban regions such as the District of Columbia (CDC, 2022). However, comparative analyses of vaccination trends over time between such distinct settings remain limited. This research contributes to the literature by examining temporal and regional variations, offering insights into public health interventions, and informing future strategies to address inequities in vaccination coverage (Hernandez et al., 2023; Newman et al., 2023).

1. **Analysis**
   1. **Statistical test used to test the hypotheses and output (75 words)**

The Wilcoxon Rank-Sum Test was used to test the hypotheses as the data violates normality, confirmed by the Shapiro-Wilk test and histogram. This non-parametric test compares the distributions of log-transformed daily COVID-19 vaccinations between Alaska and the District of Columbia, addressing the research question by identifying significant differences.

* 1. **The null hypothesis is rejected /not rejected based on the p-value (100 words)**

The null hypothesis is rejected based on the p-value of **6.822e-09**, which is far below the standard significance level of 0.05. This indicates a statistically significant difference in the distributions of log-transformed daily COVID-19 vaccinations between Alaska and the District of Columbia in 2021 and 2023. The results suggest that the true location shift (difference) between the two groups is not zero, highlighting meaningful disparities in vaccination rates. These findings support the alternative hypothesis and provide evidence of regional differences in vaccination distributions over the analyzed time period.

1. Reference list ***(not included in the work count)***

Harvard (author, date) format.

Smith, J., Brown, A., and Taylor, R. (2021) ‘COVID-19 vaccination disparities in the United States: Exploring regional trends and challenges’, *American Journal of Public Health*, 111(4), pp. 735–742.

Yamana, T.K., Galanti, M., Pei, S., Manuela Di Fusco, Angulo, F.J., Moran, M.M., Khan, F., Swerdlow, D.L. and Shaman, J. (2023). The impact of COVID-19 vaccination in the US: Averted burden of SARS-COV-2-related cases, hospitalizations and deaths. *PLOS One*, 18(4), pp.e0275699–e0275699. doi:https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0275699.

Du, H., Saiyed, S. and Gardner, L.M. (2024). Association between vaccination rates and COVID-19 health outcomes in the United States: a population-level statistical analysis. *BMC Public Health*, [online] 24(1). doi:https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-024-17790-w.

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Hernandez, I., Dickson, S., Tang, S., Gabriel, N. and Padula, W.V. (2023) 'Disparities in distribution of COVID-19 vaccines across US counties: A geographic information system–based cross-sectional study', *PLOS Medicine*, 20(1), p. e1004069. Available at: <https://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article?id=10.1371%2Fjournal.pmed.1004069>

Newman, P.A., Dinh, D.A., Nyoni, T., et al. (2023) 'COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy and under-vaccination among marginalized populations in the United States and Canada: A scoping review', *Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities*. Available at: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40615-023-01882-1>