

**Two Americas: Parents of children newly eligible for the COVID vaccine are divided on more than just whether to inoculate their child**

*Half of parents of 5- to 11-year-olds currently plan to get those children vaccinated*

One out of three parents of children newly eligible for the COVID vaccine plan to opt out, a new survey shows, and those parents are much more likely to be worried about sickness from the vaccine than from COVID itself.

The new Marketing for Change Parent Norms Survey, fielded by the global research firm Ipsos Oct. 14 to 22, found only half (51%) of parents of newly eligible 5- to 11-year-olds planned to get those children vaccinated while 31% said they won't, citing worries about side effects, vaccine efficacy and trusting the motives of government. Another 18% described themselves as unsure.

Will you get your child (under 12) vaccinated against COVID-19 once a vaccine is approved by the FDA for children that age?		
	Parents of children under 12	Parents of children 5-11
Yes	49%	51%
No	31%	31%
Unsure	20%	18%

Source: Marketing for Change Parent Norms Survey of 1,019 parents fielded by Ipsos Oct. 14 -22. Included 758 parents of children under 12 and 530 parents of children ages 5-11.

The different groups of parents appear to live in very different realities: Four out of five (80%) parents planning to vaccinate said most or nearly all the parents they know will also vaccinate their children. Yet, a similar share of parents opting out said just the opposite: Only some or few, if any, parents they know will vaccinate their children, they predicted. Most of those unsure about the COVID vaccine for their children felt the same way: Most parents will opt out.

Parents opting their children out of the vaccine are largely skeptical. Nearly seven in 10 (69%) are worried about “potential problems or side effects” from the vaccine, more than four times the 14% who worried about their child getting sick from COVID-19. Half (51%) worried about trusting “the government's motives for requiring the vaccine.” Nearly a third (31%) worried the vaccine may be ineffective.

Parents opting out also tended to be more open to conspiracy beliefs. Nearly half (49%) of all the parents who said they would not be vaccinating their newly eligible children score in the highest quartile on a battery of questions measuring conspiracy beliefs<sup>1</sup>.

Parents unsure about vaccinating their newly eligible child appear stuck between different fears. On the one hand, most fear problems or side effects from the vaccine (68%), and 27% distrust the government’s motives. But unlike the hard “no’s,” half of the unsure parents (52%) also worried about their child getting sick from COVID-19 and a third (34%) feared their child may not be able to participate in school activities or sports.

In contrast, the 50% of parents ready to vaccinate their children were more likely to fear the downsides of foregoing a vaccination. While nearly one in three (29%) are still worried about side effects or potential problems with the vaccine, a much larger number – 52% – cited fears that their child could get sick from COVID-19. Half (52%) also considered the potential of vaccine requirements barring a child’s participation in school activities or sports. A fifth said their child’s school might require vaccination. Nearly four in 10 (38%) cited the need to prevent their children from infecting family or others in their community.

Key Issues: Concerns of parents around COVID-19 vaccination	Parents with children age 5 to 11		
	Parents planning to vaccinate child	Parents not vaccinating child	Parents who are unsure
	It may be too difficult or inconvenient to get the vaccine for my child	9.5%	1.8%
The vaccine may be ineffective at protecting my child from COVID-19	14.9%	31.0%	28.3%
I am concerned about potential problems or side-effects from the vaccine	29.1%	68.5%	67.7%
I don't trust the government's motives for requiring the vaccine	6.0%	50.6%	27.0%
I want my child to be able to participate in school and community activities (sports, school activities, etc.) that may require the vaccine	51.2%	12.5%	34.3%
My child's school may mandate the vaccine	22.6%	17.9%	30.3%
I don't want my child to get sick with COVID-19	52.3%	11.9%	52.0%
I don't want my child to infect others in my family or my community with COVID-19	37.9%	6.0%	27.0%
I want to travel with my child	31.4%	6.0%	20.2%

<sup>1</sup> Generic Conspiracist Beliefs (GCB) scale as detailed in [Brotherton et al. \(2031\). Measuring belief in conspiracy theories: the generic conspiracist beliefs scale. \*Frontiers in Psychology\*](#)

I have no concerns about the vaccine for my child(ren)	28.6	4.2%	12.0%
I am morally opposed to the vaccine	0.0%	13.1%	0.9%
Other issues I consider when deciding whether to get my child vaccinated against COVID-19	0.4%	6.5%	4.0%
None of these	6.0%	7.1%	5.1%
Source: Marketing for Change Parent Norms Survey of 1,019 parents fielded by Ipsos Oct. 14 -22. Included 530 parents of children age 5 to 11.			

Parents whose oldest child was younger than five, so not yet eligible for a COVID vaccine, and parents with children 12 years old and up, who have been eligible for vaccines for some time, broke down along similar lines. Parents with younger children were, however, slightly more reluctant and unsure with only 42% ready to vaccinate their child once FDA approval is granted.

One of the most dramatic differences at all age levels between parents planning to vaccinate their children and those opting out was education. Among parents of children under 12, two-thirds (68%) of parents without a college degree were either unsure about vaccinating their child or planning on opting out. The number was 41% for parents with a college degree.

Politics can also help predict a parent’s decision on whether to vaccinate. Eight in 10 “strongly Democrat” parents (80%) plan to vaccinate children under 12 . But less than a third of “strongly” or “moderate” Republican parents make the same commitment. Nearly half of those Republican parents plan not to vaccinate their children under 12. The “unsure” group, meanwhile, was fairly bipartisan – 41% Republican and 36% Democrat with the rest identifying as independents or not stating a preference.

The Marketing for Change Parent Norms survey, in its second year, asks parents about what they and their children do, and what they believe most other families do (the social norms likely to influence their behavior). This month’s survey, fielded online by the global research firm Ipsos from Oct. 14 - 22, asked 1,019 parents about their practices around screen time, social media, guns, mental health, conversations with children and the COVID vaccines.

**About Marketing for Change Co.**

Marketing for Change is a full-service creative and research firm propelled by behavioral science and focused on doing good. The agency uses its own behavioral-determinants model to develop and produce products, experiences and campaigns to influence behavior for foundations, governments, nonprofits and healthcare companies. M4C’s efforts not only win awards, but are featured in textbooks and reviewed in peer-reviewed journals. The agency’s mission is to make what’s good more fun, easy and popular. [www.Marketingforchange.com](http://www.Marketingforchange.com)

**About Ipsos**

Ipsos is the world’s third largest Insights and Analytics company, present in 90 markets and employing more than 18,000 people.