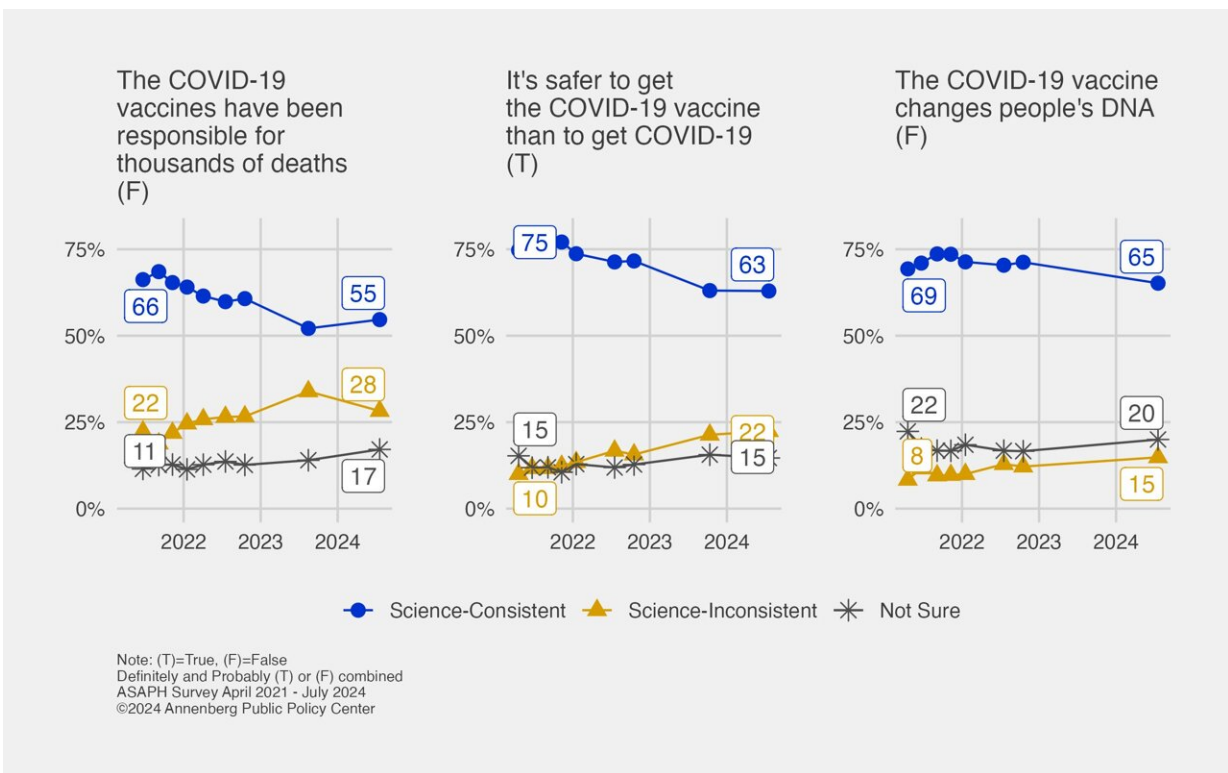


More in U.S. accept COVID-19 vaccine misinformation, and willingness to vaccinate has declined

August 28 2024



From 2021-2024, increases have been seen in acceptance of COVID-19 vaccine misinformation, and declines in science-consistent beliefs. Source: Annenberg Science and Public Health (ASAPH) knowledge surveys from 2021-2024. Credit: Annenberg Public Policy Center

With the nation in the midst of a summer surge of COVID-19 infections and increased hospitalizations due to the disease, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) last week approved updated COVID vaccines to protect Americans six months and older against the deadly virus. But Annenberg Public Policy Center (APPC) health survey data finds that the number of Americans believing COVID-19 vaccination misinformation has risen and their willingness to take or recommend vaccination against COVID-19 is lower than in the past.

The 2024 waves of the Annenberg Science and Public Health (ASAPH) [knowledge survey](#), a nationally representative panel survey of nearly 1,500 U.S. adults, suggest that many may be reluctant to get the updated vaccine.

Greater acceptance of COVID vaccine misinformation

. As of July 2024:

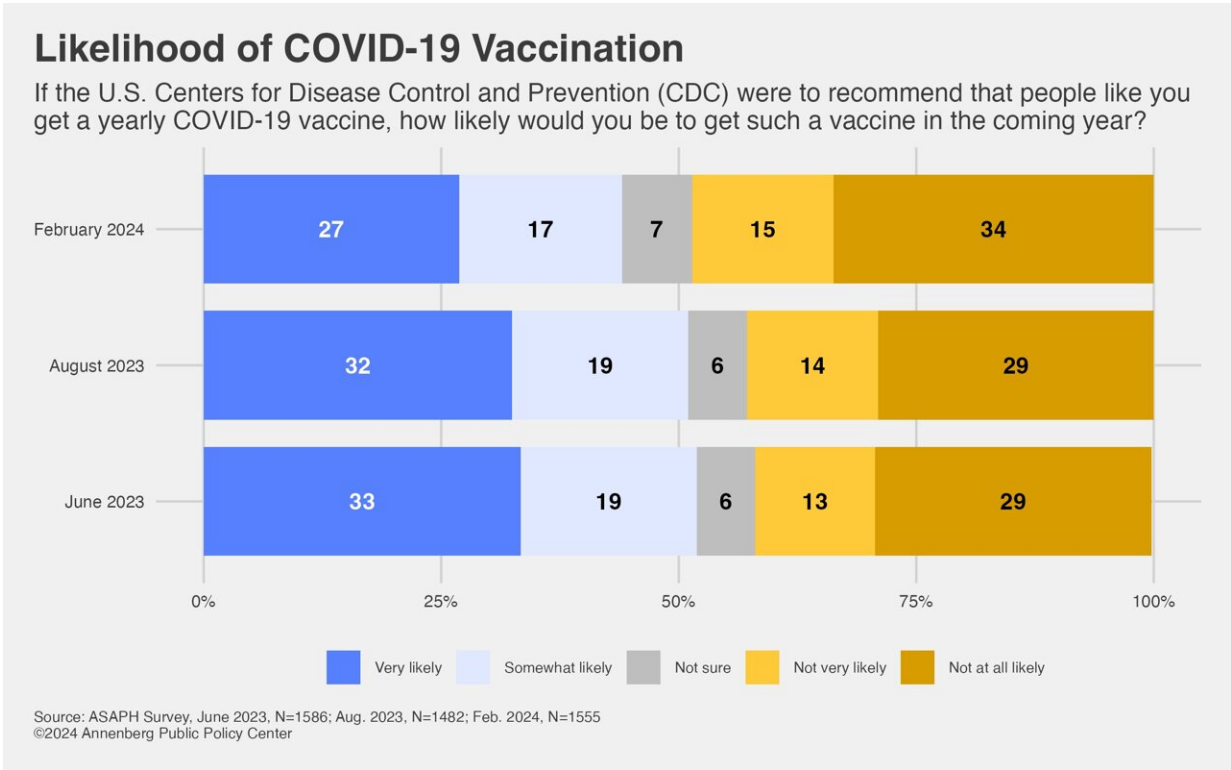
- Over a quarter of Americans (28%) incorrectly believe that the COVID-19 vaccines have been responsible for thousands of deaths, up from 22% in June 2021. The percentage who know that this is false declined from 66% to 55%.
- Over one in five Americans (22%) believe the false idea that it is safer to get a COVID-19 infection than to get the vaccine, up from 10% in April 2021, months after the life-saving vaccines were introduced.
- The percentage of Americans who incorrectly believe that the COVID-19 vaccine changes people's DNA nearly doubled to 15% from 8% in April 2021.

"Belief in these three misconceptions [is associated](#) with increased

reluctance to vaccinate," said Kathleen Hall Jamieson, director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center and director of the survey.

The policy center's ASAPH surveys also find:

- **Relatively few are worried:** Only 1 in 5 people (20%, July 2024) are somewhat or very worried they or someone in their family will contract COVID, down from 25% in February 2024 and 35% in October 2023.
- **Decreased interest:** Under half of those surveyed (44%) said in February 2024 they are "somewhat likely" or "very likely" to get a yearly COVID-19 vaccine if it is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), down from 52% in June 2023.
- **Benefits vs. risks:** Two-thirds of Americans (66% in July 2024) say the benefits of taking COVID-19 vaccines outweigh the risks—but that is lower than the percentage who say the benefits outweigh the risks for the mpox vaccine (70% in July 2024), RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) vaccine for adults 60 and older (74% in October 2023), and MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine (89% in August 2023).
- **COVID-19 vaccines are seen as less safe and effective than others:** As of our October 2023 survey, fewer people regard COVID-19 vaccines as safe (66%) and effective (65%) than a variety of other vaccines: MMR (81% safe, 83% effective); flu (81% safe, 75% effective); shingles (78% safe, 73% effective) or pneumonia (74% safe, 69% effective).



Decreasing likelihood of COVID-19 vaccination. Based on Annenberg Science and Public Health (ASAPH) knowledge surveys from June 2023-February 2024. Credit: Annenberg Public Policy Center

- A hypothetical trivalent vaccine: In July 2024, less than half of those surveyed (49%) would be likely to take a combined single-shot mRNA vaccine to protect against flu, RSV, and COVID-19 if one existed and the CDC recommended it. At the same time, 27% say they would be "not at all likely" to take such a single-shot mRNA vaccine.

"With the CDC reporting that COVID-19 infection remains an ongoing threat and an updated vaccine available, now is the time to ramp up awareness both of the value of vaccinating against COVID-19 and of the

risks of contracting the disease," Jamieson added.

The ASAPH report

The findings on COVID-19 misinformation and vaccination, measles, mpox, climate health and confidence in public health institutions are reported in the summer 2024 Annenberg Science and Public Health Knowledge Monitor, available as a free download from the Annenberg Public Policy Center.

The science and health monitor comprises survey reports that track national levels of health knowledge and misinformation over time. Building on the Annenberg Science Knowledge (ASK) surveys, which since 2016 have been focused on health knowledge and [misinformation](#) about topics such as the [Zika virus](#), measles, [COVID-19](#) and [vaccination](#), the Annenberg Science and Public Health Knowledge Monitor (ASAPH) generates indices of knowledge about such vital health topics as maternal and reproductive health, vaccination, COVID-19, monkeypox, and heat-related illness. It also provides an ongoing measure of public confidence in the CDC, FDA, and National Institutes of Health (NIH).

This third ASAPH report is based on 20 survey waves with a nationally representative sample first empaneled in April 2021, conducted for APPC by SSRS, an independent market research company. The 20th wave, with 1,496 U.S. adults, was conducted July 11-18, 2024, and has a margin of sampling error (MOE) of ± 3.6 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Some findings were previously released.

Additional findings

The latest ASAPH report also includes findings on:

- Declining flu vaccination: Fewer people say they have had a

seasonal flu shot. In mid-February 2024 at the end of flu season, 45% reported having had a seasonal flu shot, compared with 50% in January 2023. These figures are generally consistent with CDC data, which shows a decline in flu vaccination coverage to 47% in January 2024 from 50% in December 2022.

- Decline in RSV vaccine acceptance for [older adults](#): Just over half of those surveyed (55%) would be likely to recommend that a friend or family member age 60 or older talk with their health care provider about whether to get the RSV vaccine, down from 61% in August 2023.
- Many unsure of vaccines' effectiveness: Sizable numbers of respondents in 2022 and 2023 are unsure of the effectiveness of various vaccines directed at specific populations (32% are not sure about the vaccine for HPV, or human papillomavirus, aimed at young people; 23% for pneumonia and 19% for shingles, both for diseases affecting older people) and of the efficacy of getting vaccinated against RSV during pregnancy (47%) or when one is over 60 years old (37%).
- Knowledge about vaccination recommended for those who are pregnant: From June 2023 to April 2024, respondents increased their understanding of which vaccinations the CDC recommends during pregnancy. In April 2024, many knew that the CDC recommends getting vaccinated while pregnant against the seasonal flu (50%), COVID-19 (43%), and whooping cough (35%). Respondents were comparably aware of which vaccines the CDC does not recommend getting while pregnant: measles (MMR, 39%) and chickenpox (43%).

Pennsylvania

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