

Survey: 1 in 3 Americans leery about COVID-19 vaccine

By Mike Stobbe and Hannah Fingerhut
Associated Press

NEW YORK — About 1 in 3 Americans say they definitely or probably won't get the COVID-19 vaccine, according to a new poll that some experts say is discouraging news if the U.S. hopes to achieve herd immunity and vanquish the outbreak.

The poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that while 67% of Americans plan to get vaccinated or have already done so, 15% are certain they won't and 17% say probably not. Many expressed doubts about the vaccine's safety and effectiveness.

The poll suggests that substantial skepticism persists more than a month and a half into a U.S. vaccination drive that has encountered few if any serious side effects. It found that resistance runs higher among younger people, people without college degrees, Black Americans and Republicans.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the government's leading infectious-disease scientist, has estimated that somewhere between 70% and 85% of the U.S. population needs to get inoculated to stop the scourge that has killed close to 470,000 Americans.



N. Scott Trimble/TNS

A recent survey found that about 33% of Americans say they definitely or probably won't get a COVID-19 vaccine.

More recently, he said the spread of more contagious variants of the virus increases the need for more people to get their shots — and quickly.

So is 67% of Americans enough?

"No. No, no, no, no," said William Hanage, a Harvard University expert on disease dynamics. He added: "You're going to need to get quite large proportions of the population vaccinated before you see a real effect."

Nearly 33 million Americans, or

about 10% of the population, have received at least one dose, and 9.8 million have been fully vaccinated, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The poll of 1,055 adults, taken Jan. 28 through Feb. 1, provides insight into the skepticism.

Of those who said they definitely will not get the vaccine, 65% cited worries about side effects, despite the shots' safety record over the past months. About the same percent-

age said they don't trust COVID-19 vaccines. And 38% said they don't believe they need a vaccine, with a similar share saying that they don't know if a COVID-19 vaccine will work and that they don't trust the government.

Of those who probably will not get the vaccine but have not ruled it out completely, 63% said they are waiting to see if it is safe, and 60% said they are concerned about possible side effects.

"I don't trust pharmaceuticals. I really don't. And it doesn't sound like it's going to be safe," said Debra Nanez, a 67-year-old retired nurse from Tucson, Arizona.

Baron Walker, a 42-year-old laid-off insulation installer from Parkersburg, West Virginia, said he is in the "probably not" column, at least for now.

He said that if he were elderly, or lived in a densely populated area, he might consider the vaccine more strongly. But he is in rural part of the country, he has been wearing a mask and social-distancing, and he feels there is a good chance the nation will achieve herd immunity, he said.

"I feel like I have plenty of time before I get a chance to get (the

vaccine) anyway, to find out if there are bad side effects and whether it's even worth getting it," Walker said.

In interviews, some Americans expressed concerns about the revolutionary speed with which the vaccines were developed — less than a year.

"I feel like they rushed it," Walker said.

That was echoed by Matt Helder-

man, 31, of Greer, South Carolina. "I'd like to see more safety data," said Helderman, a video editor and associate producer for a Christian TV program. He also said that he would like to see more clarity on whether the vaccine is effective against new variants.

Health officials are trying to counter concerns about the vaccine with science.

The latest evidence indicates that the two vaccines being used in the U.S. — Pfizer's and Moderna's — are effective even against the variants, Fauci said.

Also, while the development of the vaccines was unusually fast, it was the culmination of many years of research. And the vaccines went through clinical trials involving thousands of people who were monitored for 60 days after their last dose.

STUDENTS

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The charter school includes Baker Web Academy and Baker Early College.

Another 14 letters were sent to the Pine Eagle School District at Halfway and 17 to Huntington. None was sent to the Burnt River School District at Unity where all students' immunization records were up-to-date, Staten said. The remaining 74 letters were mailed to families of students attending Baker schools.

This year, because of the pandemic, immunizations needed to update student records will be given by appointment only at the Health Department. There will be no special clinics scheduled for that purpose as there have been in the past.

The department moved from its former location on Pochontas Road to its new office at 2200 Fourth St. in December. To schedule a vaccination appointment, call 541-523-8211.

Staten urged callers to be patient with the phone system, which is operating on

emergency status, awaiting installation of a new phone system. Voicemail messages will be returned as soon as possible, she said.

"Call and have patience," she urged those who need to schedule immunization appointments for their children. "We'll get through it and we'll have a new phone system and it will work."

The Health Department will be closed Monday, Feb. 15, because of the Presidents Day holiday, but it will be open as usual on Tuesday.

Office hours are 8 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays, except during federal holidays.

"The school law is still in effect," Staten said. "That hasn't changed because of COVID."

"We strongly encourage parents to keep their kids up-to-date on their immunizations, especially in the pandemic," she said.

Staten said the Health Department has been working with districts since school started this year to ensure that as few students as possible would be excluded this month.

Students may be exempt

from immunizations in Oregon either through a medical exemption verified by a physician or a nonmedical exemption based on personal, religious, or philosophical reasons. To qualify for the non-medical exemption, parents may either watch an online vaccine education video and submit a certificate of completion to the school or talk with a health care provider and have the provider sign a vaccine education certificate to present to the school.

A bill has been introduced in this session of the Oregon Legislature seeking to eliminate the nonmedical exemption, which has been an option for Oregon families since 2016.

The Oregon Health Authority stated in a press release issued Wednesday, Feb. 10, that schools have the option of blocking remote learning access for kids whose immunization records aren't up-to-date by Feb. 17.

Baker Charter School, as it has always done because most students do the majority of their studying online, will take that option, said Melanie Trindle, charter school execu-

tive assistant.

"Students enrolled in our school and not up-to-date get a letter, and we will block access to online classes until all records are updated," Trindle said.

That will not be the case for students attending Baker School District classes through online programs started this year because of the pandemic.

"We will still gather information and encourage them to get the vaccinations," said Superintendent Mark Witty. "But since they're online, the state's not requiring us to exclude them if they haven't gotten all their vaccinations."

Staten said no one will be refused the vaccines based on an inability to pay. A \$21.96 administrative fee is collected

from those who are uninsured and cannot pay the full amount. If they cannot afford the administrative fee, the immunizations will be provided without charge, she said. The state pays the cost of the vaccine in those cases.

The Oregon Health Authority noted in a press release issued Wednesday that the COVID-19 vaccine is not currently required for children. In fact, the current emergency use authorizations from the Food and Drug Administration do not allow for children younger than 16 to receive the Pfizer vaccine and for those younger than 18 to receive the Moderna vaccine.

The law does, however, require all children in public and private schools, pre-schools, Head Start and certi-

fied child care centers to have up-to-date records on their required immunizations or to have an exemption.

"Immunization is the best way to protect children against vaccine-preventable diseases such as whooping cough and measles," Stacy de Assis Matthews, school law coordinator in the Oregon Health Authority Public Health Division, said in the press release.

"Just two years ago, we saw several measles cases in the Northwest. We don't want another disease outbreak on top of COVID-19," de Assis Matthews said. "Immunizations are the most effective way to stop the spread of measles, to keep kids and school communities healthy and safe."

RIVERS

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It includes extending the Snake River's designation in Oregon from the current 66.9 miles to 71.4 miles by including the reach from Cache Creek to the Oregon-Washington border. Portions of previously undesignated creeks that drain into the Snake, Imnaha, Grande Ronde and Willowa rivers are included. For example, the Snake River tributaries Cache Creek, Knight Creek, Cook Creek and most of Jim Creek would be designated as Wild rivers.

The Imnaha River and its tributaries get an upgrade, with the upper 6 miles of the Imnaha designated Wild, the 58 miles from Indian Crossing to Cow Creek designated Recreational, and the last 4 miles, Cow Creek to the Snake River, designated as Scenic. The upper 17.4 miles of Lightning Creek, the upper 16.9 miles of Horse Creek, and the upper 17.1 miles of Cow Creek, all on the Willowa-Whitman National Forest, would be designated Wild.

In Big Sheep Creek, the new legislation would classify as Scenic the 12-mile segment from the Eagle Cap Wilderness boundary to the USFS boundary as well as another lower 3.4 mile stretch that also flows through USFS management.

Similarly, Joseph Creek and many of its tributaries would receive designations including 38.1 miles of Joseph Creek designated as Wild and 19.5 miles of upper Chesnimnus Creek labeled as Recreational. Devil's Run Creek and Peavine Creek would be designated as Wild, as would portions of Deadhorse and Cottonwood creeks.

The Grande Ronde River Basin includes about 210 miles of newly designated streams. That includes 42.2 miles of the lower river designated Wild, as well as 10 miles of the river's headwaters in the Elkhorn Mountains. The stretch from the confluence with the Willowa River to the Umatilla National Forest would be designated as Recreational. Grande Ronde tributaries receiving designations include the upper portions of Catherine Creek,

Proposed additions to wild and scenic rivers list

PINE CREEK NEAR HALFWAY

- Sections of Pine Creek (1.3 miles), West Fork (0.6), Middle Fork (1.1), East Pine Creek (7.9), Trail Creek (4.4), Clear Creek (9.1), Fish Creek (8.4), Lake Fork Creek (13.4), Elk Creek (8.1)

EAST SIDE OF ELKHORN MOUNTAINS

- Sections of Dutch Flat Creek (6.7 miles), Van Patten Creek (1.6), Rock Creek (7.3), North Fork Rock Creek (3.3), Killamacue Creek (4) and North Fork of North Powder River (2.5)

BURNT RIVER SYSTEM

- North Fork (9.3 miles), Lower Burnt River (6.9), West Fork (3.8), Middle Fork (6.1), South Fork (5.3), Bull Run Creek (2.6)

EAGLE CREEK (WALLOWAS)

- West Eagle Creek (6.3 miles), East Eagle Creek (3.7)

8.7 miles of Lookingglass Creek, and 9.5 miles of Indian Creek.

Additional protection is provided for the North Fork of the John Day River, the South Fork of the John Day River, the Powder River and the portions of its tributaries on the Willowa-Whitman National Forest, including Dutch Flat, Van Patten, Rock and Killamacue creeks.

More than 2,500 individuals and organizations nominated approximately 15,000 miles of streams according to Wyden and Merkley's joint press release announcing the bill.

The Nez Perce Tribe nominated 109.7 miles of streams for inclusion in the new legislation, including 21.05 miles of Joseph Creek owned by the Bureau of Land Management along with the Nez Perce Tribe, and 18.83 miles of Broady Creek on U.S. Forest Service and Nez Perce Tribal land as well as a small amount of private property.

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