

# Vaccine skepticism rises, with fewer Americans planning immediate COVID-19 vaccination: survey



Most Americans plan to wait to get a COVID-19 vaccination once one is approved, while some 25% say they never will. (Pixabay)

Vaccine skepticism is rising in the U.S. as political maneuvering and a trial setback make headlines and foster doubt.

Only 27% of respondents said last week they would get a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as it is ready, down six percentage points from a month ago, according to weekly tracking surveys by Engine, a media and marketing services company.

That's bad news for pharma companies developing coronavirus vaccines and trying to instill public confidence. Last week, nine biopharma CEOs at companies working on vaccines jointly pledged not to seek approvals or emergency use authorizations without conclusive positive data.

Pharma vaccine news also impacted consumers' vaccine inclination last week. Almost one-third (32%) of those surveyed indicated their confidence in a COVID-19 vaccine was "significantly reduced" after news about a vaccine trial pause. AstraZeneca and the University of Oxford stopped—then restarted within the week—their vaccine trial after a serious safety issue.

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Engine found that 77% of Americans would eventually get a COVID-19 vaccine—it's just that half plan to wait for more research and safety data before doing so.

Engine's data track with a CBS poll from last week in which only 21% of voters said they would get a vaccine now, down from 32% who said the same in late July. While the majority of people in that poll also agreed they would eventually get a vaccine, more than half said they plan to "wait to see what happens."

While Engine researchers did not ask specifically why people wouldn't get vaccinated immediately, the daily barrage of political news around the vaccines, science debates and ups and downs in clinical trials likely plays a role.

The difference between those who would get a vaccine quickly and those who will wait "suggests that there's not a great amount of trust that a vaccine will be proven safe before it's approved. And that lack of trust seems to be increasing," Engine Insights Senior Vice President Neil Wolch said.

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Of course, there's also a segment who say they won't get the vaccine no matter what. About nine percent of that group is against any vaccinations. However, more concerning to pharma may be the consistent 15% or so who say they're not anti-vaccine, but still won't get a COVID-19 vaccine even after safety and efficacy is proven.

Another sentiment pharma marketers need to consider is consumer doubt about a return to normal. Only 33% of Engine respondents were highly confident that life will "return to close to normal" after an effective vaccine is available.