

TRAVEL IN THE SUMMER OF 2021: VACCINATED AND UNVACCINATED PERSPECTIVES

The Harvard Opinion Research Program, in partnership with ASTHO and NPHIC, has conducted a series of surveys in order to provide robust evidence that can guide communications strategies in the evolving COVID-19 context. The current survey, Travel in the Summer of 2021: Vaccinated and Unvaccinated Perspectives, was conducted April 24 to May 4, 2021 among a nationally representative sample of 2801 adults, including 1118 who say they are likely to travel overnight this summer. Key findings and tips for state, territorial and local health departments were developed from the results and can be used to shape communications strategies for those traveling to and from their jurisdictions. Note: this survey was conducted prior to CDC's announcement on May 13 regarding revised mask guidance for fully vaccinated individuals.

KEY FINDINGS

- Most adults plan to travel domestically this summer- and more than once.
- Most travelers are vaccinated or plan to get the vaccine before travel, but the vast majority of those who are unlikely to get vaccinated before travel do not ever intend to get vaccinated.
 - *Unvaccinated travelers are also unlikely to take alternative precautions, like testing.*



- Travelers are largely looking to vacation or visit socially; they want to reconnect with others and de-stress now that travel seems less risky and restrictions have eased.
- Most feel that travel this summer is very important to them.
 - *Unvaccinated travelers are even more likely to say travel is a top priority.*



- Most travelers feel their trips will be shaped by avoiding coronavirus to some degree.
 - *Unvaccinated adults are less likely to say avoiding coronavirus will shape their plans.*
- Most are not concerned about the risks of travel for them or others.
 - *Unvaccinated adults are even less concerned.*



- Most travelers are receptive to mask-wearing policies in the travel context.
 - *But unvaccinated adults are substantially less supportive.*



- Many travelers say they will seek information about safer travel, though unvaccinated travelers much less so.
- Regulation and requirement information is more of a draw than broader safety guidance.
- Many who do look for information say they will likely check practical outlets connected to specific travel plans, such as booking websites as well as CDC, news or public health agencies. Social media was not commonly anticipated to be used.



COMMUNICATION IMPLICATIONS

- The majority of the public will need to hear travel safety messages.
- Segmenting messaging between vaccinated and unvaccinated travelers may be helpful.
 - *Recognizing the resistance to vaccination and alternative precautions among unvaccinated travelers is critical.*

- Messages may be better received if they acknowledge travel's emotional importance.
 - *Acknowledging the need for social connectedness and stress reduction may be particularly helpful.*

- Messages that focus on risks of travel overall may be less resonant than messages focused on high-risk situations, such as exposure to crowds.
- Messages should take into account that many travelers feel they have already taken steps to avoid coronavirus in their plans.
- Messages for unvaccinated travelers should account for very low risk perception.

- Leveraging receptivity to mask-wearing in specific contexts may be helpful.
 - *But substantial and targeted efforts will be needed to reach the unvaccinated.*

- Align broader safety messages with travel requirement information.
 - *Unvaccinated adults may need more information on arrival rather than before.*
- Reaching people through multiple channels – including practical travel sources – can dovetail with information seeking patterns in the travel context.
 - *Social media may be a less reliable channel, though leveraging social medial from travel-specific sites could be helpful.*

This project is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

