

COVID Collaborative

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Coronavirus Vaccine Uptake Tracking Study – Wave 1

National Study Identifies Key Pathways to Coronavirus Vaccine Uptake

Stressing safety and effectiveness, the support of loved ones and community responsibility are the surest ways to encourage coronavirus vaccine uptake, according to a new national public opinion survey by the COVID Collaborative.

Seventy-one percent of Americans say they definitely or probably will get the vaccine, lean that way or already have done so. This includes 7 percent who'd gotten vaccinated at the time of the survey, completed Jan. 25, 38 percent who definitely planned to do so, 18 percent who called it probable and 8 percent who were unsure but leaning in favor.

Gaining adherence among these convinced or favorably inclined groups would approach the minimum vaccination level considered desirable to achieve herd immunity. The survey points to the most promising paths to achieve this goal, based on statistical modeling:

- **Focus on safety and effectiveness.** Seeing the vaccines as safe and effective is by far the single strongest predictor of intended uptake.
- **Establish a subjective social norm** by encouraging people to understand that others close to them want them to get vaccinated. This is the second-strongest predictor of intended uptake, with considerable room for improvement on current sentiment.
- **Stress social responsibility**, the understanding that getting vaccinated is a social need rather than just a personal preference. Recognizing this “moral norm” again is far from universal, and it’s the next-strongest uptake predictor.
- Rounding out the top predictors is **perceived disease risk**: The likelier people are to be worried about catching the coronavirus, the likelier to get vaccinated against it.

This survey is the first in a monthly series of tracking studies on vaccine uptake produced by [Langer Research Associates](#) for the [COVID Collaborative](#), a nonprofit dedicated to supporting state and local responses to the pandemic. Interviews were conducted online, in English and

Spanish, Jan. 15-25, 2021, among a national sample of 1,853 adults, including oversamples to a total of 531 Black and 518 Hispanic people, via the random-sample Ipsos KnowledgePanel®.

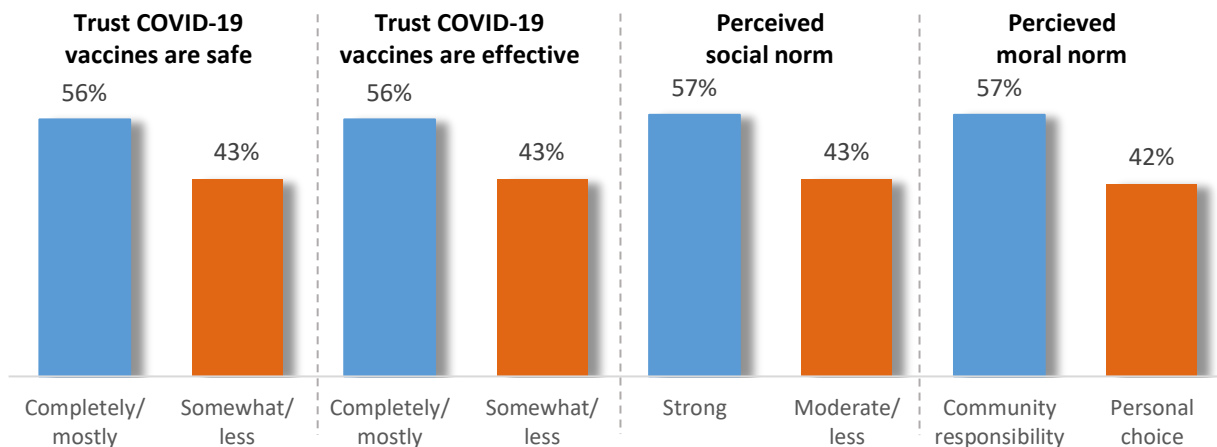
The statistical model used to evaluate uptake intention is informed by the literature on the subject and a previous COVID Collaborative [study](#) focused on vaccine hesitancy among Black and Hispanic adults. The model describes 77 percent of the variance in intended uptake.

Encouraging uptake

The study identifies approaches to encouraging uptake above and beyond the most fundamental step, demonstrating vaccine safety and effectiveness. Among them:

Currently a modest majority of Americans, 57 percent, think all or most of the people close to them want them to get vaccinated, and fewer, 51 percent, in turn are likely to recommend it to their friends and family. A stronger subjective social norm can be built by encouraging people who have been vaccinated, or are convinced of the need, to share their views and wishes within their circles.

Similarly, while 57 percent see a social responsibility in getting vaccinated, a substantial share, 42 percent, see it as an individual decision. Clarifying the importance of protecting the community, not just the individual, can build the case for a moral norm.



In terms of perceived risk, 63 percent overall are very or somewhat worried about getting sick from the virus. Partisanship and political ideology are strong factors, with worries about 30 percentage points higher among Democrats and liberals than Republicans and conservatives.

However, infection fears are not just political; they also are higher among people who report having underlying health conditions that put them at greater risk from the coronavirus. Thirty-eight percent report such a condition, and among them, three-quarters are worried about infection, vs. 55 percent of those who don't report an underlying condition that raises their risk.

One approach is to broaden awareness of potential risk conditions. The CDC [suggests](#), for example, that this may include being overweight, a condition that [affects](#) 74 percent of Americans, twice as many as currently recognize that they have a risk factor. Another path is to enhance recognition that even those without underlying conditions face risk.

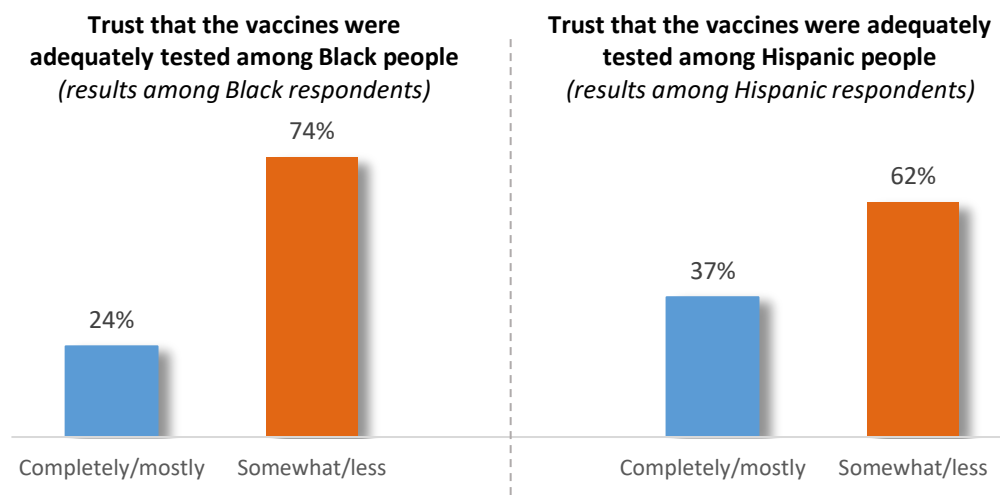
The survey covers a range of related topics relevant to vaccine uptake. Among other key results:

- **Wait-and-see is a factor.** Among people who don't rule out getting vaccinated, just half say they'll aim to get a vaccine as soon as it's available to them. The rest say they'll wait – a few weeks (13 percent), a few months (16 percent), or longer (19 percent).

Those more apt to say they'll hold off include nearly all of those who lack trust in the vaccines' safety (95 percent) or effectiveness (93 percent), or who feel little or no social encouragement (91 percent). Intention to wait also is high among those who see side effects as especially likely; 75 percent in this group say they won't get vaccinated right away. Demographically, plans to wait stand out among Black people (61 percent, as examined in the previous COVID Collaborative report), Republicans (57 percent), those who haven't gone beyond high school (also 57 percent) and rural Americans (56 percent).

- **Trust needs improvement.** Only middling majorities completely or mostly trust that the vaccines are safe (56 percent) or effective (an identical 56 percent), with roughly two in 10 "somewhat" trusting in these. As noted, these factors are by far the most critical elements in encouraging uptake. Trust is considerably lower among Black people, Republicans and conservatives, but also among independents, moderates and those without college degrees, compared with whites, Hispanics, Democrats, liberals and college graduates.

Moreover, there's a particular lack of trust among Black and Hispanic people that the vaccines were tested adequately in their own racial or ethnic communities – just 24 percent among Black people and 37 percent among Hispanics.

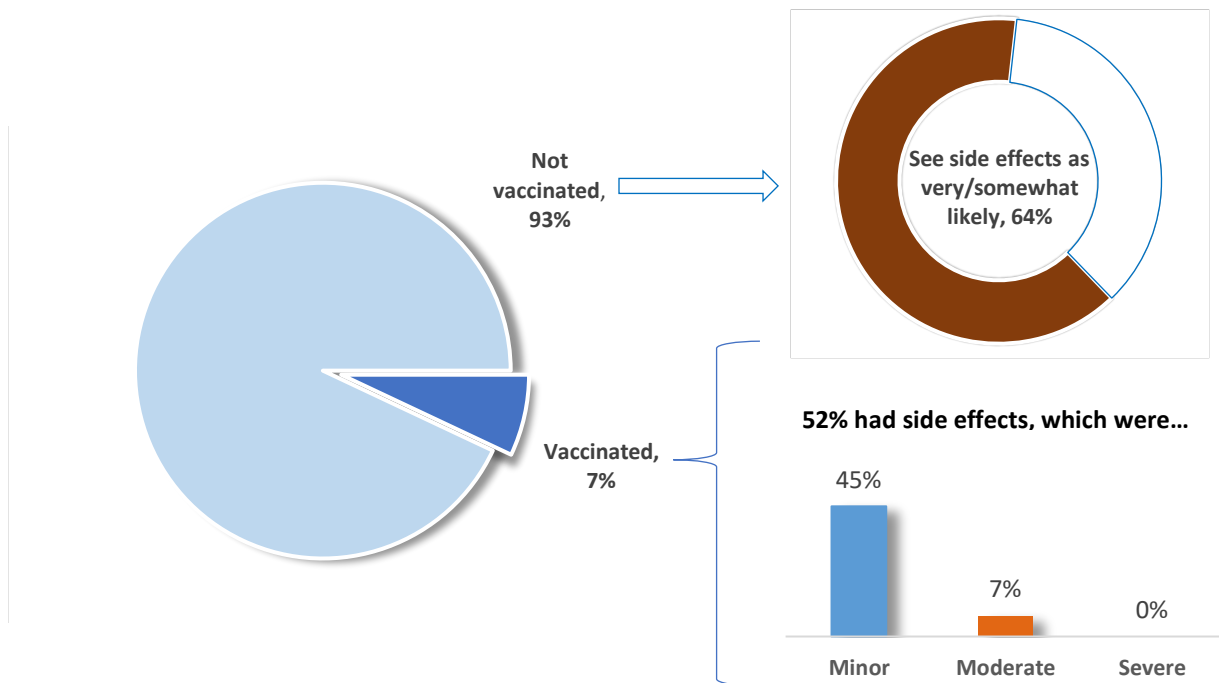


- Uptake is challenged by lack of full faith in vaccines in general.** Sixty-eight percent of Americans completely or mostly trust that vaccines are safe, leaving about one in three who trust this “somewhat” (19 percent) or less (13 percent). General trust in vaccines is highly correlated with trust in the safety of the coronavirus vaccines specifically.

Moreover, fewer than half, 45 percent, express a high level of trust that coronavirus vaccines are being distributed fairly. Trust is lowest, again, among Black people, as well as among those with lower incomes.

- Potential side effects are another concern.** Sixty-four percent think it’s very or somewhat likely that they would experience side effects from being vaccinated, and this is a negative predictor of intended uptake, though not a strong one.

Expectations of side effects outstrip actual experiences. Of those who have been vaccinated, 52 percent say they in fact experienced side effects. A point to stress: Forty-five percent had minor side effects, 7 percent moderate, and none severe.



- Basic information generally is available, but not universally.** Twenty-four percent say they currently are eligible for the vaccine and 53 percent say they’re not; in all, 78 percent report knowing their eligibility status. Still, 22 percent don’t know. This doubles among those who distrust that the vaccines are effective (44 percent) or safe (43 percent); it’s also comparatively high among Black, lower-income and less-educated Americans.

Uptake among groups

There are divisions in intended uptake among groups. In terms of race and ethnicity, seven in 10 whites and Hispanics say they definitely or probably will get the vaccine, lean toward getting it or have done so, compared with six in 10 Black people. Politically, it's 83 percent among Democrats, 70 percent among independents and 58 percent among Republicans.

Roughly seven in 10 suburban (73 percent) and urban (72 percent) residents have received a vaccine or are inclined to get one, vs. 63 percent of rural residents. It's 84 percent among college graduates vs. 64 percent among the two-thirds of adults who don't have a four-year degree.

Uptake opportunities encompass 82 percent of those age 65 and older, compared with 68 percent of those younger than 65; 75 percent among those who say they have underlying health conditions that could increase their risk of complications, vs. 68 percent among those who don't report such conditions; and 72 percent among those who haven't caught the virus, vs. 51 percent of those who say they have caught it, 8 percent of all adults.

Subjective social and moral norms among groups

Perceptions of a subjective social norm of getting vaccinated are characterized by some of the same group divisions. About six in 10 whites and Hispanics think all or most of the people close to them want them to get vaccinated, falling to four in 10 Black people. It's higher among Democrats (69 percent) than independents (53 percent) or Republicans (49 percent). And about six in 10 urban and suburban residents say the same, vs. 48 percent of those in rural areas (where Republican identification is highest).

Similar splits emerge for perceptions of a moral norm to get vaccinated. By race and ethnicity, most Hispanics (59 percent) and whites (56 percent) see a community responsibility to get vaccinated; 44 percent of Black people say the same. Three-quarters of Democrats hold this view, compared with 55 percent of independents and 39 percent of Republicans. And it's about six in 10 among urban and suburban residents alike, falling to 44 percent in rural areas.

Outreach, trusted sources and message content

Overall outreach has been far more positive than negative. Sixty-seven percent of Americans say they've seen or heard advertising saying it's a good idea to get vaccinated, and 57 percent say they've gotten this message from social media content. Far fewer, 27 percent, have seen social media content saying it's a bad idea.

That said, fewer have seen "a lot" of advertising (34 percent) or social media content (24 percent) encouraging uptake, suggesting that these efforts could be enhanced.

The study tests trusted advisers on the subject of vaccine uptake. Most trusted, far and away, is one's own healthcare provider; among those who have one, 64 percent completely or mostly trust their provider to give them advice on the vaccines.

Next most trusted – underscoring the value of a subjective social norm for vaccination – are family members, completely or mostly trusted on the subject by 50 percent overall. This declines to the next stage of trust – Joe Biden, 37 percent (with highly partisan views) and one’s state governor, 31 percent. Twenty percent highly trust religious leaders on the subject; just one in 10 says the same about celebrities they admire and social media posts from people they follow.

Completely/mostly trust for vaccine advice

Healthcare provider	64%
Your family	50
Joe Biden	37
State’s governor	31
Religious leaders	20
Social media posts from people you follow	10
Celebrities you admire	9

Differences in trust emerge by race and ethnicity. In the widest gap, trust in one’s healthcare provider is highest among whites (68 percent), falling to 56 percent among Hispanics and 50 percent among Black people. Conversely, in smaller gaps, Black people and Hispanics are 5 to 8 points more apt than whites to trust Biden, celebrities they admire and social media posts from people they follow. Black people are more trusting of religious leaders than are whites, 25 vs. 18 percent, with Hispanics falling in between.

Message content areas tested in the survey aren’t highly differentiated. Modest majorities say they’d find any of these an extremely or very strong argument in favor of getting vaccinated: keeping their community safer (56 percent), helping them return to their normal life (53 percent) and helping reopen the economy (52 percent). About two in 10 more call each of these a strong argument, but not extremely or very strong.

Views again differ by race and ethnicity, with Black people 6 to 15 points less apt than whites or Hispanics to see any of these three messages as persuasive. Bigger differences occur among other groups. Democrats are 26 to 32 points more apt than Republicans to see each as an extremely or very strong argument. Holding that view is 20 to 25 points higher among college graduates than non-graduates. And urban and suburban residents are 11 to 18 points more apt than those in rural areas to see each as an especially strong argument.

On another item, the survey finds that a vast majority of Americans, 89 percent, say they always or mostly wear a mask when they leave their home and can’t maintain social distance from other people. Mask wearing is correlated with perceived risk of infection, one of the key predictors of intended vaccine uptake.

Additional materials

The survey questionnaire with topline data, methodological details and a summary of the statistical modeling used in this report are provided in a separate appendix. All materials are available via the Societal Experts Action Network (SEAN) COVID-19 [Survey Archive](#).