

THE AMERICAN PUBLIC'S VIEWS ON MANDATING COVID-19 VACCINATIONS AND ON ALLOWING PRESCRIPTION DRUG IMPORTATION FROM MULTIPLE COUNTRIES

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THE AMERICAN PUBLIC’S VIEWS ON MANDATING COVID-19 VACCINATIONS AND ON ALLOWING PRESCRIPTION DRUG IMPORTATION FROM MULTIPLE COUNTRIES

This report, based on a new POLITICO-Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health poll, examines the American public’s views on two broad topics: (1) mandating vaccination against Covid-19 for a wide variety of groups, including public-school students aged 12 or older, public-school teachers, employees at workplaces, healthcare workers, college students, faculty and staff, customers entering stores or businesses, attending sporting events, boarding international or domestic flights, or boarding cruise ships; and (2) allowing prescription drug importation from multiple countries, including not only Canada, but also Great Britain, the European Union, Mexico, Japan, and China. In addition, the report examines public response to the debate over the origins of the Covid-19 virus.

PART I: THE PUBLIC’S VIEWS ON MANDATING COVID-19 VACCINATIONS

The new POLITICO-Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health poll finds the American public divided on requiring public-school students aged 12 or older to be vaccinated against Covid-19 before they can attend school in person. Half (50%) of the public favors such a requirement, while 49% are opposed. Adults in households with children aged 12-17 are similarly divided (52% favor, 48% oppose). This suggests that in many communities, there could be substantial resistance to such a requirement.

Democrats and Republicans differ widely in their views – 62% of Democrats favor such a requirement, while 60% of Republicans are opposed. This suggests that in Republican states there is also likely to be resistance to this type of mandate (Table 1).

Table 1. The Public’s Views on Requiring Public-School Students Aged 12 or Older to Be Vaccinated Against Covid-19 Before They Can Attend School in Person, by Party Identification, in percent

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	Adults in households with children aged 12-17
Favor	50	62	40	47	52
Oppose	49	37	60	51	48
Don’t know/Refused	1	1	-	2	*

POLITICO/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, The American Public’s Views on Mandating Covid-19 Vaccinations and on Allowing Prescription Drug Importation from Multiple Countries. June 22 – 27, 2021. Base: U.S. adults.

A majority of the public, on a bipartisan basis, favors requiring all public-school teachers to be vaccinated before they can remain at or return to work. A similar proportion of adults in households with children aged 4-17 (70%) also hold this view (Table 2).

Table 2. The Public’s Views on Requiring All Public-School Teachers to Be Vaccinated Against Covid-19 Before They Can Remain at or Return to Work, by Party Identification, in percent

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	Adults in households with children aged 4-17
Favor	63	75	56	58	70
Oppose	37	25	43	42	30
Don’t know/Refused	*	*	1	*	-

POLITICO/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, The American Public’s Views on Mandating Covid-19 Vaccinations and on Allowing Prescription Drug Importation from Multiple Countries. June 22 – 27, 2021. Base: U.S. adults.

Of important note, more than half (52%) of employed adults oppose employers requiring all their employees to be vaccinated against Covid-19 before they can remain at or return to work. This contrasts with the view among people who are not employed, 65% of whom favor such a requirement, and differs from the view of the public as a whole (53% favor). This means there is likely to be substantial resistance among employees to a vaccination requirement by their employers.

In addition, there is a large partisan difference. While 64% of Democrats favor such a requirement, 56% of Republicans are opposed (Table 3). Again, this suggests that states may vary in the level of employee requirements based on the political leaning of the state.

Table 3. The Public’s Views on Employers Requiring All Their Employees to Be Vaccinated Against Covid-19 Before They Can Remain at or Return to Work, by Party Identification, in percent

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	Employed adults	Non-employed adults
Favor	53	64	43	51	48	65
Oppose	46	36	56	49	52	34
Don’t know/Refused	1	*	1	*	*	1

POLITICO/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, The American Public’s Views on Mandating Covid-19 Vaccinations and on Allowing Prescription Drug Importation from Multiple Countries. June 22 – 27, 2021. Base: U.S. adults.

Although there is a large partisan difference on employer requirements in general, this is not the case when it comes to healthcare institutions. About two-thirds of the public (66%), including majorities of both Democrats (74%) and Republicans (59%), favor healthcare institutions requiring all their workers to be vaccinated against Covid-19 before they can remain at or return to work (Table 4).

Table 4. The Public’s Views on Healthcare Institutions Requiring All Their Workers to Be Vaccinated Against Covid-19 Before They Can Remain at or Return to Work, by Party Identification, in percent

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Favor	66	74	59	64
Oppose	33	25	40	34
Don’t know/Refused	1	1	1	2

POLITICO/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, The American Public’s Views on Mandating Covid-19 Vaccinations and on Allowing Prescription Drug Importation from Multiple Countries. June 22 – 27, 2021. Base: U.S. adults.

But there is less agreement when it comes to college students, faculty, and staff. A majority of the public (56%) favors colleges and universities requiring their students, faculty, and staff to be vaccinated against Covid-19 before they can remain at or return to campus. While 75% of Democrats favor such a requirement, Republicans are evenly divided (51% favor) (Table 5).

Table 5. The Public’s Views on Colleges and Universities Requiring All Their Students, Faculty, and Staff to Be Vaccinated Against Covid-19 Before They Can Remain at or Return to Campus, by Party Identification, in percent

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Favor	56	75	51	44
Oppose	43	25	49	55
Don’t know/Refused	1	-	-	1

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The American public’s attitudes about whether or not customers should be required to be vaccinated before they can enter businesses or participate in an activity depends on the type of business or enterprise being discussed.

A majority opposes such requirements overall and when it comes to attending sporting events. Two-thirds of the public (67%) oppose requiring customers entering stores or businesses to show proof of vaccination against Covid-19, including majorities of both Democrats (63%) and Republicans (80%) opposed. A majority (55%) also opposes requiring people to show proof of vaccination before they can attend sporting events in person (Table 6).

Table 6. The Public’s Views on Customers Being Required to Show Proof of Vaccination Against Covid-19, by Party Identification, in percent

Requiring each of the following type of customers to show proof of vaccination	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Customers entering stores or businesses				
Favor	32	36	20	35
Oppose	67	63	80	64
People before they can attend sporting events in person				
Favor	45	51	35	48
Oppose	55	49	65	52
Passengers in international flights before they are allowed to board				
Favor	62	74	62	50
Oppose	37	26	36	49
Passengers in U.S. domestic flights before they are allowed to board				
Favor	56	69	53	45
Oppose	44	31	47	54
Passengers on cruise ships before they are allowed to board				
Favor	60	67	51	60
Oppose	39	32	48	39

POLITICO/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, The American Public’s Views on Mandating Covid-19 Vaccinations and on Allowing Prescription Drug Importation from Multiple Countries. June 22 – 27, 2021. Base: U.S. adults. “Don’t know/Refused” responses not shown.

However, a majority of the public favors requiring proof of vaccination before boarding international (62%) or domestic (56%) flights, or cruise ships (60%). When it comes to cruise ships, Republican opinion is divided (51% favor, 48% oppose).

In terms of how these requirements would be administered, the U.S. public is almost evenly divided on either the federal government (49% favor, 50% oppose) or state governments (52% favor, 47% oppose) providing a standard document that individuals would carry and would certify that they were vaccinated against Covid-19. In each case, a majority of Democrats are in favor of such documents, while a majority of Republicans are opposed (Table 7).

Table 7. The Public’s Views on Federal or States Government Providing a Standard Document Individuals Would Carry and Would Certify They Are Vaccinated Against Covid-19, by Party Identification, in percent

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Federal government				
Favor	49	57	38	49
Oppose	50	43	62	51
State governments				
Favor	52	61	38	53
Oppose	47	39	62	46

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The poll’s findings suggest a note of caution. Many media sources describe the debate as being about “vaccine passports.” More than one-third of the public (35%) reports that do not understand too well or at all what is meant by that term (Table 8).

Table 8. The Public’s Self-Reported Understanding of the Term “Vaccine Passport,” by Party Identification, in percent

Understand what “vaccine passport” means...	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Very well	35	31	40	36
Somewhat well	29	35	31	24
Not too well	21	21	22	20
Not at all	14	12	6	18
Don’t know/Refused	1	1	1	2

POLITICO/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, The American Public’s Views on Mandating Covid-19 Vaccinations and on Allowing Prescription Drug Importation from Multiple Countries. June 22 – 27, 2021. Base: U.S. adults.

PART II: THE PUBLIC’S VIEWS ON ALLOWING PRESCRIPTION DRUG IMPORTATION FROM MULTIPLE COUNTRIES

On the issue of what to do about high prescription drug costs, although most of the attention has been focused on price controls, in recent months a number of political figures on the federal and state level have proposed allowing the importation of prescription drugs as a policy option. Almost all of the polling on this issue has been about importation from Canada. The new POLITICO-Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health poll shows public support for prescription drug importation from a much larger range of countries.

The poll finds large and bipartisan support for making it legal for Americans to buy prescription drugs not only from Canada (79%), but also from Great Britain (73%) and the European Union (67%). There is smaller but still majority support for making legal the importation of prescription drugs from Mexico (60%) and Japan (58%). A majority does not support making importation from China legal (Table 9).

These results were found even though the public in this poll was told about possible safety considerations.

Table 9. The Public’s Views on Whether It Should Be Legal for Americans to Buy Prescription Drugs from Various Countries, by Party Identification

Some people say it should be legal for Americans to buy prescription drugs from other countries if they think they can get a lower price. Others say it should be illegal because imported drugs may be less safe and effective. What do you think – should it be legal or illegal for Americans to buy prescription drugs from each of the following countries?

% saying it should be legal for Americans to buy prescription drugs from each country	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Canada	79	82	74	82
Great Britain	73	74	69	74
The European Union	67	69	61	70
Mexico	60	66	52	61
Japan	58	60	52	61
China	39	41	30	43

POLITICO/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, The American Public’s Views on Mandating Covid-19 Vaccinations and on Allowing Prescription Drug Importation from Multiple Countries. June 22 – 27, 2021. Base: U.S. adults.

The strong support for making prescription drug importation from Canada, Great Britain, and the European Union legal is bipartisan, with more than 60% of both Democrats and Republicans supporting legalization of importation from each of these sources.

This debate occurs at a time when about one in five U.S. adults (21%) say that they have already bought prescription drugs from Canada or another foreign country to get a better price.

PART III: THE PUBLIC’S VIEWS ON THE ORIGINS OF THE COVID-19 VIRUS

While the nation is waiting for a report from President Biden and intelligence agencies on the origins of Covid-19, the public has come to some judgment on the question, and this judgment has shifted over the past year. When asked in a March 2020 Pew Research Center poll about the origins of the current strain of coronavirus, a plurality of the U.S. public (43%) said they thought it came about naturally, while 29% believed it was made in a laboratory, either intentionally or by accident.¹

Those beliefs have since been reversed. The new POLITICO-Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health poll finds that a majority of the public believes that the virus came from a laboratory leak in China (52%), rather than by human contact with an infected animal (28%). And in this case, there was no significant partisan difference. A majority of both Democrats (52%) and Republicans (59%) believe the origin was a laboratory leak (Table 10). This finding is very important in a politically polarized America.

Table 10. The Public’s Views on the Origin of the Covid-19 Virus, by Party Identification, in percent

Believe the Covid-19 virus came from...	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
A laboratory leak in China	52	59	52	47
Human contact from an infected animal	28	23	34	25
Neither (vol)	5	2	3	7
Both (vol)	6	10	3	6
Don’t know/Refused	9	6	8	15

POLITICO/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, The American Public’s Views on Mandating Covid-19 Vaccinations and on Allowing Prescription Drug Importation from Multiple Countries. June 22 – 27, 2021. Base: U.S. adults.

¹Pew Research Center Poll, March 10-16, 2020. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/04/08/nearly-three-in-ten-americans-believe-covid-19-was-made-in-a-lab/>

The issue is of significance because a majority of the public (62%) believes it is extremely or very important that the U.S. investigate the origins of Covid-19, including 64% of both Democrats and Republicans (Table 11).

Table 11. The Public’s Views on the Importance of the U.S. Government Investigating the Origins of the Covid-19 Virus, by Party Identification, in percent

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Extremely important	33	30	44	29
Very important	29	34	20	31
Somewhat important	20	20	18	22
Not too important	11	11	10	11
Not at all important	5	5	6	5
Don’t know/Refused	2	*	2	2

POLITICO/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, The American Public’s Views on Mandating Covid-19 Vaccinations and on Allowing Prescription Drug Importation from Multiple Countries. June 22 – 27, 2021. Base: U.S. adults.

METHODOLOGY

The results are based on polling conducted by *Politico* and Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Representatives of the two organizations worked closely to develop the survey questionnaires and analyze the results of the polls. *Politico* and Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health paid for the surveys and related expenses.

The project team was led by Robert J. Blendon, Sc.D., Professor of Public Health and Professor of Health Policy and Political Analysis Emeritus, at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, and Joanne Kenen, Executive Editor, Health Care at *Politico/Politico Pro*. The *Politico* research team also included Jason Millman; the Harvard research team also included John M. Benson and Chelsea Whitton Pearsall.

Interviews were conducted with a nationally representative sample of 1,009 randomly selected U.S. adults via telephone (including cell phones and landlines) by SSRS of Glen Mills, Pennsylvania. The interviewing period was June 22 – 27, 2021. The interviews were conducted in English and Spanish.

When interpreting these findings, one should recognize that all surveys are subject to sampling error. The margin of error for the full sample is ± 3.8 percentage points. The margin of error for questions asked of half-samples is ± 5.5 percentage points; for employed adults ($n=736$), ± 4.5 percentage points.

Possible sources of non-sampling error include non-response bias, as well as question wording and ordering effects. Non-response in telephone surveys produces some known biases in survey-derived estimates because participation tends to vary for different subgroups of the population. To compensate for these known biases and for variations in probability of selection within and across households, sample data are weighted by household size, cell phone/landline use and demographics (sex, age, race/ethnicity, education, and region) to reflect the true population. Other techniques, including random-digit dialing, replicate subsamples, and systematic respondent selection within households, are used to ensure that the sample is representative.

Politico/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health Poll

**THE AMERICAN PUBLIC’S VIEWS ON MANDATING COVID-19
VACCINATIONS AND ON ALLOWING PRESCRIPTION DRUG
IMPORTATION FROM MULTIPLE COUNTRIES**

This survey was conducted for *Politico* and Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health via telephone by SSRS, an independent research company. Interviews were conducted via telephone (cell phone and landline) **June 22 – 27, 2021**, among a nationally representative sample of **1,009 U.S. adults**. The margin of error for total respondents is ± 3.8 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. More information about SSRS can be obtained by visiting www.ssrs.com.

I. Mandating COVID-19 Vaccinations

POLQ1. Recently, there have been discussions at both the national and the state level about whether various institutions and government should require people to be vaccinated against COVID-19 in order to participate in certain activities. Do you favor or oppose... (INSERT ITEM)?

a. Employers requiring all their employees to be vaccinated against COVID-19 before they can remain at or return to work

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	Employed adults	Non-employed adults
Favor	53	64	43	51	48	65
Oppose	46	36	56	49	52	34
Don't know/Refused	1	*	1	*	*	1

b. Requiring all public-school teachers to be vaccinated against COVID-19 before they can remain at or return to work

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	Adults in households with children aged 4-17
Favor	63	75	56	58	70
Oppose	37	25	43	42	30
Don't know/Refused	*	*	1	*	-

c. Requiring public-school students aged 12 or older to be vaccinated against COVID-19 before they can attend school in person

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	Adults in households with children aged 12-17
Favor	50	62	40	47	52
Oppose	49	37	60	51	48
Don't know/Refused	1	1	-	2	*

(Asked of half sample A; n=519)

d. Health care institutions requiring all their workers to be vaccinated against COVID-19 before they can remain at or return to work at their facilities

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Favor	66	74	59	64
Oppose	33	25	40	34
Don't know/Refused	1	1	1	2

(Asked of half sample B; n=490)

e. Colleges and universities requiring all their students, faculty, and staff to be vaccinated against COVID-19 before they can remain at or return to campus

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Favor	56	75	51	44
Oppose	43	25	49	55
Don't know/Refused	1	-	-	1

(Asked of half sample A; n=519)

POLQ2. Do you favor or oppose requiring customers entering stores or businesses to show proof that they have been vaccinated against COVID-19?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Favor	32	36	20	35
Oppose	67	63	80	64
Don't know/Refused	1	1	-	1

(Asked of half sample B; n=490)

POLQ3. Do you favor or oppose requiring passengers on international flights to show proof that they have been vaccinated against COVID-19 before they are allowed to board a flight?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Favor	62	74	62	50
Oppose	37	26	36	49
Don't know/Refused	1	-	2	1

(Asked of half sample B; n=490)

POLQ4. Do you favor or oppose requiring passengers on domestic flights within the U.S. to show proof that they have been vaccinated against COVID-19 before they are allowed to board a flight?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Favor	56	69	53	45
Oppose	44	31	47	54
Don't know/Refused	*	-	-	1

(Asked of half sample A; n=519)

POLQ5. Do you favor or oppose requiring passengers on cruise ships to show proof that they have been vaccinated against COVID-19 before they are allowed to board a ship?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Favor	60	67	51	60
Oppose	39	32	48	39
Don't know/Refused	1	1	1	1

(Asked of half sample A; n=519)

POLQ6. Do you favor or oppose requiring people to show proof that they have been vaccinated against COVID-19 before they can attend sporting events in person?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Favor	45	51	35	48
Oppose	55	49	65	52
Don't know/Refused	*	*	-	-

(Asked of half sample C; n=484)

POLQ7. Do you favor or oppose the federal government providing a standard document that individuals would carry and would certify that they are vaccinated against COVID-19?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Favor	49	57	38	49
Oppose	50	43	62	51
Don't know/Refused	1	*	*	*

(Asked of half sample C; n=484)

POLQ8. Do you favor or oppose your state government providing a standard document that individuals would carry and would certify that they are vaccinated against COVID-19?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Favor	52	61	38	53
Oppose	47	39	62	46
Don't know/Refused	1	*	-	1

POLQ12. Do you personally know anyone, such as a close friend or family member, who has died due to complications from COVID-19?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Yes	39	36	38	43
No	61	64	62	57
Don't know/Refused	-	-	-	-

(Asked of half sample A; n=519)

POLQ13. If you read or hear somebody talking about a vaccine passport, how well do you feel that you understand what they mean by those two words "vaccine passport"?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Very well	35	31	40	36
Somewhat well	29	35	31	24
Not too well	21	21	22	20
Not at all	14	12	6	18
Don't know/Refused	1	1	1	2

II. Allowing Prescription Drug Importation from Multiple Countries

POLQ14. Some people say it should be legal for Americans to buy prescription drugs from other countries if they think they can get a lower price. Others say it should be illegal because imported drugs may be less safe and effective. What do you think--should it be legal or illegal for Americans to buy prescription drugs from each of the following countries? How about...(INSERT ITEM)?

a. Canada

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Legal	79	82	74	82
Illegal	20	17	26	18
Don't know/Refused	1	1	*	-

b. Mexico

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Legal	60	66	52	61
Illegal	39	33	46	39
Don't know/Refused	1	1	2	*

c. The European Union

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Legal	67	69	61	70
Illegal	31	29	38	28
Don't know/Refused	2	2	1	2

d. Great Britain

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Legal	73	74	69	74
Illegal	27	25	31	25
Don't know/Refused	*	1	-	1

e. China

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Legal	39	41	30	43
Illegal	61	58	70	57
Don't know/Refused	*	1	-	*

f. Japan

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Legal	58	60	52	61
Illegal	41	39	48	38
Don't know/Refused	1	1	-	1

POLQ14 Legal Summary Table
Based on total respondents

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Canada	79	82	74	82
Great Britain	73	74	69	74
The European Union	67	69	61	70
Mexico	60	66	52	61
Japan	58	60	52	61
China	39	41	30	43

POLQ15. How much of a problem is it for you and your family to pay prescription drug costs? Is it...?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Very difficult	11	11	10	12
Somewhat difficult	26	32	25	19
Not too difficult	32	30	38	32
Not at all difficult	30	26	27	36
Don't know/Refused	1	1	*	1

POLQ16. Have you or has anyone in your household ever bought prescription drugs from Canada or from another foreign country to get a better price, or not?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Yes	21	21	20	22
No	78	79	77	78
Don't know/Refused	1	*	3	-

III. Origins of the COVID-19 Virus

(Asked of half sample B; n=490)

POLQ10. Recently, there has been a debate about whether the COVID-19 virus came (from human contact with an infected animal) or (from a laboratory leak in China). How important do you think it is that the U.S. government investigate the origins of the COVID-19 virus?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Extremely important	33	30	44	29
Very important	29	34	20	31
Somewhat important	20	20	18	22
Not too important	11	11	10	11
Not at all important	5	5	6	5
Don't know/Refused	2	*	2	2

(Asked of half sample B; n=490)

POLQ11. Given what you have heard or read, do you believe the COVID-19 virus came (from human contact with an infected animal) or (from a laboratory leak in China)?

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
A laboratory leak in China	52	59	52	47
Human contact from an infected animal	28	23	34	25
Neither (vol)	5	2	3	7
Both (vol)	6	10	3	6
Don't know/Refused	9	6	8	15