

What do people REALLY think about vaccination?

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Vaccination: Opinion Research Insights

1. Views of childhood vaccine policy are not what the media seems to say
2. Vaccine misinformation is not viewed by people in the same ways that health organizations view it
3. People often don't think they need vaccines even if they are in the target patient population

Methods Summary

Design	All nationally representative surveys
Sampling	Representative online and phone panel
Sample Size	Overall ns range from ~1200-3,400 U.S. adults
Languages	English and Spanish
Weighting	Age, gender, race/ethnicity, Census region, home tenure, household size, population density, religious affiliation, education, party ID, voter registration, internet access/use, civic engagement
Timing	Ranging from 2019-2025

NOTES:
For presentation purposes, Don't Know and Refused responses not always shown unless >5%
~±2 to 5 percentage points for total respondents at the 95% confidence level

Views of childhood vaccine policy are not what the media tells you

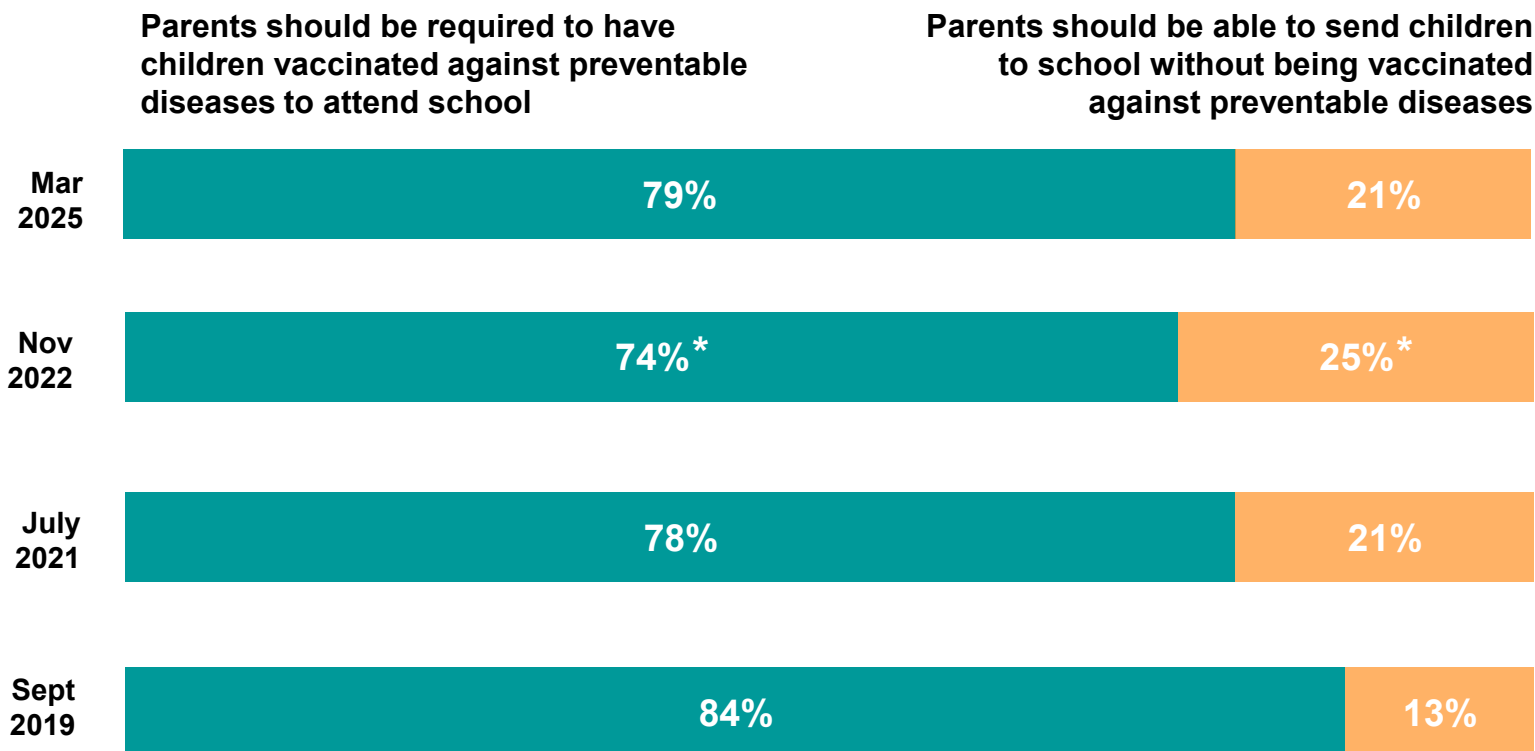
March 2025

Funded by the de Beaumont Foundation and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Historic data funded by the CDC through a cooperative agreement with ASTHO and by
the Harvard Opinion Research Program

SteelFisher GK, Findling MG, Caporello HL, Stein RI. Has COVID-19 Threatened Routine Childhood Vaccination? Insights from US Public Opinion Polls. *Health Affairs Forefront*, 6 June 2023.

Most Americans Continue to Support Routine Childhood Vaccine Requirements

% saying...



March 2025 n=2509

November 2022 n=1813

July 2021 n=2500

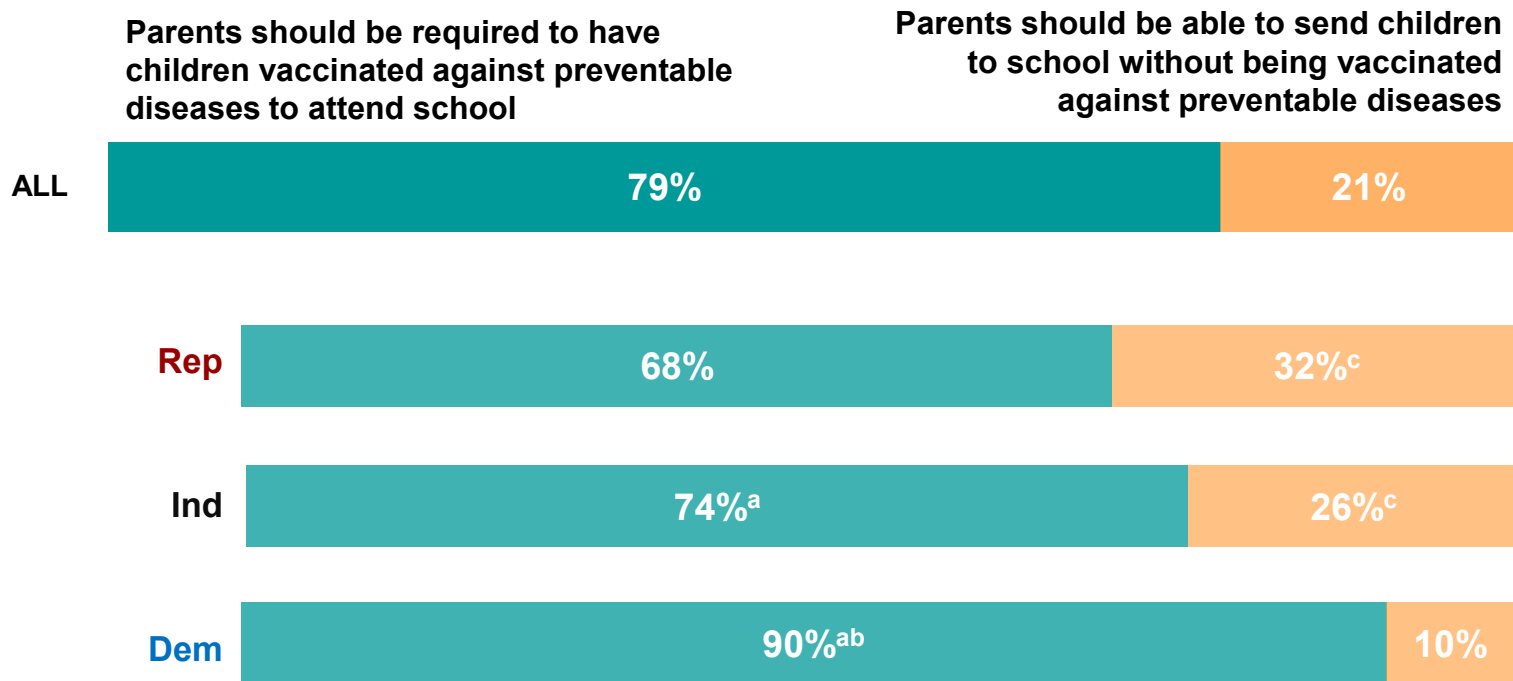
Sept 2019 n=1550

Exact question wording was as follows: "As you may know, children who cannot get vaccinated for medical reasons are never required to get vaccinated in order to attend school. But for all other children to attend school, do you think...?"

*Comparing 2022 vs 2019, * significantly lower than in 2022 at p<0.05*

Although Partisan Differences Exist, A Majority of Republicans Support Childhood Vaccination Requirements

% saying...



^a significantly higher than Republicans at $p < 0.05$, ^b significantly higher than Independents at $p < 0.05$, ^c significantly higher than Democrats at $p < 0.05$. Exact question wording was as follows: "As you may know, children who cannot get vaccinated for medical reasons are never required to get vaccinated in order to attend school. But for all other children to attend school, do you think...?"

n=2509, R n=1016, D n=1132, I n=339

There is Majority Support for Childhood Vaccination Policy Among Parents and MAGA Supporters

% saying...

Parents should be required to have children vaccinated against preventable diseases to attend school

Parents should be able to send children to school without being vaccinated against preventable diseases

ALL

79%

21%

All Parents

72%

28%

MAGA supporters

66%

34%

Parent & MAGA supporter

58%

42%

n=2509

MAGA supporters n=778

Parent/guardian n=777

Parent/guardian & MAGA supporter n=248

Exact question wording: "As you may know, children who cannot get vaccinated for medical reasons are never required to get vaccinated in order to attend school. But for all other children to attend school, do you think...?"

Parent Choice is Strongest Reason for Vaccination Policy Opposition; Concerns About Safety are Less Influential

Among those who OPPOSE childhood vaccination requirements for school attendance, percent saying each is MAJOR reason why:

I think it should be the parents' choice on whether or not to vaccinate their child 79%

I think government agencies that enforce vaccine requirements are influenced too much by politics and big companies 66%

I worry about a slippery slope where children might be required to get too many vaccines in the future 64%

I think these vaccines exist to make money for companies that develop them 54%

I do not think these vaccines are safe for many children 40% ←

I don't think these vaccines are needed because children are unlikely to get very sick even if they get infected with these illnesses 20%

I don't think these vaccines are needed because illnesses like measles are not around much anymore 17%

n=518

Key Implications

- **Create a more grounded vaccine environment by spreading the word that most people – across parties – support requirements**
- **Recognize that opposition to vaccine policies will likely go beyond safety concerns**
 - **Anticipate conversations with opponents that speak to their concerns with empathy**

People feel differently about vaccine misinformation than health organizations do

November 2023

Funded by the CDC through a cooperative agreement with ASTHO
Data accepted as manuscript for *Health Security*, Expect Nov 2025

Deep Concerns about False Information

% saying the spread of false and inaccurate information about vaccines in the U.S. is...



n=1632

But False Information Not Universally Seen as Malicious

% saying false information about vaccines is spread...

Mostly people who think the information is true and want to help others

23%

About equally by these different types of people

51%

Mostly by people who know the information is false but spread it for their own interests

26%

74% NOT “mostly malicious actors”

n=1632

Many Have Heard What They Believe is False Information about Vaccines

% saying they have personally heard or read information about vaccines that they believe is false and inaccurate

Yes, have personally heard or read



No, have not



n=1632

Perceptions of What People Think is False is Nuanced: Two-Thirds Reference Negative Misinformation

*Among those who gave examples of false information that they had heard,
% providing statements suggesting...*

**Vaccines are harmful, implying that they
actually believe vaccines are beneficial**

71%



Data from forthcoming paper accepted by *Health Security*,
Data add to 102% because respondents were allowed to give multiple examples
n=902 respondents gave relevant examples

Some Negative Information is Clearly False But not All

% of respondents giving examples of false information in which vaccines are harmful, among adults sharing examples of false information

89% VACCINE SAFETY

Vaccines are not safe

Vaccines allow the government to track the population	27%
Vaccines can cause autism	24%
Vaccines have severe side effects or cause adverse events/illness, or harm outweighs good	23%
Vaccines cause death or carry a high risk of death	11%
Vaccines negatively affect the reproductive system (including in pregnancy)	8%
Vaccines give people the virus or contain live virus	6%
Vaccines are generally unsafe	4%
Vaccines change DNA	3%
Ingredients are unsafe or bad	2%
Vaccines are not adequately tested	2%

16% VACCINE EFFECTIVENESS

Vaccines do not work or are unnecessary because they do not work

Vaccines are not effective or do not work	11%
Vaccines are unnecessary or unhelpful	3%
Vaccines are a placebo, fake, or hoax	3%

Data from forthcoming paper accepted by *Health Security*, n=634 gave examples that vaccines are harmful as false information they have heard

One Third Reference Positive Information as False

***Among those who gave examples of false information that they had heard,
% providing statements suggesting...***

**Vaccines are harmful, implying that they
actually believe vaccines are beneficial**

71%

**Vaccines beneficial, implying that they
actually believe that vaccines are harmful**

31%



n=902

Data from forthcoming paper accepted by *Health Security*,
Percentages add to 102% because respondents were allowed to give multiple
examples and some respondents gave both harmful and beneficial examples

Safety and Effectiveness are Common Positive False Claims – Often Focused on Extreme Statements

% of respondents giving examples of false information in which vaccines are beneficial, among adults sharing examples of false information

30% VACCINE SAFETY

Vaccines are safe

Vaccines are generally safe	20%
Vaccines have no/mild side effects; no adverse effects; don't cause illness	11%
Vaccines are adequately tested	2%

75% VACCINE EFFECTIVENESS

Vaccines work or are necessary because they work

Vaccines are effective / protect the person getting vaccinated	59%
Vaccines stop transmission / prevent disease spread / protect others	13%
Vaccines are generally helpful or necessary	13%

Data from forthcoming paper accepted by *Health Security*, n=282 gave examples that vaccines are beneficial as false information they have heard

Key Implications

Recognize the complexity of the concept of misinformation and consider related wording carefully

- **Avoid language and framing that may inadvertently shame or disrespect those who spread misinformation**
- **Avoid blanket positive statements and acknowledge risks in context**
- **Set expectations about effectiveness**

People Don't Think They are in the Target Market for Vaccines

July 2023

Funded by the CDC through a cooperative agreement with ASTHO

Perceived Personal COVID Risk Status

% saying, if they got COVID-19, they would be at high risk of getting very sick

Yes, would be at high risk



No



n=1430

Majority in High-Risk Groups Don't Identify as High-Risk

% saying, if they got COVID-19, they would be at high risk of getting very sick



Medical conditions question wording: "Have you been told by a doctor or health professional that you have any of the following medical conditions: A serious heart, lung, kidney, or brain condition; a mental health condition; substance use disorder; cancer; diabetes; obesity or overweight; sickle-cell disease; tuberculosis; or decreased immunity?"

Age 65 and older n=336;
Have underlying medical condition(s) n=595

Key Implications

People who are eligible for vaccines may not understand standardized messaging when framed around high-risk

- **Find motivations that connect with how they DO feel and identify**
- **Align more age-inclusive and health-inclusive images with language describing eligible groups**

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