

US to miss July 4 goal of one Covid shot for 70% of adults: W.House

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The US government won't meet its goal of administering one or more doses of a COVID vaccine to 70 percent of US adults by July 4, White House COVID response team coordinator Jeffrey Zients conceded

Tuesday.

But he said President Joe Biden's administration had "succeeded beyond our highest expectations" in returning the nation to a pre-pandemic normal, as the infection rate has plummeted and large gatherings of vaccinated people are now considered safe.

"We think it'll take a few extra weeks to get to 70 percent of all adults with at least one shot," Zients told reporters in a briefing.

As of Tuesday, 65.4 percent of over-18s had received one or more doses of the Pfizer, Moderna or Johnson & Johnson shots.

Seventy percent of over-30s nationally have received one or more shots, and 70 percent of over-27s are expected to be partially vaccinated by July 4, the day the United States commemorates its Declaration of Independence.

Nationwide, the vaccination rate has been declining since April when it hit a peak average of 3.4 million daily shots. The latest average is around 850,000 daily shots.

Adult immunization rates vary greatly by state. The Northeast has some of the highest uptake, with Vermont leading the charge at 84 percent partially vaccinated and 75 percent fully vaccinated.

The bottom of the table is dominated by states in the South, with Mississippi covering just 45 percent of adults with one shot and 37 percent with two.

According to nationally representative surveys carried out by the Kaiser Family Foundation, unvaccinated adults are significantly younger, less educated, more likely to be Republicans, people of color and uninsured.

'Crushing the outbreak'

Even so, the country is registering its fewest cases since the pandemic began, as a result of current levels of vaccination, people who have gained a degree of immunity from past infection, as well as seasonality associated with the virus.

The pathogen survives longer in cold and dry weather, and transmits more readily indoors.

The latest seven-day-average is around 10,000 new infections—just three per 100,000 people. Daily deaths are at around 270 on average, or 0.1 per 100,000.

"Instead of just small backyard gatherings, America is getting ready for a truly historic Fourth of July, with large celebrations planned in communities across the country," said Zients.

He added the White House was preparing for an outdoor party with 1,000 [military personnel](#) and frontline workers to celebrate the upcoming holiday.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) lifted its masking recommendations for vaccinated people in May—making the US among the first countries to do so—and the policy appears to have been vindicated so far.

Still, officials remain deeply concerned about unvaccinated people who remain vulnerable.

"Nearly every death, especially among adults, due to COVID-19, is at this point entirely preventable" said CDC director Rochelle Walensky, emphasizing that vaccines are close to 100 percent effective against

death and against severe cases of COVID.

The July 4 target of 70 percent "is not the [goal line](#), nor is it the end game," added Anthony Fauci, Biden's chief medical advisor on the pandemic.

"The end game is to go well beyond that, beyond July 4 into the summer and beyond, with the ultimate goal of crushing the outbreak completely in the United States."

Epidemiologists are also worried about the rise of the Delta variant, which is more transmissible than past strains and badly hit India, Britain and other countries. It now accounts for at least 20 percent of US cases.

Current vaccines remain highly effective against the variant if a person is fully vaccinated, but there are fears that undervaccinated parts of the country could incubate fresh surges.

Fauci said these spikes would likely remain localized and not close to the same magnitude of the three major waves the United States has experienced since the spring of 2020.

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