

As Delta variant infections surge, more Americans favor vaccine mandates

5 August 2021, by Stephanie Kulke



Travelers at Reagan National Airport in Washington, D.C. Credit: IMF Photo/Cory Hancock

As infections from the delta variant surge, the percentage of Americans who support vaccine mandates has risen to 64% from 58% in April.

According to the latest poll by the COVID States Project, majorities of respondents from nearly all states approve of an overall [vaccine](#) mandate as well as specific mandates for plane travel and in-person schooling.

The poll was conducted by a university consortium that includes Northwestern, Northeastern, Harvard and Rutgers University.

"The support for mandates is higher than many realize and increasing, likely due to the spread of the delta variant and anxiety about [school](#) starting this fall," said political scientist James Druckman, one of the project researchers.

Druckman is the Payson S. Wild Professor of Political Science in the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences and associate director of the Institute for Policy Research at Northwestern.

Between June 9 and July 7, Druckman and

colleagues surveyed 20,669 individuals across all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Respondents were asked whether they approved or disapproved of four types of federal, state and local government vaccination mandates:

- an overall mandate requiring everyone to get a COVID-19 vaccine;
- required vaccinations to get on an airplane;
- required vaccinations for children to be allowed in school; and
- required vaccinations for college students to return to school

While the May report also showed strong public support for vaccine mandates, the number of Americans supporting an overall vaccine mandate has increased during each wave of the survey, from 54% in February, to 58% in April, to 64% in June. Support is also higher for specific mandates around vaccinations for flying (70%) and returning to university (66%) or school (61%).

The August report also shows a narrowing gap across nearly all partisan and demographic subgroups. But while 70% of the eligible U.S. population is now vaccinated, there remains a persistent 20% to 30% of Americans who are uncertain or unwilling to be vaccinated. Major differences were seen in terms of party affiliation and where respondents lived: Democrats were twice as likely as Republicans to approve of such mandates (84% to 45%), and [rural residents](#) were 20 percentage points less supportive of mandates than urban dwellers (73% to 53%).

"The spike from delta may be finally closing some of the partisan vaccine divide, but there is still a ways to go. Increased messaging from Republican leaders will continue to be vital," said Druckman.

More information: Matthew Baum et al, The COVID States Project #58: High public support for mandating vaccines, *OSF Preprints* (2021). [DOI:](#)

[10.31219/osf.io/6wcn9](https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/6wcn9)

Provided by Northwestern University

APA citation: As Delta variant infections surge, more Americans favor vaccine mandates (2021, August 5) retrieved 5 December 2021 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-08-delta-variant-infections-surge-americans.html>

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