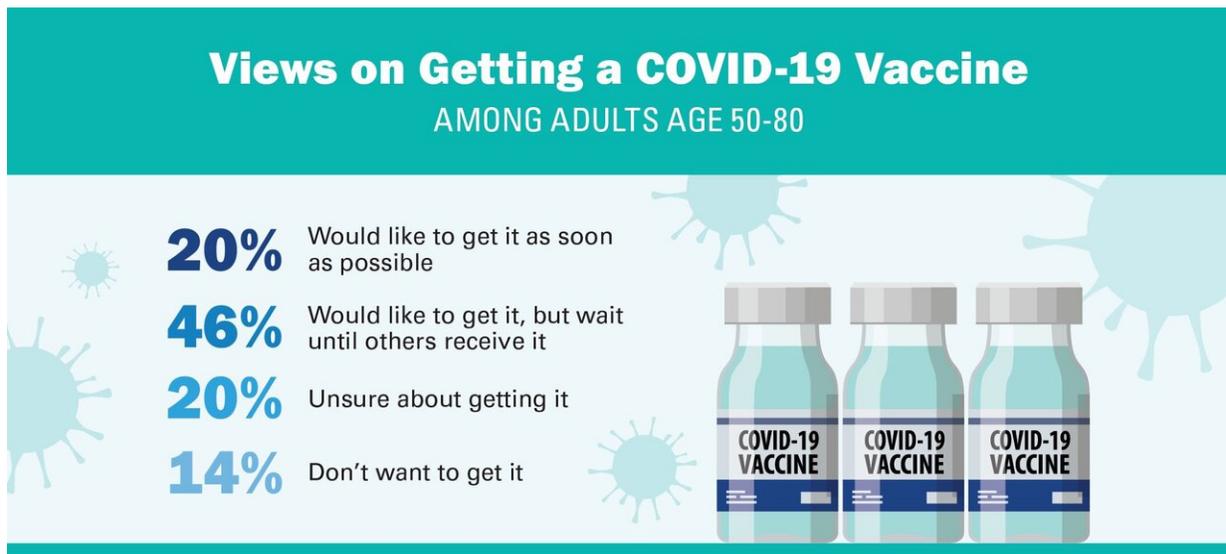


Most adults over 50 say they'll get vaccinated against COVID-19, but many want to wait

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A poll of older adults taken by the University of Michigan National Poll on Healthy Aging suggests an uphill climb ahead to get most people in the high-risk age group vaccinated against COVID-19. Credit: University of Michigan

Once enough people receive effective vaccines against the novel coronavirus, experts say, the end of the pandemic may be in sight. But a new poll of older adults—one of the highest-priority groups for vaccination—suggests an uphill climb lies ahead to reach that goal.

In all, 58% of adults aged 50 to 80 say they are somewhat or very likely

to get vaccinated to prevent COVID-19, according to [new results from the National Poll on Healthy Aging](#) from the University of Michigan.

That number went up to 66% when the [poll](#) team asked the question a different way: 20% said they'd want to get vaccinated right away when vaccines become available, but 46% said they'd rather wait for others to get vaccinated first before doing it themselves.

Women, people of color, people between 50 and 64 years old, and those with lower incomes and education levels were less likely to say they'd seek vaccination in general. Only 40% of older adults who are Black, and 51% of those who are Hispanic, said they are somewhat or very likely to get vaccinated, despite the greater risk of hospitalization and death for members of these groups if they develop COVID-19.

People over age 65, whites, men and those with higher levels of education were more likely than others to say they'd want to get vaccinated right away. One-quarter of respondents said they'd consider taking part in a [vaccine](#) clinical trial.

The new results come from a poll taken in October for U-M's Institute for Healthcare Policy and Innovation, with support from AARP and Michigan Medicine, U-M's academic medical center. The poll draws from the answers of a national sample of more than 2,000 adults aged 50 to 80.

"Effective vaccines will be crucial to getting this pandemic under control and preventing serious illness and death from COVID-19, especially among people over 50 and those with underlying [health issues](#)," says Preeti Malani, M.D., the poll's director and a specialist in geriatrics and infectious diseases at Michigan Medicine. "Our findings point to a strong need to communicate effectively and transparently about how well the vaccines work, the safeguards built in to protect the safety of recipients,

and the public [health](#) importance of widespread vaccination starting with priority groups."

Key messengers and messages

Getting out the word about the efficacy of each vaccine will be paramount, the poll suggests; 80% of respondents said that they'll consider how well a vaccine works as part of making their vaccination decision.

Health care providers will also play a critical role in talking with older adults about the vaccine, the poll suggests. Just over half of the [older adults](#) polled said their doctor's recommendation would be very important to their decision about vaccination. Just over 40% called recommendations from public health officials very important.

More than half of the respondents said their own research into information available about COVID-19 vaccines will factor into their decisions. That makes it important for the news media, government, vaccine makers, health organizations, hospitals and nonprofits to share easily understandable and accurate information about vaccines, Malani says.

This includes sharing information about any issues spotted in clinical trials, and about the safeguards in place during vaccine development. Nearly half of poll respondents said they worry about the safety of a rapidly developed vaccine.

One factor that didn't seem to make a difference in a person's inclination to be vaccinated against COVID-19 was their personal experience with the disease, either in themselves or someone they know.

Just over half of poll respondents knew someone who had had

COVID-19, and 2% said they'd been infected themselves. Nearly one in five said they knew someone who had died of COVID-19. But members of these groups were no more likely to say they'd get vaccinated.

Messaging about the cost of vaccine for consumers also appears to be important. Nearly one-third of respondents said cost was very important to their decision about vaccination.

"Any coronavirus vaccine must be FDA-authorized or approved, safe, effective and accessible. Once vaccines are available, it will be important for Americans to talk to their providers to understand which vaccine is best for them and make an informed choice, and for [public health officials](#) to monitor uptake and the impact on community health," says Alison Bryant, Ph.D., senior vice president of research for AARP.

"AARP is urging the government to be transparent about the development and authorization or approval process for any vaccines. It is also important to engage higher-risk groups, hear their concerns, and work to address them honestly and with sensitivity."

Reaching those who are on the fence about vaccination—including the 14% who are unsure, and the 11% who are somewhat unlikely to get vaccinated— will also be important.

More findings

Most poll respondents appear to agree with recommendations from public health authorities that getting a flu shot and prioritizing COVID-19 vaccine for the highest risk members of society are both good ideas.

Nearly three-quarters of respondents said they had already gotten vaccinated against the flu, or intended to. Nearly half said it was more important to get a flu shot this year than previously.

Nearly all respondents (93%) agreed it's important to prioritize giving COVID-19 vaccines to high-risk individuals. Older adults, those who work directly with the public in healthcare and other professions, and people with underlying health conditions and weak immune systems, have all been identified as possible priority groups.

More information: www.healthyagingpoll.org/

Provided by University of Michigan

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