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THE COVID STATES PROJECT:

A 50-STATE COVID-19 SURVEY

REPORT #59: WHAT AMERICANS THINK ABOUT PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT VACCINATED

USA, August 2021

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Report of August 4, 2021, v.1

The COVID States Project

From: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States

A joint project of:

Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University

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This report is based on work supported by the National Science Foundation under grants SES-2029292 and SES-2029297. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

This research was partly supported by a grant from the *Knight Foundation*.

We also received generous support from the Russell Sage Foundation.

The project was also supported by the Peter G. Peterson Foundation.

Data collection was supported in part by *Amazon*.

Our work was made possible through the continued financial and logistic support provided by *Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University*, and *Northwestern University*.











COVER MEMO

Summary Memo — August 4, 2021

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From April 2020 through July 2021, we conducted multiple waves of a large, 50-state survey, some results of which are presented here. You can find previous reports online at covidstates.org.

Note on methods:

Between June 9 and July 7, 2021, we surveyed 20,669 individuals across all 50 states plus the District of Columbia. The survey was conducted by PureSpectrum via an online, nonprobability sample, with state-level representative quotas for race/ethnicity, age, and gender (for methodological details on the other waves, see covidstates.org). In addition to balancing on these dimensions, we reweighted our data using demographic characteristics to match the U.S. population with respect to race/ethnicity, age, gender, education, and living in urban, suburban, or rural areas. This was the latest in a series of surveys we have been conducting since April 2020, examining attitudes and behaviors regarding COVID-19 in the United States.

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What Americans think about people who are not vaccinated

COVID-19 continues to spread in the United States, driven by the Delta variant and fueled by the large number of unvaccinated individuals in the country. As a result, the role of unvaccinated Americans has received increasing attention from political and media elites. CDC director Rochelle Walensky, for instance, <u>called the current situation</u> "a pandemic of the unvaccinated". President Biden <u>noted that</u> "We have a pandemic for those who haven't gotten a vaccination. It's that basic, that simple."

This rhetoric, in turn, has at times shifted into blaming the unvaccinated for the continued spread of the disease. Governor Ivey of Alabama <u>made her position clear</u>: "it's time to start blaming the unvaccinated folks, not the regular folks. It's the unvaccinated folks that are letting us down". These statements, and the resulting potential impact on public opinion, may have important effects, both on individual behaviors, and on public policy. For individuals, it may result in increased normative pressure to get vaccinated. And at the policy level, these views may increase support for mandates that people get vaccinated -- as indeed, we have begun to see (read about it in our <u>Report #52</u> and <u>Report #58</u>).

In this report, we evaluate how people feel about those who are vaccinated and those who are not. A common way of measuring these feelings is through <u>feeling thermometers</u> – special survey items aimed at capturing a respondent's overall level of warmth towards a particular person, group, or idea. Two of the thermometer questions we asked measured feelings towards "People who are vaccinated against COVID-19" and "People who are NOT vaccinated against COVID-19", with response options ranging from 0 to 100 degrees. These are the two key outcome variables for this report (see the appendix for full question wording). To evaluate the gap between feelings towards those who are vaccinated against COVID-19 and those who are not, we take the difference in scores between the two corresponding thermometer questions. That tells us how much more favorably respondents view one group compared to the other. Our analyses examine how feelings expressed by the respondents are linked to factors such as partisanship, education, gender, age, income, place of residence and personal vaccination status, among others.

Overall, our findings suggest that people's own vaccination status predicts how they are likely to feel about others. In general, the same features that correlate strongly with one's own desire to get the vaccine also correlate with attitudes toward others' vaccination decisions. On average, respondents tend to report feeling quite warmly towards those who are vaccinated (average 78 degrees) and neutral or cold towards those who are not (average 45 degrees). This points to a very large difference in feelings towards vaccinated versus unvaccinated people, with a national average of 33 degrees.

Key Takeaways

- On average, Americans have warmer feelings towards people who are vaccinated against COVID-19. On a thermometer scale from 0 to 100 degrees, the average feeling towards people who are vaccinated is 78 degrees, versus 45 degrees for those who are not vaccinated.
- In particular, people who are vaccinated themselves tend to report an average of 86 degrees towards others who are vaccinated and 35 degrees towards those who are not. In contrast, those who are not vaccinated feel the same towards other people regardless of vaccination status, reporting an average of 64 degrees for both groups.
- Among partisans, Democrats and Biden voters, feel warmest towards people who
 are vaccinated (85 degrees average) and coldest towards those who are not
 vaccinated (38 degrees average). However, even Republicans and Independents
 feel substantially warmer towards vaccinated individuals than they do towards the
 unvaccinated (average difference of 22 degrees for Independents and 17 degrees
 for Republicans for feelings towards people who are vaccinated compared to
 people who are not).
- Americans over 65 report the coldest feelings towards people who are not vaccinated (average 36 degrees) and warmest towards people who are vaccinated (average 85 degrees), compared to all other age groups.

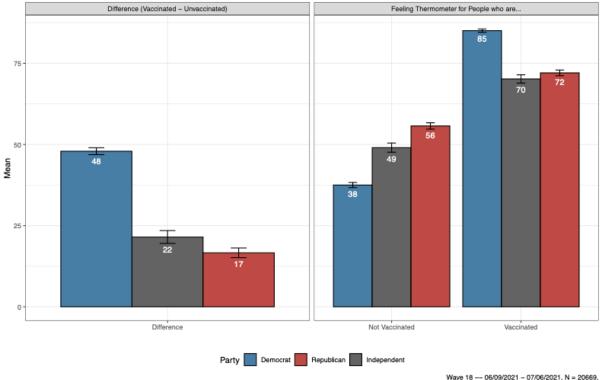
We turn now to our examination of subgroup differences with respect to sentiment towards the vaccinated and unvaccinated.

POLITICAL PARTY

Starting with political party affiliation, Figure 1 shows a clear partisan divide between Democrats and Republicans in terms of their opinions towards those who are and are not vaccinated against COVID-19. All three partisan groups feel substantially warmer towards those who are vaccinated; but overall, Democrats tend to experience the greatest difference in feelings towards people who are vaccinated compared to people who are not vaccinated (48 degree difference on average) compared to Republicans (17 degrees difference on average) with Independents in the between (average difference of 22 degrees).

Vaccine Perceptions and Party

Please rate on a feeling thermometer the following group: [People who got vaccinated/People who did NOT get vaccinated]



Wave 18 — Us/Us/ZUZ1, N = ZUBB9,
Error bars display 95% Confidence Intervals.
The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States
(A Joint Project by Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University,
and Northwestern University), www.covidstates.org

Figure 1: Feelings towards people who are and are not vaccinated against COVID-19 by Political Party¹

Democrats are comparatively more favorable towards people who are vaccinated against COVID-19 compared to Republicans and this difference is statistically significant. On average, Democrats gave an average rating of 85 degrees towards people who are vaccinated while Republicans gave an average feeling of 72 degrees. Comparing Independents to Republicans, Independents feel slightly colder (70 degrees) towards people who are vaccinated than Republicans (72 degrees), but this difference is not statistically significant compared to Republicans.

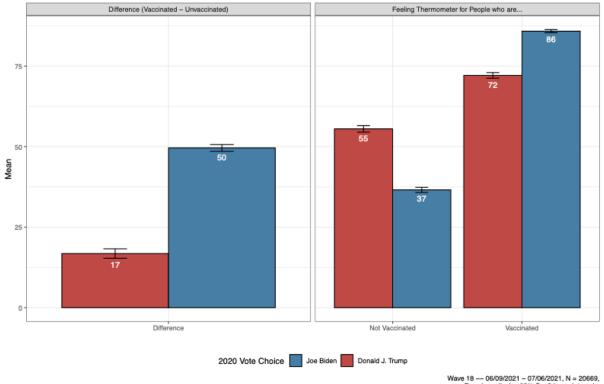
On the other hand, there is a substantial difference between Democrats, Republicans and Independents regarding people who are not vaccinated against COVID-19. Democrats, on average, have the coldest feelings towards those who are not vaccinated, reporting an average of 38 degrees. Republicans, on average, report feeling the warmest, with an average of 56 degrees. Independents are between, reporting an average of 49 degrees, signaling that they are feeling rather neutral towards this group.

¹ The aggregate data for the figures are included in the appendix, Table A.2.

2020 VOTE CHOICE

Vaccine Perceptions and Vote Choice

Please rate on a feeling thermometer the following group: [People who got vaccinated/People who did NOT get vaccinated]



Wave 18 — 06/09/2021 - 07/06/2021, N = 20669, Error bars display 95% Confidence Intervals. The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States (A Joint Project by Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University), www.covidstates.org

Figure 2: Feelings towards people who are and are not vaccinated against COVID-19 by 2020 Vote Choice

Unsurprisingly, the results by vote choice, shown in Figure 2, convey a similar message. Joe Biden voters were, on average, colder (37 degrees) towards people who are not vaccinated compared to voters for Donald Trump (55 degrees). Towards vaccinated people, Biden voters reported an average of 86 degrees while Trump voters reported an average of 72 degrees.

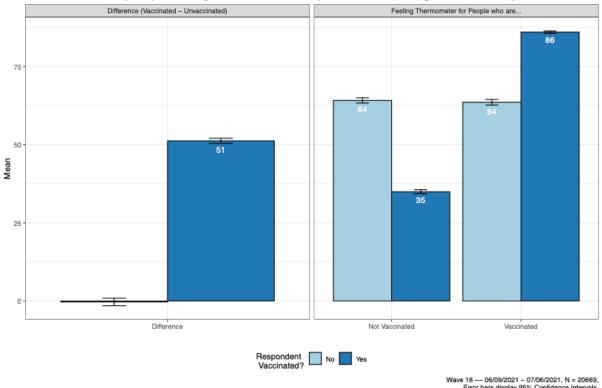
PERSONAL VACCINATION STATUS

Unsurprisingly, there are enormous differences in sentiment toward the vaccinated/unvaccinated based on their own vaccination status. Respondents who are vaccinated themselves feel very warmly towards others who have gotten the vaccine, reporting an average of 86 degrees towards this group. They also feel very coldly towards those who did not receive the vaccine, reporting an average of 35 degrees towards the

unvaccinated. For people who did not receive the vaccine themselves, their feelings towards those who did and did not get vaccinated are quite similar, reporting an average of 64 degrees for both. This suggests that, on average, people who are not vaccinated themselves do not feel differently about others based on their COVID-19 vaccination status, which contrasts sharply with people who are vaccinated themselves.

Vaccine Perceptions and Personal Vaccination Status

Please rate on a feeling thermometer the following group: [People who got vaccinated/People who did NOT get vaccinated]



wave 16 — Usi/Usi/Zul7 i. 9 = Zubosy.
Error bars display 95% Confidence intervals.
The COVID—19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States
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Figure 3: Feelings towards people who are and are not vaccinated against COVID-19 by Personal Vaccine Status

As shown in Figures 1 (for party) and 2 (for vote choice), there is a substantial partisan difference in attitudes towards people who are vaccinated and not vaccinated. Figure 3 shows that people who are vaccinated are generally more favorable towards others who are also vaccinated. Combining these characteristics, we show in Figure 4 the intersection between partisanship and personal vaccination status on feelings towards people who did and did not get a shot. Overall, people who have gotten the vaccine are more likely to feel positively towards other people who got the vaccine and negatively towards those who did not, regardless of party. What seems striking are the differences in perceptions: among

Democrats, unvaccinated respondents are more likely to feel more positive about people who are vaccinated compared to those who are not (average difference of 15 degrees). On the other hand, Republicans who have not been vaccinated feel warmer towards people who did not get the vaccine compared to those who have (average difference of 15 degrees), suggesting the average feeling towards vaccinated people is actually lower than unvaccinated people.

Vaccine Perceptions By Vaccination Status and Party

Please rate on a feeling thermometer the following group: [People who got vaccinated/People who did NOT get vaccinated]

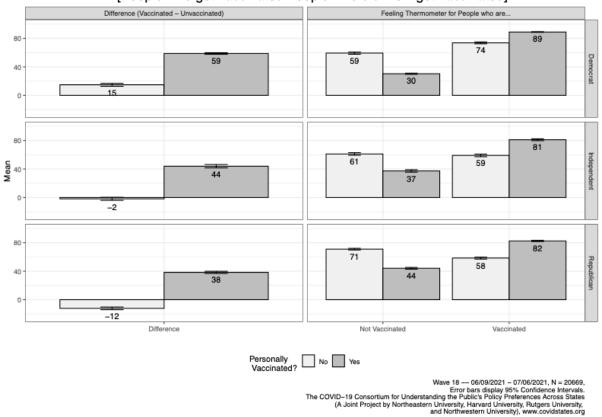


Figure 4: Feelings towards people who are and are not vaccinated against COVID-19 by Personal Vaccine Status and Party Identification

EDUCATION LEVEL

Education has a strong correlation with feelings respondents have towards others based on vaccination status. The gap between feelings towards vaccinated versus unvaccinated others is the largest among people who are more educated than those with lower education attainment. Highly educated respondents feel warmer towards people who are vaccinated and colder towards those who are not. For example, looking at people who are vaccinated against COVID-19, Figure 5 shows that Americans with at least a college degree or higher tend to feel the warmest towards vaccinated people, reporting an average of at

least 81 degrees. This difference is statistically significant when comparing those with college degrees to those with only some college or less. Those with only some college report an average of 79 degrees while those with a high school diploma or no high school completed report an average of 74 degrees or lower. While people generally feel warmly towards those who are vaccinated, there are still substantial differences at different education levels.

Turning to attitudes towards those who are not vaccinated against COVID-19, we see a similar picture. Generally, respondents are neutral at best towards this group, but the difference between those who have a college degree and those who do not are also statistically significant. On average, those who receive a Bachelor's degree or higher report feeling cold towards those who are not vaccinated, at about 41 degrees. Those who only attended some college degree or less education report an average of 45 degrees or higher, with those who do not have a high school diploma reporting an average of 52 degrees towards those who are not vaccinated.

Vaccine Perceptions and Education

Please rate on a feeling thermometer the following group: [People who got vaccinated/People who did NOT get vaccinated]

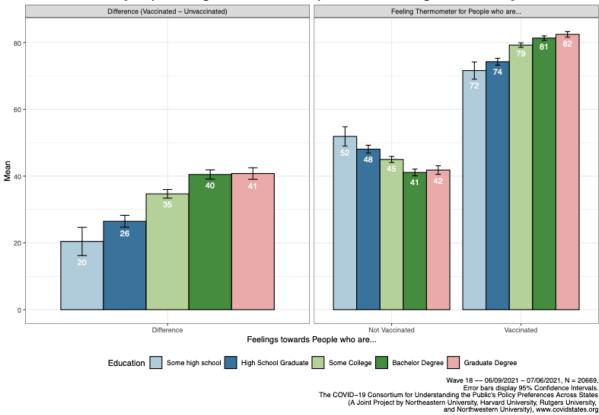


Figure 5: Feelings towards people who are and are not vaccinated against COVID-19 by Education

GENDER

There does not seem to be a significant difference between the attitudes of men and women towards people who are and are not vaccinated against COVID-19. On average, as shown in Figure 6, men and women report feeling 45 degrees towards those who are not vaccinated and 78 degrees towards people who are vaccinated.

Vaccine Perceptions and Gender Please rate on a feeling thermometer the following group: [People who got vaccinated/People who did NOT get vaccinated]

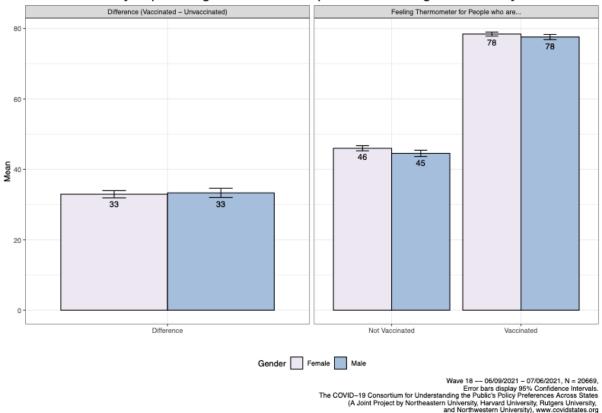


Figure 6: Feelings towards people who are and are not vaccinated against COVID-19 by Gender

PLACE OF RESIDENCE

Overall, there seems to be a slight urban-rural divide for feelings towards people based on their vaccination status. Urban residents tend to have the largest gap between their feelings towards people who are vaccinated compared to those who are not (average difference of 36 degrees). Rural residents, in contrast, have the smallest difference (average difference of 25 degrees). This is unsurprising, especially since <u>rural residents tend to be</u> more conservative when it comes to social and political issues. However, though the divide is not as stark as the discussion of partisanship differences in Figure 1, rural residents do

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report slightly warmer feelings towards people who are not vaccinated (average 50 degrees) compared to their urban counterparts (average 44 degrees) and slightly colder feelings towards people who are vaccinated (average 75 degrees) compared to urban residents (average 80 degrees).

Vaccine Perceptions and Place of Residence Please rate on a feeling thermometer the following group:

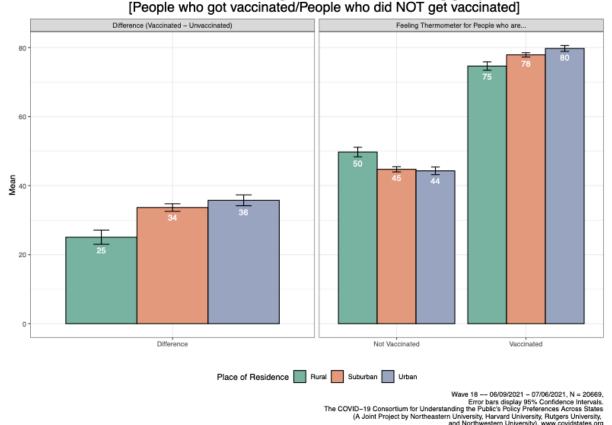


Figure 7: Feelings towards people who are and are not vaccinated against COVID-19 by Place of Residence

Looking beyond a simple urban-rural divide and turning to a state-by-state comparison, Figures 8 and 9 demonstrate that there is a difference between states in their feelings towards people who are vaccinated (Figure 8) and people who are not (Figure 9). The difference by state is shown in Figure 10 (See Appendix Table A.1 for the specific numbers). From Figure 8, we see that residents in the New England states (especially Massachusetts and Vermont), Upper Midwest (Michigan and Wisconsin) and Western states (especially Washington and Nevada), on average, have a comparatively warmer feeling towards people who are vaccinated compared to states in the Northern Rocky Mountains region and the South, including Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas and South Carolina.

Feelings towards People Who Are Vaccinated

Please rate on a feeling thermometer the following group: [People who got vaccinated]

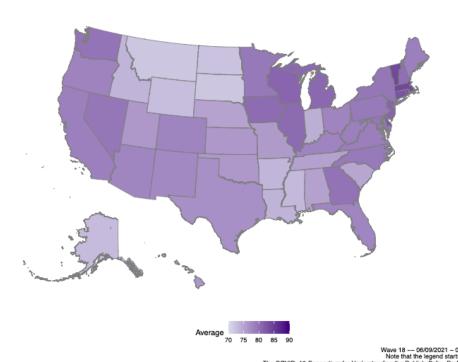


Figure 8: Feelings towards people who are vaccinated against COVID-19 by State

Feelings towards People Who Are Not Vaccinated

Please rate on a feeling thermometer the following group: [People who are not vaccinated]

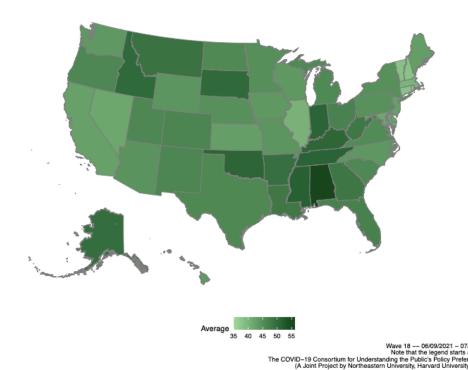


Figure 9: Feelings towards people who are not vaccinated against COVID-19 by State

Turning to respondents' feelings towards people who are not vaccinated, we can see in Figure 9 that people in New England, Upper Midwest, and Western states tend to feel the coldest towards people who are not vaccinated. The states with the warmest feelings for unvaccinated people are Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky, Indiana, Montana, Idaho and South Dakota.

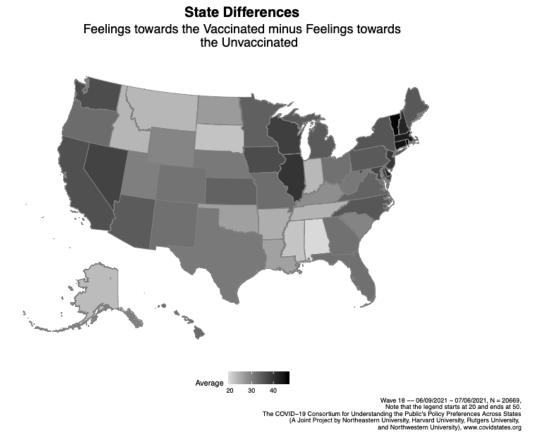


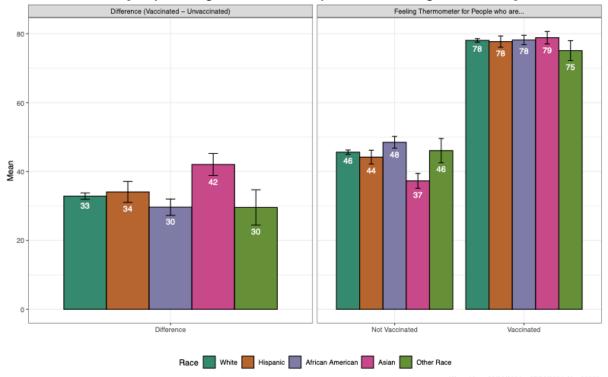
Figure 10: Difference in Feelings towards people who are vaccinated against COVID-19 and those who are not

RACE AND ETHNICITY

On average, all people, regardless of race, report the same level of warmth towards people who are vaccinated, at around 75 to 79 degrees (as shown in Figure 11). For feelings towards people who are not vaccinated, there are not big differences between Whites, African Americans, Hispanics and people identifying as other races; they all report an average feeling of 44 to 46 degrees. Asian Americans, on the other hand, feel coldest towards people who are not vaccinated, reporting an average of 37 degrees. Overall, compared to all other racial groups Asian Americans have the largest gap between their feelings towards people who are vaccinated and people who are not vaccinated.

Vaccine Perceptions and Race

Please rate on a feeling thermometer the following group: [People who got vaccinated/People who did NOT get vaccinated]



Wave 18 — 06/09/2021 - 07/06/2021, N = 20669, Error bars display 95% Confidence Intervals. The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States (A Joint Project by Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University), www.covidistates.org

Figure 11: Feelings towards people who are and are not vaccinated against COVID-19 by Race

AGE

Historically, older Americans tend to be more Republican while younger Americans tend to be more Democratic. Thus, we might expect younger Americans to report feeling the coldest towards those who are not vaccinated and warmest towards those who are. However, the results in Figure 12 do not show this effect. In fact, the reality seems to be quite the opposite. The oldest age group (which comprises respondents aged 65+) report the largest difference between feelings towards people who are vaccinated versus people who are not. Overall, they report the warmest feelings towards people who are vaccinated (average 85 degrees) and the coldest feelings towards people who are not vaccinated (average 36 degrees). The differences in the averages are statistically significant when compared to the other age groups. This might be because people who are over 65 are most vulnerable to the virus. Therefore, they have a personal interest for others to be vaccinated in order to protect themselves from contracting the virus and suffering severe health consequences.

Vaccine Perceptions and Age

Please rate on a feeling thermometer the following group: [People who got vaccinated/People who did NOT get vaccinated]

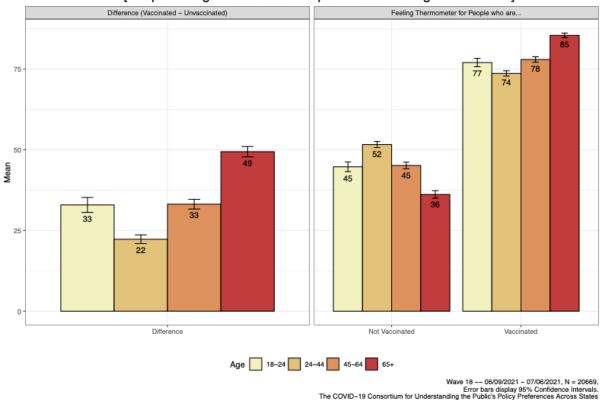


Figure 12: Feelings towards people who are and are not vaccinated against COVID-19 by Age

Interestingly, Americans who are between the ages of 24 and 44 feel the warmest of all the age groups towards people who are not vaccinated, reporting an average of 52 degrees. They also feel the coldest towards people who are vaccinated, reporting an average of 74 degrees. The difference in these two categories, compared to people in the age groups immediately younger and older than them are statistically significant. People in the 18 to 24 age group and the 45 to 64 age group are rather similar when it comes to feelings towards people who are not vaccinated (average 45 degrees) and people who are vaccinated (average 77 degrees).

When introducing partisan identity to the age equation, we see that there are some notable trends within parties between respondents of every age group as seen in Figure 13. Overall, while all people regardless of party feel warmer towards people who are vaccinated, Republicans, especially younger members, tend to be the most indifferent towards people's vaccine status. They are, across all partisan and age groups, the ones

ersity, Harvard University, Rutgers University, orthwestern University), www.covidstates.org who feel the warmest towards people who are not vaccinated. Across the board, older people tend to feel the coldest towards people who are unvaccinated and warmest towards people who are vaccinated. Democrats, across all age groups, tend to experience the greatest difference in feelings towards people who are vaccinated and people who are not.

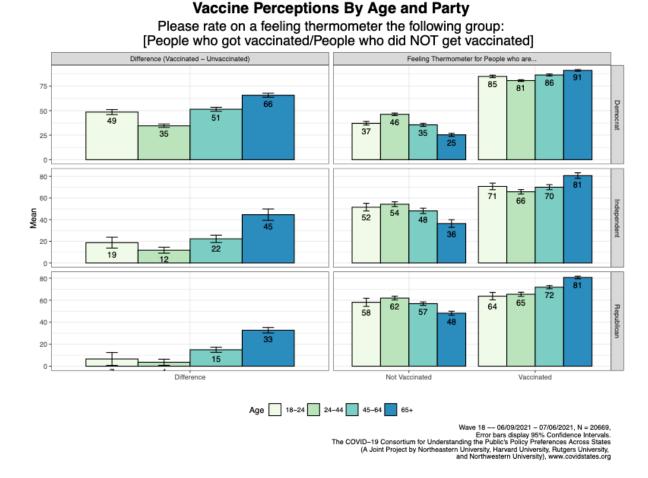


Figure 13: Feelings towards people who are and are not vaccinated against COVID-19 by Partisanship and Age

INCOME

Finally, for income, as the level of income increases, respondents feel colder towards vaccinated people (average 48 degrees for the lowest income bracket which gradually decreases to an average of 41 degrees for the highest earners) and feel warmer towards vaccinated people (average 73 degrees for the lowest income bracket which gradually increases to an average of 81 degrees for the highest earners). However, there does not appear to be significant differences between the lowest and highest earners nor for any group in between in their feelings towards people who are and are not vaccinated.

Like the other demographic groups discussed in this report, people generally feel substantially warmer towards people who are vaccinated compared to those who are not vaccinated.

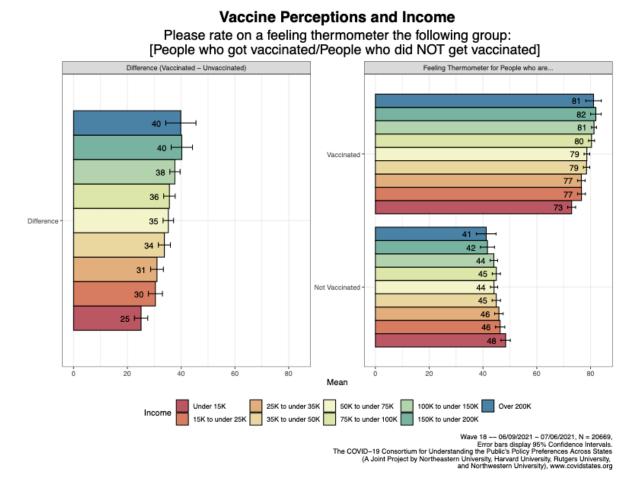


Figure 14: Feelings towards people who are and are not vaccinated against COVID-19 by Income

CONCLUSION

Overall, it is clear that the American public is beginning to draw a line between people who are vaccinated and people who are not. By gathering, analyzing, and representing respondents' subjective feelings towards vaccinated and unvaccinated people using the feeling thermometer, we have used a simple yet powerful tool to show that the public generally agrees with Governor Ivey's sentiments that: "It's the unvaccinated folks that are letting us down". These results suggest there will likely be increasing social pressure for people to get vaccinated themselves and expect those around them to do the same. These sentiments are likely also contributing to growing support for vaccine mandate policies requiring people to get vaccinated, especially children returning to school in the fall.

APPENDIX

Feeling thermometer question text:

In our June/July 2021 survey, we asked respondents the following:

"We'd like to get your feelings towards different groups on a scale of 0 to 100, which we call a "feeling thermometer." On this feeling thermometer scale, ratings between 0 and 49 degrees mean that you feel unfavorable and cold (with 0 being the most unfavorable/coldest). Ratings between 51 and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm (with 100 being the most favorable/warmest). A rating of 50 means you have no feelings one way or the other. How would you rate each of the following groups?"

Table A.1: Feelings towards people who are vaccinated and people who are not vaccinated, by state (Confidence intervals displayed in parentheses)

State	Vaccinated	Not Vaccinated	Difference
National	78 (0)	45 (1)	33 (1)
AK	73 (5)	50 (6)	23 (9)
AL	75 (3)	56 (4)	19 (5)
AR	73 (4)	49 (4)	24 (6)
AZ	78 (3)	44 (4)	35 (5)
CA	78 (3)	43 (3)	36 (5)
CO	78 (3)	46 (4)	32 (5)
CT	83 (3)	38 (4)	45 (5)
DC	82 (5)	40 (6)	41 (9)
DE	83 (3)	42 (4)	42 (5)
FL	78 (3)	47 (3)	32 (5)
GA	80 (3)	48 (4)	32 (5)
HI	76 (4)	44 (4)	33 (8)
IA	80 (3)	44 (4)	37 (6)
ID	74 (4)	50 (5)	23 (7)
IL	81 (3)	40 (3)	40 (5)
IN	74 (3)	51 (4)	23 (5)
KS	76 (4)	43 (4)	34 (7)
KY	78 (3)	51 (4)	28 (5)

LA	74 (4)	48 (4)	26 (6)
MA	84 (3)	40 (4)	44 (6)
MD	79 (3)	42 (4)	38 (6)
ME	78 (3)	43 (4)	35 (6)
MI	81 (3)	46 (4)	35 (5)
MN	79 (3)	45 (4)	34 (5)
MO	76 (3)	44 (4)	32 (5)
MS	73 (3)	52 (4)	22 (6)
MT	72 (5)	49 (5)	23 (9)
NC	79 (3)	44 (3)	35 (5)
ND	72 (5)	46 (6)	27 (10)
NE	75 (4)	45 (4)	31 (6)
NH	80 (4)	38 (4)	42 (7)
NJ	81 (2)	43 (4)	40 (5)
NM	78 (4)	46 (5)	32 (6)
NV	79 (3)	42 (4)	38 (5)
NY	79 (2)	45 (3)	36 (5)
ОН	78 (3)	47 (3)	32 (5)
OK	76 (3)	51 (4)	26 (6)
OR	78 (3)	46 (4)	32 (6)
PA	79 (3)	45 (4)	35 (5)
RI	83 (3)	37 (4)	47 (6)
SC	75 (3)	46 (4)	29 (5)
SD	72 (4)	50 (5)	22 (8)
TN	75 (3)	51 (4)	24 (5)
TX	77 (3)	46 (3)	31 (5)
UT	76 (3)	46 (4)	30 (6)
VA	79 (3)	46 (4)	34 (6)
VT	84 (3)	38 (5)	46 (7)
WA	80 (3)	44 (3)	36 (5)
WI	81 (2)	44 (4)	38 (5)
WV	78 (3)	48 (5)	31 (6)
WY	73 (5)	44 (6)	29 (9)

Table A.2: Aggregate data for report figures, sorted alphabetically by demographic class

Demographic	Vaccinated	Not Vaccinated	Difference
Age:			
18-24	77 (1)	45 (2)	33 (2)
24-44	74 (1)	52 (1)	22 (1)
45-64	78 (1)	45 (1)	33 (1)
65+	85 (1)	36 (1)	49 (2)
Education:			
Some high school	72 (3)	52 (3)	20 (4)
High School Graduate	74 (1)	48 (1)	26 (2)
Some College	79 (1)	45 (1)	35 (1)
Bachelor's degree	81 (1)	41 (1)	40 (1)
Graduate Degree	82 (1)	42 (1)	41 (2)
Gender:			
Female	78 (1)	46 (1)	33 (1)
Male	78 (1)	45 (1)	33 (1)
Income:			
Under 15K	73 (1)	48 (2)	25 (2)
15K to under 25K	77 (1)	46 (2)	30 (3)
25K to under 35K	77 (1)	46 (2)	31 (2)
35K to under 50K	79 (1)	45 (2)	34 (2)
50K to under 75K	79 (1)	44 (1)	35 (2)
75K to under 100K	80 (1)	45 (2)	36 (2)
100K to under 150K	81 (1)	44 (1)	38 (2)
150K to under 200K	82 (2)	42 (3)	40 (4)
Over 200K	81 (3)	41 (4)	40 (6)
Political Party:			
Democrat	85 (1)	38 (1)	48 (1)
Independent	70 (1)	49 (1)	22 (2)
Republican	72 (1)	56 (1)	17 (1)

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	White	78 (1)	46 (1)	33 (1)
	Hispanic	78 (2)	44 (2)	34 (3)
	African American	78 (1)	48 (2)	30 (2)
	Asian	79 (2)	37 (2)	42 (3)
	Other Race	75 (3)	46 (4)	30 (5)
Place of Residence:				
	Rural	75 (1)	50 (1)	25 (2)
	Suburban	78 (1)	45 (1)	34 (1)
	Urban	80 (1)	44 (1)	36 (2)
(Personally) Vaccinated:				
	No	64 (1)	64 (1)	0 (1)
	Yes	86 (0)	35 (1)	51 (1)
Vote Choice 2020:				
	Donald J. Trump	72 (1)	55 (1)	17 (1)
	Joe Biden	86 (0)	37 (1)	50 (1)