Public Opinion On COVID-19 Vaccine: What Those Who Want To “Wait and See” Have to Tell Us

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The KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor is an ongoing research project tracking the public’s attitudes and experiences with COVID-19 vaccinations.

Using a combination of surveys and focus groups, this project will track the dynamic nature of public reactions as vaccine development unfolds, including vaccine confidence and hesitancy, trusted messengers and messages, as well as the public’s experiences with vaccination as distribution begins. Will include a data dashboard to highlight key data.

- Special focus on Black and Latino adults, Health care workers, Rural residents, Partisans
- Probability-based sampling, RDD cell and landline.

We are going to be flexible with what we’re asking over time and adjusting accordingly as the national narrative changes.

Goal: To provide public health, policy, advocacy and community organizations and communication experts with the in-depth data to help them meet people where they are, so individuals can make decisions that best protect themselves and their families.
Enthusiasm For COVID-19 Vaccine Growing

Have you personally received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, or not? When an FDA approved vaccine for COVID-19 is available to you for free, do you think you will…?

- **Already vaccinated**
- **Get it as soon as you can**
- **Wait and see how it’s working**
- **Get it only if required**
- **Definitely not get it**

**January 2021**
- 6% Already vaccinated
- 41% Get it as soon as you can
- 31% Wait and see how it’s working
- 7% Get it only if required
- 13% Definitely not get it

**December 2020**
- 34% Already vaccinated
- 39% Get it as soon as you can
- 9% Wait and see how it’s working
- 9% Get it only if required
- 15% Definitely not get it

NOTE: December survey did not have an option for respondents to indicate they had already been vaccinated.
Young Adults, Black Adults Most Likely To Want To “Wait And See”

Percent within each group who say, when an FDA approved vaccine for COVID-19 is available to them for free, they would **wait and see** how it is working for other people:

- Ages 18-29: 43%
- Black adults: 43%
- Hispanic adults: 37%
- Urban residents: 37%
- Republicans: 33%
- Independents: 33%
- Total: 31%
- Essential workers (non-health): 31%
- Suburban residents: 29%
- Rural residents: 27%
- Democrats: 26%
- White adults: 26%
- Ages 65 and over: 21%

### Not Monolithic Groups – Lots of Variation in Intentions

Percent who say they will get a COVID-19 vaccine:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Already gotten/As soon as possible</th>
<th>Wait and see</th>
<th>Only if required</th>
<th>Definitely not</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Black</strong></td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hispanic</strong></td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>White</strong></td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rural</strong></td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Urban</strong></td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Republicans</strong></td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Democrats</strong></td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCE:** KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor (Jan. 11-18, 2021). See topline for full question wording.
Most Who Want To “Wait And See” Worry About Getting Sick; A Majority See Vaccination As A Personal Choice

How worried, if at all, are you that you or someone in your family will get sick from the coronavirus?

- Very/Somewhat worried
- Not too/Not at all worried

Wait and See

- 64% Very/Somewhat worried
- 30% Not too/Not at all worried

As soon as possible

- 79% Very/Somewhat worried
- 17% Not too/Not at all worried

Which comes closer to your view: getting vaccinated against COVID-19 is a personal choice or is part of everyone's responsibility to protect the health of others?

- Personal choice
- Everyone's responsibility

- 54% Personal choice
- 40% Everyone's responsibility

- 21% Personal choice
- 75% Everyone's responsibility

NOTE: Among those who have not been vaccinated against COVID-19.
## CHALLENGE: Concerns Vary By Vaccine Enthusiasm

Percent who say they are **concerned** about each of the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concern</th>
<th>As soon as possible</th>
<th>Wait and see</th>
<th>Only if required</th>
<th>Definitely not</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long-term effects unknown</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Might experience serious side effects</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaccines not as effective as said to be</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaccines not as safe as said to be</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Might get COVID-19 from the vaccine</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCE:** KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor (conducted Jan. 11-18, 2021). See topline for full question wording.
Among those who want to “wait and see” how the COVID-19 vaccine is working for others, percent who say they are very or somewhat concerned about each of the following:

- **The long-term effects of the COVID-19 vaccines are unknown**
  - Black adults: 94%
  - Hispanic adults: 89%
  - White adults: 88%

- **You might experience serious side effects from the COVID-19 vaccine**
  - Black adults: 86%
  - Hispanic adults: 80%
  - White adults: 75%

- **The COVID-19 vaccines are not as safe as they are said to be**
  - Black adults: 80%
  - Hispanic adults: 79%
  - White adults: 71%

- **The COVID-19 vaccines are not as effective as they are said to be**
  - Black adults: 82%
  - Hispanic adults: 78%
  - White adults: 61%

- **They might get COVID-19 from the vaccine**
  - Black adults: 59%
  - Hispanic adults: 61%
  - White adults: 30%

**NOTE:** Among those who have not been vaccinated against COVID-19

**SOURCE:** KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor (conducted Jan. 11-18, 2021). See topline for full question wording.
### CHALLENGE: News about Side Effects, Rare Allergic Reactions

Percent who say hearing each would make them **less likely** to get vaccinated for COVID-19:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>As soon as possible</th>
<th>Wait and see</th>
<th>Only if required</th>
<th>Definitely not</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small number of people have had serious allergic reaction</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some people experience short-term side effects like pain, fever</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to continue to wear mask/social distance after getting vaccinated</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need two doses of vaccine several weeks apart</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCE:** KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor (conducted Jan. 11-18, 2021). See topline for full question wording.
### CHALLENGE: Don’t Have Enough Basic Information

Percent that say they *don’t have enough information* about each of the following items:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Wait and See:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When people like you will be able to get the COVID-19 vaccine*</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where you will be able to get a COVID-19 vaccine*</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The potential side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccine</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How your state is deciding who gets priority for the COVID-19 vaccine</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** * Items with asterisk asked only of those who have not received the COVID-19 vaccine (94% of all adults).  
**SOURCE:** KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor (Jan. 11-18, 2021). See topline for full question wording.
Percent who say that hearing each of the following would make them more likely to get vaccinated:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Message</th>
<th>As soon as possible</th>
<th>Wait and see</th>
<th>Only if required</th>
<th>Definitely not</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Help protect you from getting COVID-19</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly effective in preventing illness</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quickest way for life to return to normal</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millions of people have already safely been vaccinated</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get the U.S. economy back on track</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A doctor or health care provider you trust has gotten the vaccine</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is no cost to get the vaccine</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A close friend or family member got vaccinated for COVID-19</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Messengers

Percent who say are **very** or **somewhat** likely to turn to each of the following when deciding whether to get a COVID-19 vaccine:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Message Source</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Wait and see</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A doctor, nurse, or other health care provider</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDC</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State or local public health department</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family or friends</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A pharmacist</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A religious leader</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Among those who have not been vaccinated against COVID-19
In Their Own Words: “If there is one message or piece of information you could hear that would make you more likely to get vaccinated for COVID-19, what would it be?”

No not any celebrity could change my mind. The only person that might be able to is my doctor who I trust if I can be told what is in the vaccine and how it works. (White woman, age 18-29)

Knowing COVID is so devastating to human organs, I am concerned not only about the effectiveness of the vaccine but also the long term effects over years in the body...especially if it is needed on an ongoing basis. (Black woman, age 30-49)

That it won't be effective or have bad side effects. (Black woman, age 30-49)

I am going to get the vaccine, I just will not be anywhere near the front of the line! (Black man, age 50-64)

Don't trust the government in today's political climate and it hasn't been vetted enough in trials. (White man, age 50-64)
Implications

• **Dynamic situation** – will continue throughout distribution
  - Be **flexible and stay** with it
  - Worry **a lot** about **misinformation**

• **Hesitant group not monolithic** – overall or by key subgroups
  - Much of hesitancy = **real desire to wait/see how (trusted) others react** to the vaccine and a need for real facts about what the vaccine is and isn’t

• **Key Things to Focus On**–
  - Address concerns: **vaccine safety, LT side effects, worries about getting virus** from the vaccine
  - MESSAGE: “Vaccine is **highly effective**, will **protect you** from illness, and offers an **opportunity to return** to normal life”
  - Highlight local trusted **health providers** and “**people**” who look like me and my friends and family
  - Show that **millions and millions of “people like me”** have safely been vaccinated
  - Help people find the **basic information** they need
  - Not telling people what to do = **help people come to their own conclusion** that getting vaccinated is the **right choice** for themselves and their families.