

Most Americans unhappy with U.S. vaccine rollout, poll shows

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As the United States enters a critical phase of its national coronavirus

vaccination campaign, a new poll shows that two-thirds of Americans are frustrated with how hard it is to get immunized against COVID-19.

The Gallup Poll, released Wednesday morning, comes as health officials across the country are desperately juggling precious [vaccine doses](#) so they can put second shots into the arms of those who have had their first dose, while still getting first shots to eligible Americans.

In the poll, 66 percent of Americans were dissatisfied with the handling of the vaccine rollout, including 21 percent who were "very dissatisfied," according to the survey of 4,098 adults conducted between Jan. 25 and Jan. 31. The effort, hampered by long lines and vaccine shortages, has frustrated many people eligible for immunization, including health-care workers and seniors, as some have been unable to book appointments, the *Washington Post* reported.

But a heartening sign also emerged: Despite the frustration, the same survey found an increase in interest to get the vaccine, with 71 percent of Americans now willing to be vaccinated, up from 65 percent in late December, the *Post* reported.

One of the most common reasons people gave for feeling reluctant was concern about the rushed timeline. Twenty-two percent said they want to wait for more people to get vaccinated to confirm it is safe. But 28 percent cited other reasons, including theories that concern about the virus is overblown or they already have antibodies because of previous COVID-19 infection.

The results may reflect lingering worries from the Trump administration's initial rollout of vaccines, according to Gallup, as Biden and other Democrats have campaigned to convince Americans the approved vaccines are safe and effective.

While Americans in both political parties have increasingly expressed their willingness to get the vaccine, Democrats surveyed were far more likely to want to get vaccinated. Ninety-one percent of Democrats said they were willing to be immunized, and about 51 percent of Republicans said the same—the highest percentages to date for either group, the *Post* reported.

FDA approves emergency use of second antibody cocktail

On Tuesday, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved the emergency use of a second antibody cocktail for treating COVID-19 infection.

The approval of the treatment, which combines two monoclonal antibody drugs and is made by Eli Lilly, gives doctors another option for patients with COVID-19 who are not sick enough to be hospitalized but are at high risk of becoming seriously ill. Such therapies received a boost under President Donald Trump when he and several other politicians took them while sick with COVID-19, but the drugs have not been widely available, *The New York Times* reported,

The therapy combines the company's drug known as bamlanivimab—which was authorized in November and is being used for high-risk COVID-19 patients—with a second drug known as etesevimab. Both consist of artificially synthesized copies of the antibodies generated naturally when an immune system fights off infection.

Another monoclonal antibody combination therapy, made by Regeneron, is also authorized for emergency use in the United States.

In clinical trial results released last month, high-risk patients with COVID-19 who were given Eli Lilly's cocktail were significantly less likely to end up hospitalized than those who received a placebo. No patients who were given the antibody treatment died.

The combination therapy must be given via an intravenous infusion. On Tuesday, the FDA also said that bamlanivimab alone could now be infused for a period as short as 16 minutes, down from an hour when the therapy was first authorized, the *Times* reported.

That long infusion time is one reason that monoclonal antibody drugs have not been more widely used. But some hospitals have also been too overwhelmed to prioritize the drugs, the *Times* reported. And some doctors have been hesitant to embrace them, saying that they want to see more evidence from clinical trials supporting the drug's use.

British COVID variant spreading rapidly across U.S.

The highly contagious coronavirus variant that drove Britain into lockdown in December is now spreading quickly across the United States, a new study shows.

What has been dubbed the B.1.1.7 variant is doubling its prevalence every nine days in this country, according to a report posted on the preprint server MedRxiv this week and not yet peer-reviewed or published in a journal. The findings, from a large collaboration of scientists, buttresses a forecast issued last month by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that showed the variant becoming dominant in this country by late March.

The researchers scrutinized genomic analyses of the virus samples from 10 states, including from 212 infections involving the variant, and concluded that the variant has been 35% to 45% more transmissible than

other variants in the United States.

"It is here, it's got its hooks deep into this country, and it's on its way to very quickly becoming the dominant lineage," study co-author Michael Worobey, an evolutionary biologist at the University of Arizona, told the *Post*.

In the study, Florida stands out as the state with the highest estimated prevalence of the variant. The new report estimated the doubling time of B.1.1.7 prevalence in positive test results at just over nine days.

Florida leads the nation in reported B.1.1.7 cases, with 343 as of Wednesday, followed by much more populous California with 156, according to the CDC. A total of 932 cases have been reported in 34 states, according to the CDC.

Mary Jo Trepka, an epidemiologist at Florida International University, told the *Post* she is not surprised by the spread of the variant in Florida, because the state has not been strict about mask mandates or other restrictions, while at the same time it is a hub for international travel.

"The message is that we have to work harder to prevent transmission of all these cases of COVID," she said. "If we don't, we'll potentially see more variants. We need to get everybody vaccinated and we need to do a much better job at preventing transmission."

The variant first appeared in genomic surveys in the United Kingdom in September, but did not get tagged as a "variant of concern" until early December when its rapid spread stunned scientists and prompted lockdowns in southern England.

"What concerns me is the exponential growth in the early stages doesn't look very fast," Andrew Noymer, an epidemiologist at the University of

California, Irvine, who was not part of the new study, told the *Post*. "It kind of putzes along—and then goes boom."

U.S. [health officials](#) say they are in a race against time to increase the number of Americans vaccinated as more contagious variants of the virus spread across America. By Wednesday, more than 43.2 million Americans had been vaccinated, while nearly 62.9 million doses have been distributed. Just over 9.8 million people have had their second shot, according to the CDC.

A global scourge

By Wednesday, the U.S. coronavirus case count passed 27.2 million while the death toll passed 468,000, according to a *Times* tally. On Wednesday, the top five states for coronavirus infections were: California with over 3.4 million cases; Texas with more than 2.5 million cases; Florida with nearly 1.8 million cases; New York with nearly 1.5 million cases; and Illinois with over 1.1 million cases.

Curbing the spread of the coronavirus in the rest of the world remains challenging.

In India, the [coronavirus](#) case count was more than 10.8 million by Wednesday, a Johns Hopkins University tally showed. Brazil had over 9.6 million cases and more than 233,500 deaths as of Wednesday, the Hopkins tally showed.

Worldwide, the number of reported infections passed 106.9 million on Wednesday, with over 2.3 million deaths recorded, according to the Hopkins tally.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on the [new coronavirus](#).

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