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# Opposition to Childhood Vaccine Mandates on the Rise, More Parents Say They Want the Right to Choose

*A growing number of parents oppose vaccine mandates as a precondition for public school attendance, and interest among adults in receiving COVID-19 booster shots is waning, according to a national poll by the Kaiser Family Foundation.*

**By Michael Nevradakis, Ph.D.**

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A growing number of parents oppose vaccine mandates as a precondition for public school attendance, and interest among adults in receiving COVID-19 booster shots is waning, according to a [national poll by the Kaiser Family Foundation](#) (KFF).

The results of the latest KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor survey, released today, show more than one-third (35%) of parents now believe they should be the ones to decide whether their children receive a slate of [childhood vaccines](#).

The poll encompassed a nationally representative sample of 1,259 adults who were interviewed between Nov. 29 and Dec. 8. [According to The New York Times](#), the KFF is a “nonpartisan health care research organization.”

“It’s unfortunate that it took a wave of injuries and deaths from vaccines that never should have been released into the market — much less mandated — to draw long-overdue attention to the issue of vaccine safety,” said Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., chairman and chief litigation counsel for [Children’s Health Defense](#).

Kennedy told The Defender:

“This latest poll is encouraging for those parents, physicians and scientists who for decades have been calling for an investigation into the relentless promotion by FDA, CDC and Big Pharma of inferior medical products without rigorous safety testing.

“As more parents begin to question the forced, routine administration of vaccines on healthy children, perhaps we will move closer to protecting children and holding vaccine makers and government agencies accountable for the harm these products cause.”

## **26% of parents today: ‘Risks of childhood vaccines for measles, mumps, and rubella outweigh the benefits’**

According to the KFF poll, 65% of parents of children under age 18 “think healthy children should be required to be vaccinated to attend public schools.”

This represents an 11% decline from an [October 2019 Pew Research Center poll](#) showing 76% of parents supported public school vaccine mandates.

More than one-third of parents surveyed (35%) “now believe parents should be able to decide not to vaccinate their children, up from 23% in 2019.”

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The poll also revealed declines in support for specific vaccines. For instance, 71% of respondents said "healthy children should be required to get vaccinated for MMR in order to attend public schools" compared with 82% who supported the MMR vaccine mandate for healthy children in 2019.

Nearly 3 in 10 parents (28%) said parents should be able to choose whether their children receive the MMR vaccine, compared with 16% in the 2019 poll.

A similar percentage (26%) responded that the "risks of childhood vaccines for measles, mumps, and rubella outweigh the benefits."

A smaller decline was noted in the percentage of adults (85%) who felt the benefits of childhood MMR vaccination outweigh the risk. This represented a three-percentage-point decline from the 2019 Pew Research Center poll (88%).

These declines were driven by increased vaccine "skepticism" and a growing movement toward parental choice, on the part of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents — 44% of whom responded that parents should have a choice about whether or not their children receive the MMR vaccine, up from 20% in 2019.

Only 11% of Democrats provided the same response.

Moreover, only 56% of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents said "healthy children should be required to be vaccinated to attend public schools," a decline of 23 percentage points compared to 2019.

A similar divide was apparent among respondents in reference to their COVID-19 vaccination status. While 83% of vaccinated respondents said healthy children should be required to be vaccinated in order to attend public schools, 63% of unvaccinated parents said parents should instead decide.

### 'Tepid' interest in COVID 'boosters' and flu vaccine

Interest in the [updated COVID-19 booster](#) is "tepid," according to the KFF poll, which showed only 1 in 5 adults (22%) surveyed said they have received the updated bivalent booster and an additional 16% said they plan to receive it "as soon as possible."

However, 12% of respondents said they would "wait and see" before deciding whether to get the new booster, 13% said they would get it only if required and 9% said they would "definitely not" get it.

An additional 27% were unvaccinated or only "partially" vaccinated, which means they are not eligible to get the booster.

Interest in the bivalent booster was highest among adults 65 and older (39%) and Democrat voters (38%), though both figures fall significantly short of a majority. Conversely, only 12% of Republicans and 11% of young adults under 30 said they had received a dose of the updated booster.

Also, 36% of "fully vaccinated" adults 65 and older said they don't think they need the updated booster, while a "similar percentage," according to KFF, said they did not think the benefit of the updated booster was worth it.

Overall, fewer than half of parents of children under 18 said their child has received the updated booster or is likely to do so.

Combined with children who have not been vaccinated and who are therefore ineligible for the booster, 58% of parents of 12- to 17-year-olds and 70% of parents of 5- to 11-year-olds responded in this manner.

Republicans and Republican-leaning independents, even if vaccinated, expressed skepticism toward the updated booster, with 64% stating they do not think they need it, and 61% saying they did not believe the benefit was worth it.

Even among Democrats, a majority (51%) said they were too busy or hadn't had the time to get the updated booster, indicating it was not a high priority for them.

Even in the face of a so-called "triple-demic" of COVID-19, flu and [RSV](#) (respiratory syncytial virus) this fall and winter, and despite the majority of parents saying they are worried their children will get sick from RSV (56%, and 73% of parents of children under the age of 5), only 34% of parents said their child has gotten a flu shot this season.

### Parents' rights movement growing in prominence

According to The Times, "The shift in positions appears to be less about rejecting the shots than a growing endorsement of the so-called parents' rights movement."

Dr. Sean O'Leary, chairman of the American Academy of Pediatrics' Committee on Infectious Diseases told The Times:

"The talking point that has been circulated is the concept of taking away parents' rights. And when you frame it that simply, it's very appealing to a certain segment of the population."

O'Leary said he worried that the parental rights movement might slow down compliance with state-mandated childhood immunization schedules, telling The Times "We do have a global dip in vaccine coverage. So this is not a time to be considering a rollback of these laws."

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Michael Nevradakis, Ph.D., based in Athens, Greece, is a senior reporter for The Defender and part of the rotation of hosts for CHD.TV's "Good Morning CHD."

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