

# Desire to travel increases likelihood of COVID-19 vaccination, study says

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Wanderlust can be a powerful motivator in people's decision to get vaccinated against COVID-19, a new study from Washington State University says.

People with a strong desire to [travel](#) are less likely to express concern about the [vaccine](#)'s potential side effects or long-term complications and more likely to say they would get vaccinated, according to a survey of U.S. residents.

"Many people consider travel an essential part of their lifestyle and a contributor to their sense of well-being," said Dogan Gursoy, Taco Bell Distinguished Professor in Hospitality Business Management at the WSU Carson College of Business. "They'll weigh the value of travel experiences they might miss by not being vaccinated against the vaccines' possible risks."

Even if they think COVID-19 vaccines pose risks, they still may be willing to get vaccinated, he said.

Gursoy is the lead author on the research published in *Tourism Management*, which also involved Jessica Murray, a WSU School of Hospitality Business Management doctoral student, and U.K. research collaborators at the University of Portsmouth.

The findings about travel desire were part of the study's larger look at how messaging influences people's intentions related to the COVID-19 vaccine. In the survey, researchers found that emotional, loss-based appeals were most persuasive in changing people's intent to get vaccinated.

Some popular tourism destinations, such as the European Union, require a digital COVID certificate for unrestricted travel that verifies vaccination status, a negative COVID test or recovery from the illness. However, the study's findings about travel desire and vaccination intention were true even for people who didn't have upcoming vacations plans or business trips, the authors said.

"We define travel desire as a yearning to travel," Gursoy said. "It describes people's longing to escape from their everyday environment, see new places and have new experiences."

Researchers surveyed 1,021 U.S. residents who rated their travel desire on a five-point scale. Survey respondents with the highest travel desire also had the highest COVID-19 vaccination intentions, the study found.

Even among 266 [survey respondents](#) who previously said they wouldn't get vaccinated, a strong travel desire moderated vaccine hesitancy when paired with messages about the vaccines' safety and what individuals could lose by not getting vaccinated against COVID-19. The loss-based messages emphasized the risks of not taking protective action, including spreading the virus to loved ones.

Since early 2020, Gursoy has spearheaded efforts to track the pandemic's effect on the hospitality and tourism industries. About 5,000 people have answered questions about vaccines in the past surveys, and about 30% consistently say they won't get the COVID-19 vaccine.

Gursoy said the current study's findings could aid the travel and tourism industry's economic recovery.

"Appealing to people's longing for a vacation getaway could help overcome their vaccine hesitancy," he said, "Resulting in higher vaccination rates and reductions in COVID-related travel restrictions and advisories."

**More information:** Dogan Gursoy et al, Effectiveness of message framing in changing COVID-19 vaccination intentions: Moderating role of travel desire, *Tourism Management* (2021). [DOI: 10.1016/j.tourman.2021.104468](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2021.104468)

Provided by Washington State University

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