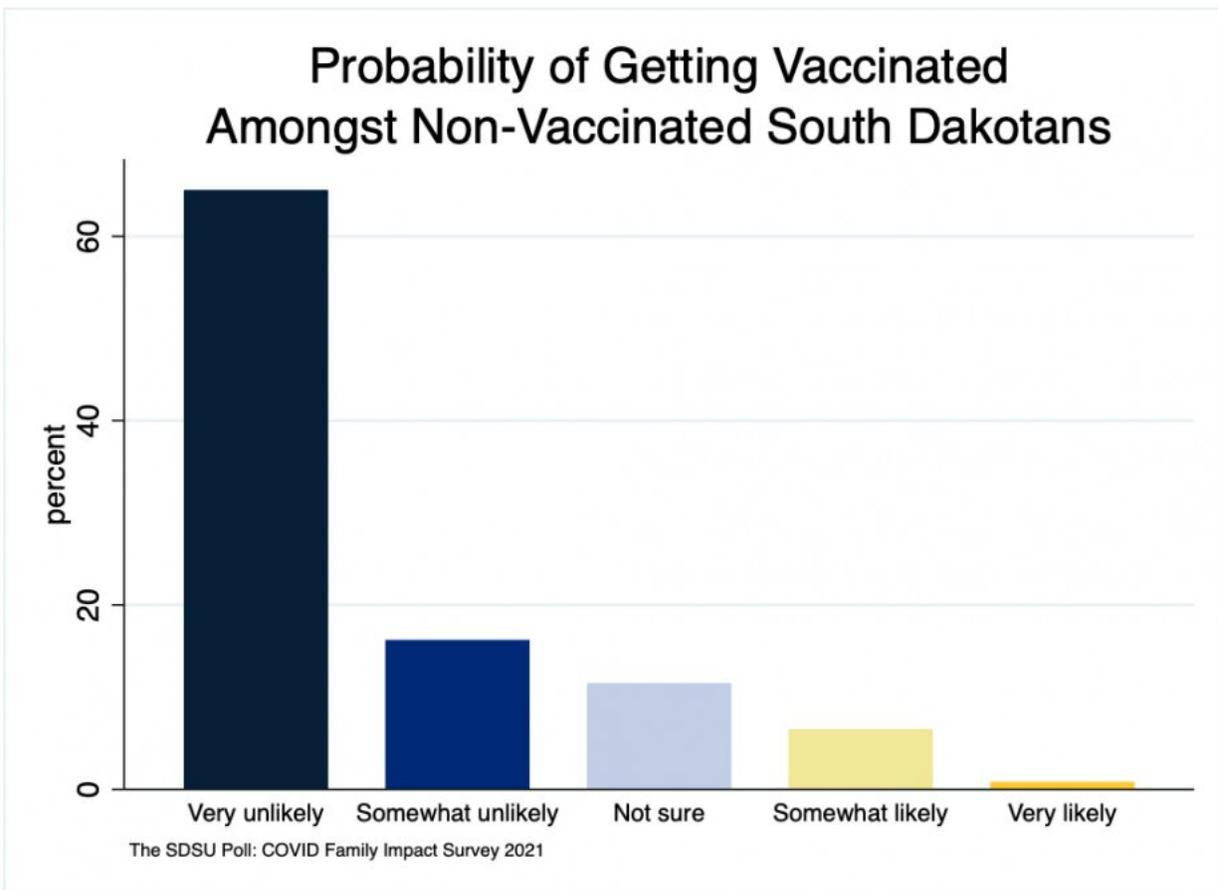


# South Dakotans remain strongly polarized on getting vaccinated

September 9 2021



Vaccinated South Dakotans are very likely to get booster shots. Credit: South Dakota State University

The South Dakota COVID-19 Family Impact Survey 2021 was

conducted from July 31st to August 14th, 2021 by The SDSU Poll, a research group housed in the School of American and Global Studies at South Dakota State University. This survey builds upon similar surveys conducted by The SDSU Poll in October 2020 and April 2021. In this poll, a total of 573 registered voters in South Dakota answered questions about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their daily lives. The margin of error of this survey was +/- 4 %, on par with other state-wide polls.

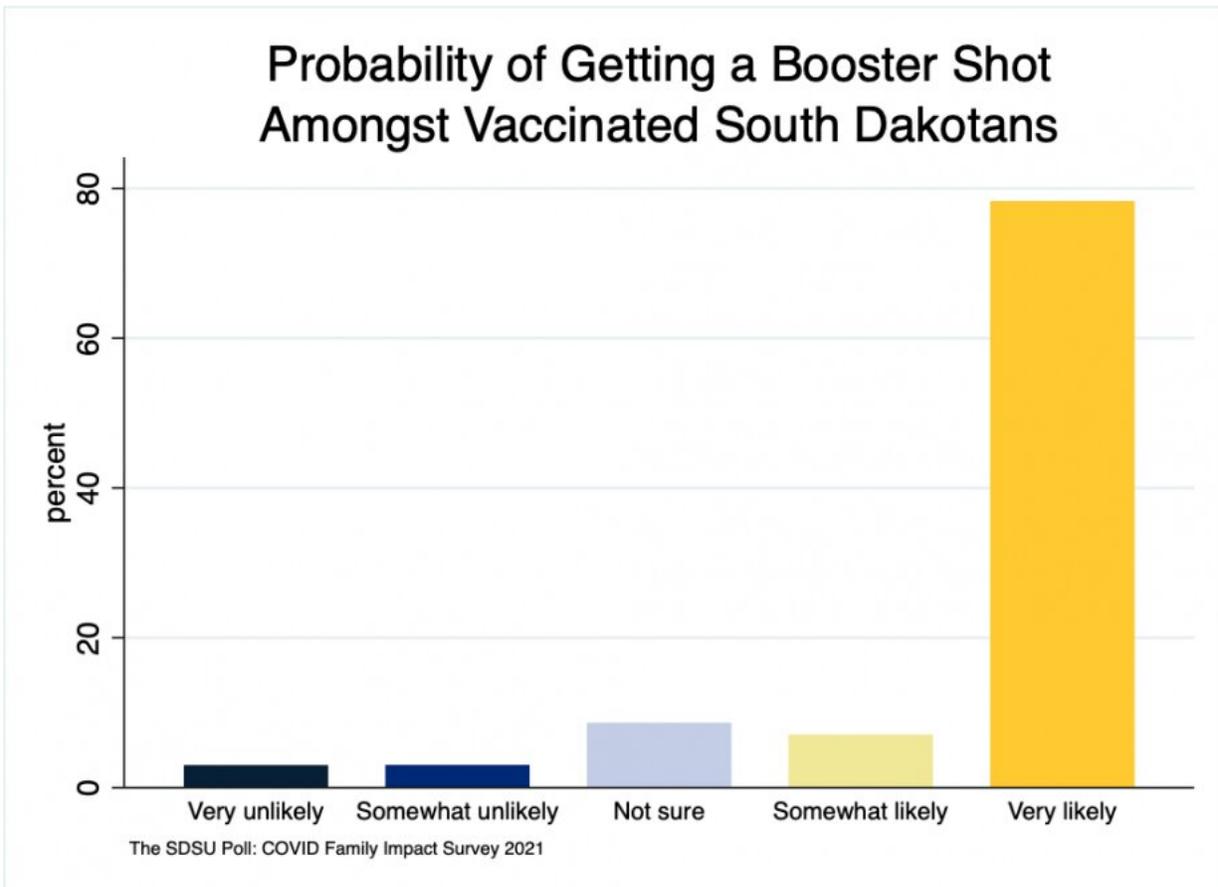
## **Unvaccinated South Dakotans Display Strong Vaccine Hesitancy**

COVID-19 vaccination became a divisive issue in South Dakota, as well as in the entire country. Despite a wide availability of vaccines that experts consider safe and effective, a sizable portion of the population has not yet been vaccinated. The data provided by the South Dakota Department of Health indicate that only about 60% of the adult population has been vaccinated.

We asked the unvaccinated respondents in our survey about their likelihood getting vaccination; 65% responded that they are "very unlikely" and 16% that they are "somewhat unlikely" to receive vaccination. About 8% said they were "somewhat likely" or "very likely" to get vaccinated. Just over 11% said they were "not sure." These findings underscore the strong sense of [vaccine](#) hesitancy in South Dakota.

Public health experts believe that approximately 70-80% of the population needs to be vaccinated to reach "herd immunity" and to bring the pandemic under control. Convincing the unvaccinated proportion of the population will not be an easy task. We have previously reported that [religious leaders](#) might play a crucial role in

encouraging the unvaccinated segment of the population to receive a COVID-19 vaccine.

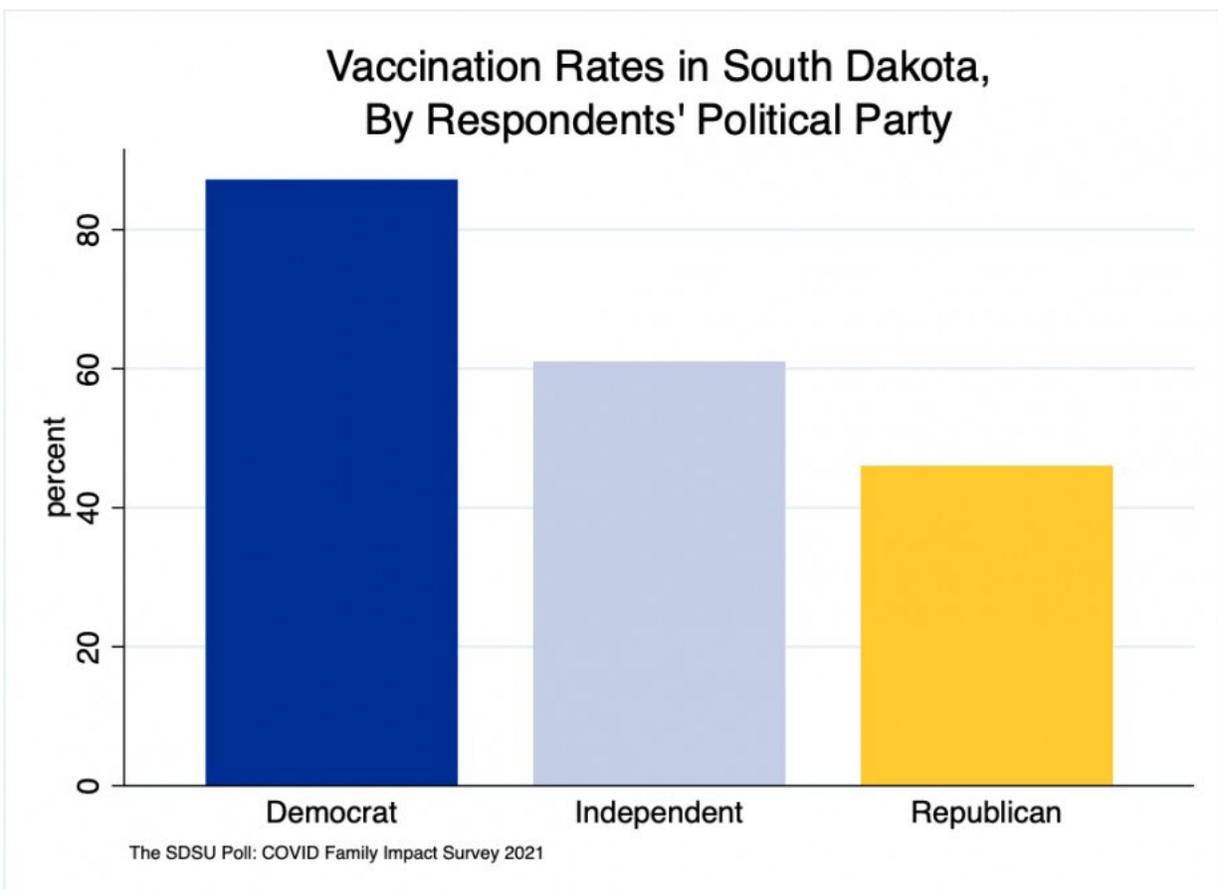


The partisan polarization of vaccinations. Credit: South Dakota State University

The emergence of new and highly contagious virus mutations, such as the delta variant, threaten to prolong the pandemic. Experts believe that even those who are fully vaccinated might need a booster shot approximately eight months after initial vaccination.

The Biden administration announced a plan to start offering booster

shots as of September 20th. We asked South Dakotans who had already been vaccinated how likely they are to receive a booster shot once available. Amongst these people, 85% said that it is "very likely" or "somewhat likely" they will get a booster shot. Only 6% mentioned that they are either "somewhat unlikely" or "very unlikely" to get the booster shot, and about 9% were "not sure." Put differently: In for a dime, in for a dollar.



Credit: South Dakota State University

The results from our survey illustrate in a painful way the divisions

among South Dakotans on vaccination. On the one hand, a majority of the population has received COVID-19 vaccination, yet a large minority has expressed strong reluctance to get vaccinated. Vaccine hesitancy is a complex issue that has many causes but it is without a doubt that the politicization of the pandemic is one of the main culprits.

The divisions between Democratic and Republican parties on COVID-19 mitigation efforts began shortly after state and federal governments took sharp actions in March of 2020. The national framing and debate on COVID-19 more broadly has clearly shaped South Dakotans' attitudes towards the pandemic and mitigation measures, especially vaccination. The figure below illustrates that 87% of Democrats in South Dakota are vaccinated, compared to 61% of independents, and 46% of Republicans.

These results show that vaccination rates have gone up slightly for both Democrats and Republicans in South Dakota between now and our April survey; an increase of 6 and 7 points, respectively. The results for Independents are quite striking, as they have shot up by 18 points in the intervening four months.

In many regards, the attitudes and behaviors of independents about COVID-19 vaccination was more similar to Republicans than Democrats in the spring, but this clearly has shifted over the summer. We will be paying close attention to any apparent shifts in independents' attitudes and behaviors as we sort through more of our data about other COVID-19 attitudes in the coming weeks.

Provided by South Dakota State University

Citation: South Dakotans remain strongly polarized on getting vaccinated (2021, September 9) retrieved 6 May 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-09-south-dakotans-strongly-polarized-vaccinated.html>

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