

Most Americans oppose COVID vaccine mandates: survey

21 December 2020, by Alan Mozes



Though many Americans would support a COVID-19 vaccine mandate, a Gallup survey finds there is no clear majority in favor of it.

The Gallup Panel conducted the [online survey](#) of 2,730 U.S. adults between Sept. 14 and 27.

Nearly 49% of respondents said they would "accept" a state mandate requiring children to be vaccinated in order to attend school. But support fell to 41% when respondents were asked about a state vaccine mandate for all adults.

"The low acceptability of COVID-19 mandates suggests that broad mandates should be a last resort," said survey leader Emily Largent, a professor of medical ethics and [health policy](#) at the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine in Philadelphia.

Largent said the survey suggests a mandate should be considered only "if the pandemic continues to rage, and if efforts to increase vaccine access and to engage in [public health](#) messaging prove unsuccessful in achieving the level of vaccine uptake necessary for community

immunity."

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's senior official for [infectious diseases](#), has said at least 75% of people would need to be vaccinated to achieve herd immunity.

The new report was published online Dec. 18 in *JAMA Network Open*.

Among the survey respondents, 88% were white and 54% were men. Democrats made up 41%; Republicans, 31%; and Independents, 25%. About 58% of respondents had a college degree.

In response to a series of vaccine-related questions, 61% said they would probably get vaccinated. But percentages varied widely by [political affiliation](#), with 77% of Democrats saying they planned to get the shot, compared with 44% of Republicans and 58% of Independents.

The survey also revealed a sharp racial divide: 64% of white participants said they would get the COVID-19 shot, compared to 44% of Black respondents.

While vaccine mandates for adults are legal in the United States, more adults (45%) opposed a state vaccine requirement than considered them acceptable (41%). That dynamic flipped with respect to employer-enforced mandates: 48% were for them, 38% were not.

And while 38% said they opposed mandatory vaccination of schoolchildren, 49% said the idea was acceptable, according to the report.

Among those who said they were likely to get vaccinated anyway, mandate support shot up. Among that group, 74% supported child/school mandates, 65% supported adult mandates and 73% supported employer-enforced mandates.

Support dipped among Black respondents with just 27% supporting mandatory vaccination of adults. But support rose among those with college degrees.

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Political affiliation also influenced perspectives. Democrats strongly favored adult, employer-enforced and child mandates (61%, 66% and 70%, respectively), but support fell off dramatically among Republicans (23%, 31% and 28%, respectively).

Still, Largent struck a largely upbeat tone.

"Now that we have all of these great images of health care providers being vaccinated, I think we'll see an increase in people reporting that they are likely to be vaccinated," she said.

But that will depend on the medical community being honest and forthright about the science, said Dr. Erika Schwartz, a preventive medicine specialist and founder of Evolved Science in New York City. She was not part of the survey team.

"We need to show results that are convincing," Schwartz said. And looking ahead, "the data collected must address a much more representative cross-section of the population. Those at high risk must be carefully evaluated, and transparency in data release is crucial."

Kathryn Tart, founding dean and professor in the University of Houston College of Nursing, said fostering trust will be key and nurses will play a major role in that. For the past 17 years, she said, the Gallup Poll has found that nurses are the most-trusted professionals.

"We are incredibly excited to have this vaccine, which is why we are lining up—nurses and health care professionals—to get vaccinated," Tart said. "And you can trust us, because when we have a choice between living or dying, we choose life. That's what nurses do. And this [vaccine](#) will save lives."

More information: Learn more about COVID-19 vaccines at the U.S. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

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