

COVID-19 vaccine eligibility moves up for many Oregonians

Everyone eligible by May 1

By Gary A. Warner
Oregon Capital Bureau

More than 1 million new people will be added early to the eligibility list for COVID-19 vaccinations, Gov. Kate Brown announced Friday morning.

People aged 45 to 64 with serious medical conditions that would likely result in severe illness or death if they contracted COVID-19 can be vaccinated March 22 in some counties — a week earlier than previously scheduled.

Counties would only need to submit a written statement to the Oregon Health Authority that they had “largely” vaccinated those aged 65 and above, the last of whom became eligible on March 1. OHA officials said counties can proceed with vaccinations beginning Monday without having to wait for approval or even a response from the state.

Migrant and seasonal farm workers in counties where they are currently already working can also be vaccinated.

Brown said the earlier start date was to allow the groups a chance at getting inoculated ahead of the federally mandated deadline to remove all eligibility requirements by May



Gov. Kate Brown

File photo

1. Oregon’s phased eligibility program didn’t call for opening vaccination to all adults until July 1 — two months later.

President Joe Biden announced last week that all adults would be eligible for vaccination on May 1. Oregon Health Authority officials and Brown said they would be sticking with their timeline until they could be guaranteed additional vaccine shipments to meet the increased demand unleashed by Biden’s order.

But Allen testified Wednesday to the House Subcommittee on COVID-19 that the state had received a directive from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that said the May 1 date was not optional, but “binding” and “regulatory.”

States have had wide latitude in how they have dealt with the COVID-19 public health crisis, including vaccine priority. But the federal government determines how much supply is

ELIGIBILITY TIMELINE

March 22

- Counties that attest to largely completing the vaccination of residents 65 and older may begin vaccinating the next eligible groups.
- Vaccinations may also begin for migrant and seasonal farm workers in counties where they are currently already working.

March 29

- All adults 45-64 with underlying health conditions,
- Migrant and seasonal farm workers,
- Seafood and agricultural workers,
- Food processing workers,

April 19

- People living in low-income senior housing, senior congregate and independent living,
- Individuals experiencing homelessness,
- People currently displaced by wildfires,
- Wildland firefighters and
- Pregnant people 16 and older.

April 19

- Frontline workers as defined by the CDC,
- Multigenerational household members and
- Adults 16-44 with underlying health conditions.

May 1

- All Oregonians 16 and older

sent to each state. Brown said during an online press call Friday that earlier or increased eligibility won’t translate into immediate availability.

“This doesn’t mean that every Oregonian will be able to get a shot right away,” Brown said.

Demand has outstripped supply in Oregon and other states. OHA

has been averaging about 24,000 shots per day — mostly the two-shot Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. A one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine is increasingly available.

Oregon is currently receiving about 200,000 doses of vaccine per week from the federal government. Allen has said the state needs at least 100,000 additional

doses or more to meet Biden’s goal without creating an even bigger gap between those who want shots and the amount of vaccine available.

Brown said that equity had been a key to her approach to prioritizing vaccinations. With the new Biden directive, she said Oregon would move up the start time for some in the next two eligibility groups to give them at least a head start before the general public.

The remainder of the original March 29 group will be eligible as planned. This includes people who are pregnant and aged 16 or over, all adults 45-64 with underlying health conditions in all counties, all migrant and seasonal farm workers, seafood and agricultural workers, food processing workers, people living in low-income senior housing, senior congregate and independent living situations, the homeless, people displaced by wildfire and wildland firefighters.

Another 550,000 people who were to be eligible on May 1 have had their start date moved to April 19. The group includes those age 16 to 45 with underlying conditions, frontline workers as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and people living in multi-generational households.

Pessimism pours like rain in Oregon, survey says

By Zane Sparling
Oregon Capital Bureau

A growing share of Oregonians think the state is headed down the wrong track, if not at risk of derailing completely, according to polling data from the Oregon Values and Beliefs Center.

Some 44% of Beaver State residents are pessimistic about Oregon’s future, while only 35% are optimistic and the remaining 21% are unsure. Those results show a flip-flop from summer 2020, when 43% believed the state was headed in the right direction.

“As a whole, the government is infuriating,” Melissa Aspell, one of the poll’s respondents,

said in a phone interview. “There’s a lot of frustration with how Gov. (Kate) Brown runs things. And then clean up Portland, for God’s sake!”

Aspell, a 39-year-old Bend resident, said she was concerned about the overgrowth of “cookie-cutter homes” in her neighborhood and the misallocation of government resources, but noted that local parks are well maintained and she has been able to receive a COVID-19 vaccination.

“(Some people) are pretty sure it’s full of nanobots or something, but conspiracy theories aside, I had a considerably bad reaction to the second one,” she said. “But I feel that was something my body needed

to go through.”

Roughly 600 Oregonians, who are part of a professionally maintained polling group, participated in the online survey in January, with participants selected to correspond with state demographics. The poll’s overall margin of error is 4%.

Here are the key findings:

- Democrats (51%) are significantly more positive about the state’s near future, compared with Republicans (23%) and voters who belong to neither party (28%). Conversely, 66% of Republicans had a negative view of Oregon’s future, compared with 29% of Democrats and 48% of independents.
- Just 2% of poll respon-

dents rated Oregon’s economy as excellent, vastly outnumbered by those who scored the state economy as poor (31%) or only fair (47%). Middle income earners (83%) were more likely to downrate the economy than the working class (74%).

Nearly half of residents (47%) predict Oregon’s economy is getting worse, compared to 11% who see an upturn on the horizon and 36% who foresee it treading water. Women (52%) were more likely to predict tighter wallets than men (43%). The most pessimistic age group was the middle aged.

A slim majority (53%) are very or somewhat worried about their personal finances, while 45% are

not too worried or not at all worried. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of those making less than \$50,000 are concerned about the state of their pocketbook, compared with 33% of those bringing in more than \$100,000 yearly.

When asked about 2021 in general, rather than just Oregon, most residents (59%) are optimists, though (38%) are pessimistic.

Portlander Amy Bradley said the biggest factor in her sunny outlook was the rebalancing of power in Washington, D.C.

“I think the Democrats holding two branches of government is a good thing,” the 51-year-old said. “People are out and spending money. Help is coming, and is coming to

those who need it.”

Chris Billington, who lives in the Sylvan area near Beaverton, admitted that mask wearing can be tiresome — and she’s eager for restrictions to lift so she can take a dip in the pool — but said the state’s response to climate change promised economic opportunities.

“There’s a potential for new and different kinds of jobs,” she said. “My biggest concern is the Republican walkout (of the Oregon Legislature), because that’s just disruptive.”

Republicans walked out of the 2019 and 2020 legislative sessions, and briefly walked out again this year. The 2020 walkout ended the session before it really began.

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