

Poll finds herd immunity in U.S. possible by summer

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Seventy percent of American adults could be vaccinated by this summer,

a new poll suggests.

The [survey results](#) bode well for the country and likely mean that President Joe Biden's goal of 70 percent vaccine coverage for adults by July 4 will be reached.

The Kaiser Family Foundation's latest survey found 62 percent of respondents said they had received at least one dose of a vaccine, up from 56 percent in April. Even better, about a third of those had taken the stance of "wait-and-see" said they had already made vaccine appointments or planned to do so soon.

Vaccine expert Dr. William Schaffner, medical director of the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases, was heartened by the results.

"I think there are many people who were on the fence who were worried about things moving too rapidly and about possible side effects, but those concerns are being allayed as they see more of their friends and acquaintances celebrating getting vaccinated," Schaffner told *The New York Times*.

"They're getting that growing sense of comfort and reassurance that 'people like me' are getting vaccinated," which is essential to instilling confidence in the vaccines, he said.

Schaffner said he thought Biden's July vaccination goal was possible. But, "we have to work harder," he said.

The greatest increase in vaccination rates from April to May were seen among two important groups: Latino adults (47% to 57%) and adults without college degrees (48% to 55%).

But more good news was to be found in the poll: Forty percent of parents

of adolescents said their child had already gotten at least one dose or would be getting one soon. On May 10, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration authorized the Pfizer vaccine for children ages 12 and older.

But parents of younger children were more guarded, with only about a quarter expressing a willingness to get their children vaccinated as soon as the shots become authorized for them, the poll found.

While public health experts acknowledged the continuing improvement in vaccination rates, they noted that it meant the pool of willing adults was shrinking.

"At this point, there's almost no low-hanging fruit, but there's a path toward a slow-but-steady increase in vaccination rates through improved access, information, persuasion and incentives," said Drew Altman, president and CEO of the Kaiser Family Foundation.

The telephone survey of 1,526 adults was conducted in English and Spanish from May 18 through May 25.

FDA OKs third COVID antibody treatment

A third antibody treatment designed to keep high-risk COVID-19 patients from winding up in the hospital was approved for emergency use by the FDA on Wednesday.

Importantly, in lab tests the newly authorized drug, dubbed sotrovimab, neutralized the highly infectious virus variant that is crippling India, as well as variants first spotted in Britain, South Africa, Brazil, California and New York.

"With the authorization of this monoclonal antibody treatment, we are

providing another option to help keep high-risk patients with COVID-19 out of the hospital," Dr. Patrizia Cavazzoni, director of the FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research, said in an agency news release. "It is important to expand the arsenal of monoclonal antibody therapies that are expected to retain activity against the circulating variants of COVID-19 in the United States."

Developed by GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), in concert with the American company Vir Biotechnology Inc., the drug should become available to Americans "in the coming weeks," company officials said in a statement.

"Sotrovimab is a critical new treatment option in the fight against the current pandemic and potentially for future coronavirus outbreaks as well," said George Scangos, Vir's chief executive.

Recently, the federal government paused shipments of Eli Lilly's antibody cocktail to eight states because of the high prevalence there of the variants first seen in South Africa and Brazil, the *Times* reported. Lab experiments have suggested that those variants can resist Lilly's treatment. (Regeneron's antibody cocktail appears to neutralize the variants, based on lab tests.)

GSK and Vir's treatment is a single drug, designed to mimic the antibodies generated when the immune system fights off the coronavirus. Its emergency use authorization was based on a study of 583 volunteers who had started experiencing symptoms within the previous five days. The study found that those who got the GSK-Vir treatment showed an 85 percent reduction in their risk of hospitalization or death, compared with those who got a placebo.

Even as vaccination numbers rise and infection rates fall in the United States, the antibody treatments are likely to remain an important tool for preventing bad outcomes in high-risk patients, the *Times* said.

Last week, the FDA broadened the criteria that doctors can use to determine eligibility for antibody treatments, the *Times* reported. That opens the door for more young people with certain medical conditions and members of high-risk racial or ethnic groups to get the treatments.

"Ultimately, it gives prescribers a lot of latitude in what they can give this for," Dr. Walid F. Gellad, who directs the Center for Pharmaceutical Policy and Prescribing at the University of Pittsburgh, told the *Times*.

Fully vaccinated in U.S. Hits 50%

Half of America's adults are now fully vaccinated against the new coronavirus, U.S. officials announced Tuesday.

"This is a major milestone in our country's vaccination efforts," White House senior COVID-19 adviser Andy Slavitt said during a White House media briefing, noting that only 1% of Americans were vaccinated when President Joe Biden entered office in January.

Biden has said there will be enough vaccines for every American adult by the end of this month, and all people aged 12 and up are now eligible to receive a shot. At least 25 states, plus Washington, D.C., have now fully vaccinated at least half of their adult residents, *CNN* reported.

At least 70% to 85% of the U.S. population will need to have immunity to COVID-19 to reach the threshold of protection needed to limit the virus' spread, health experts have said. Vaccinating children, teens and young adults could help officials reach that percentage, while leaving the young unvaccinated could give the virus a chance to spread, mutate and develop a strain resistant to existing vaccines, *CNN* reported.

Vaccinating children and adolescents will also help schools reopen more safely in the fall.

As the promising vaccination numbers were released, the head of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offered a mix of hope and caution as Americans prepare to celebrate Memorial Day weekend, the traditional beginning of summer with friends and family.

"If you are vaccinated, you are protected, and you can enjoy your Memorial Day," Dr. Rochelle Walensky said during the White House media briefing. "If you are not vaccinated, our guidance has not changed for you, you remain at risk of infection. You still need to mask and take other precautions."

The holiday arrives amid a national decline in coronavirus cases, hospitalizations and deaths. All across the country, mask mandates are easing, restrictions are lifting and many states have gone back to business as usual, the *Times* reported.

After countless Memorial Day events were scuttled last year because of the pandemic, vaccinated Americans may be looking forward to crowded beaches and packed backyard barbecues, Walensky acknowledged.

But she also urged those who remain unvaccinated to add a new activity to their Memorial Day rituals. "I want to encourage you to take this holiday weekend to give yourself and your family the gift of protection by getting vaccinated," she said. "We are on a good downward path, but we are not quite out of the woods yet."

As of Friday, 132.7 million Americans were fully vaccinated and 62% of adults had received at least one dose, according to the CDC. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration also recently approved the Pfizer vaccine for adolescents ages 12 to 15.

As of Friday, the U.S. coronavirus case count passed 33.2 million, while

the death toll passed 593,000, according to a tally from Johns Hopkins University. Worldwide, more than 169 million cases had been reported by Friday, with over 3.5 million people dead from COVID-19.

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

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