

Support for school vaccination requirements edges up, but some resistance remains

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New survey results from a consortium of universities that includes Northwestern, Harvard, Northeastern and Rutgers reveal a slight increase in Americans who support vaccination requirements. Overall, there was

a 4-percentage point rise from 54% to 58% since February and the growth holds across gender, race and ethnicity and income levels.

While young children cannot get vaccinated yet, the FDA is [expected](#) to approve Pfizer's COVID-19 [vaccine](#) for adolescents 12 to 15 years old, which is likely to have an impact on school policies.

"This will stimulate a lot of discussion about vaccine requirements," said political scientist James Druckman, the Payson S. Wild Professor of Political Science in the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences and associate director of the Institute for Policy Research at Northwestern. He is one of the researchers investigating Americans' attitudes about COVID-19.

"Many colleges have debated whether to require student vaccinations and now those debates are bound to occur with regard to secondary schools," Druckman said.

Between April 1 and May 3, Druckman and his colleagues surveyed 21,733 individuals across the country about their attitudes on childhood vaccinations. The report shows how likely [parents](#) are to get their children vaccinated and whether they support vaccination requirements before their children return to in-person learning, as well as what students think about getting vaccinated.

Vaccine Requirements in Schools

The researchers point out differences in support for requirements may foreshadow where vaccination requirements are likely to occur: 76% of Democrats support them versus only 38% of Republicans, and those in cities (66%) are more likely to be in favor of them than those in suburban (56%) and [rural areas](#) (49%). Since states and local municipalities typically determine school policies, school districts in

urban areas and Democratic-leaning states are more likely to implement vaccination requirements than those in rural and Republican-leaning states.

"This would result in the continued uneven national trend that we have seen throughout COVID-19, with Democratic-leaning areas taking more precautions than Republican ones," Druckman said.

There were also differences between parents and those without children. Mothers were less likely to support requirements than other women, while fathers were more likely to support vaccination requirements than men without children.

However, among both parents and nonparents, overall support grew 4 percentage points since February.

Hispanic and Black Americans are more supportive of requirements, too. Support among Hispanics grew 7 percentage points, from 57% to 64%, while support among Black Americans grew 5 percentage points, from 58% to 63%.

Attitudes Toward Vaccinating Children

Meanwhile, parents' attitudes toward vaccinating children have widened since February in terms of their educational backgrounds, incomes and political affiliations.

Parents who have become more resistant to vaccinating their children earn less than \$25,000 per year, identify as Republican, and do not have a college degree. Parents who are less resistant to vaccinating their children are college-educated, higher earners and identify as Democrats.

Additionally, resistance among high-earning parents dropped

considerably, from 9% to 5%, while it grew the most among those earning less than \$25,000, from 28% to 35%.

The gap between [mothers](#) and fathers grew slightly because resistance among fathers fell from 14% in February to 11% in April. There was no change in mothers' resistance, which remains at 27%.

Other highlights include:

- Young mothers between the ages of 18 and 35 are more resistant to vaccinating their children: 31% of these younger mothers and 25% of mothers 36 years and older said they were extremely unlikely to vaccinate their children.
- Parents of teenagers ages 13 to 17 are less resistant and more supportive of school vaccination requirements: Among mothers of teenagers, 25% indicate resistance and 50% support vaccination requirements. Among mothers of infants and preschoolers, 30% said they were resistant and 43% supported requirements. Fathers are generally less resistant and more supportive of requirements.
- Resistance toward vaccinating [children](#) has not increased among racial or [ethnic groups](#): Asian American parents are still the least resistant (8%), while resistance among white, Hispanic and Black parents continues to hover around 20%.
- One in five young adults between the ages of 18 and 21 are vaccine resistant: In terms of race and ethnicity, Asian American adolescents, like their parents, are the least resistant to getting a vaccine. In terms of political leanings, more Republican youth are vaccine resistant, but their overall resistance fell from 41% in February to 32% by April.

Previous surveys can be found [here](#).

More information: The COVID States Project #49: Vaccinating America's youth: osf.io/stacj/

Provided by Northwestern University

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