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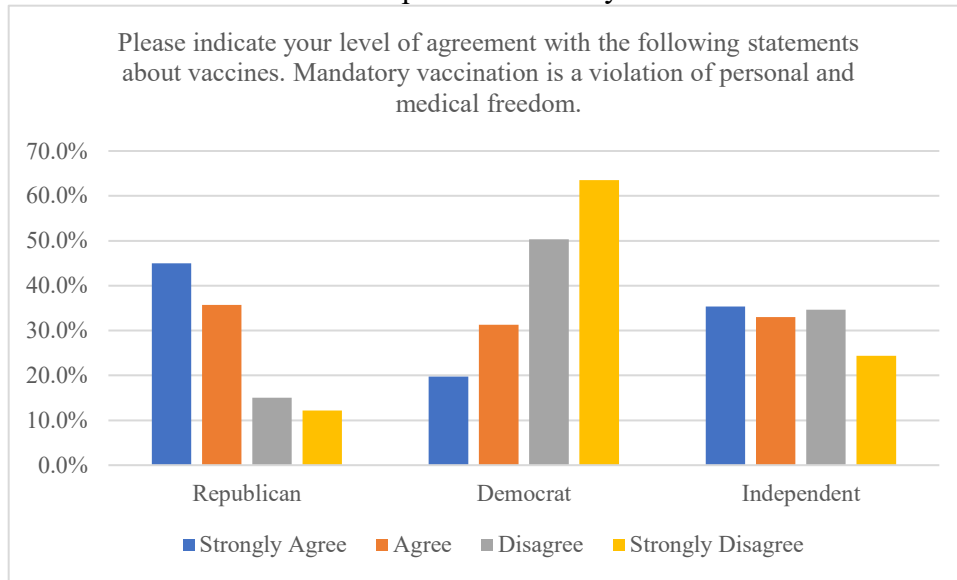
Understanding Vaccine Hesitancy in America
The Chapman University Survey of American Fears

As the Coronavirus spread across world, the search for a vaccine began alongside it. As early as mid-March of 2020, scientists began Phase 1 trials of an experimental vaccine for COVID-19. In the United States, the vaccine became available for some as early as January of 2020, with more groups becoming eligible for the vaccine as time went on. The development of vaccination did not go without worries – as some have cited concerns regarding the speed at which the vaccine became available to the public and others have worried about the potential side effects. Despite this, the vaccine has been strongly promoted by President Joe Biden as he set the goal of 100 million COVID-19 vaccinations in his first 100 days. To further explore vaccine hesitancy in America, I will be utilizing the Chapman Survey of American Fears (CSF), Wave 8 2020/21¹.

The notion of a mandatory COVID-19 vaccination became a divisive issue among Americans, as many struggled to balance concerns involving the spread of the Coronavirus with the fear of limiting freedom. The issue of whether mandatory vaccinations are a violation of personal and medical freedoms was especially interesting when looking at differences between political parties.

¹ Because the survey was fielded at the start of 2021 (Jan 5th to 15th), we have used 2020/2021 in the title.

Table 1: Partisanship and Mandatory Vaccinations

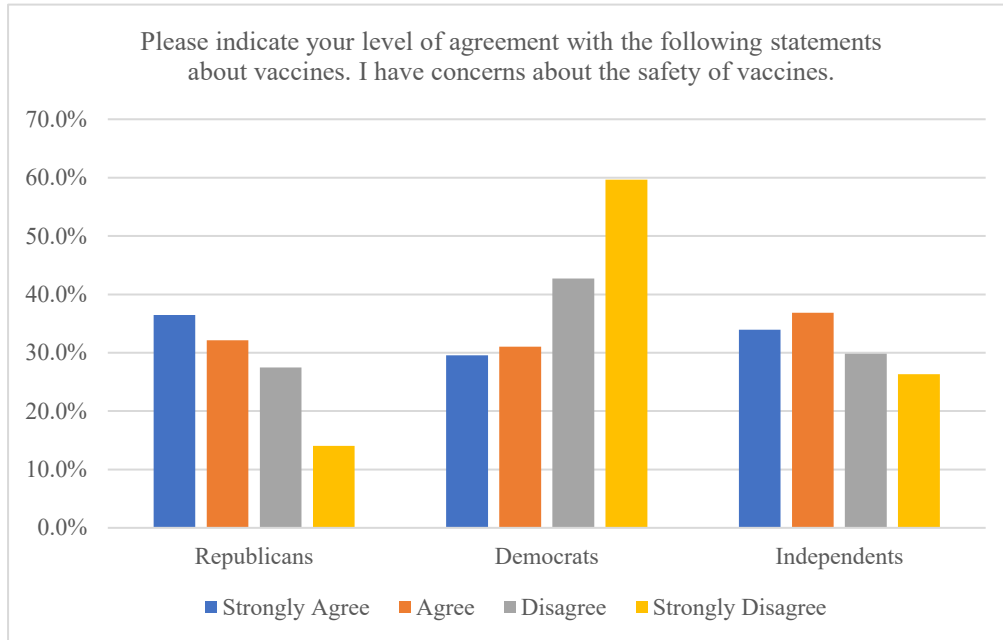


Source CSAF, Wave 7, Chapman University

Table 1 displays the levels of agreement among Republicans, Democrats, and Independents to mandatory vaccinations being a violation of personal and medical freedoms. As seen in Table 1, Republicans are much more likely to strongly agree or agree with this notion –most Republicans (45%) strongly agree that mandatory vaccinations violate personal and medical freedoms. In comparison, Democrats are much more likely to strongly disagree (63.5%) or disagree (50.4%) with mandatory vaccinations being a violation of personal and medical freedoms. Independents, unlike both Republicans and Democrats, have an even distribution of both agreement and disagreement to this statement as a roughly even percentage strongly agree, agree, and disagree with mandatory vaccinations being a violation of personal and medical freedoms.

Republicans, Democrats, and Independents also have differences in agreement about whether they have concerns about the safety of vaccines, as indicated by Table 2.

Table 2: Partisanship and Vaccine Safety

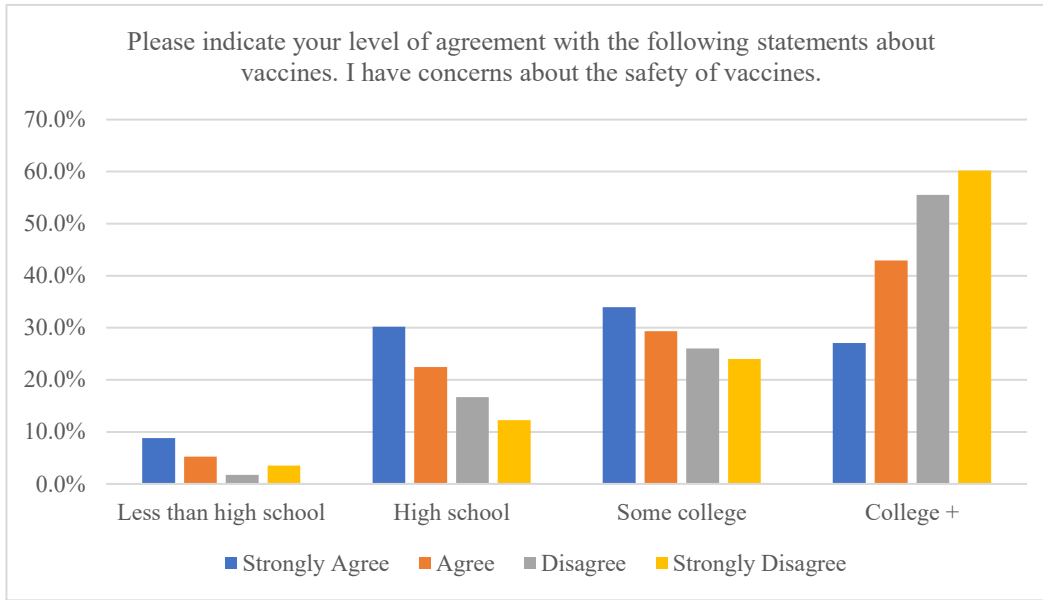


Source CSAF, Wave 7, Chapman University

Republicans are more likely to strongly agree or agree with having concerns about the safety of vaccines; very few Republicans (14%) indicated they strongly disagree with the statement. Unlike the Republicans, a large percentage of Democrats (59.6%) strongly disagree with having concerns about the safety of vaccines with the next largest percentage being those who disagree (42.7%). Only around 30% of Democrats strongly agree or agree with the statement. Like the opinions about mandatory vaccines, the Independents are spread out more evenly; the largest percentage of Independents (36.8%) indicated they agree with having concerns about the safety of the vaccine and the lowest percentage of Independents (26.3%) Strongly Disagree with the statement.

Aside from political parties, concerns involving the safety of vaccines also differ among those with varying education levels. When looking at agreement with having concerns about the safety of vaccine and the respondents' level of education, distinct findings were uncovered.

Table 3: Education Level and Vaccine Safety

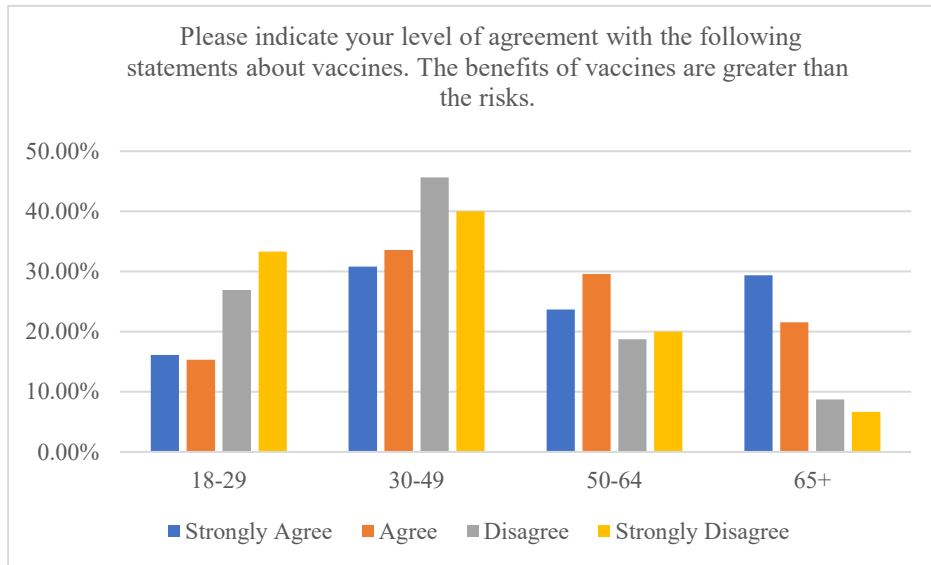


Source CSAF, Wave 7, Chapman University

Those who are most educated, obtaining a college degree or higher, are most likely to strongly disagree (60.2%) or disagree (55.6%) with having concerns about the safety of vaccines. The lowest percentage (27.2%) of those who have obtained a college degree or higher strongly agree with having concerns about the safety of vaccines. Interestingly, those who have some college experience seem to vary in their opinion about the safety of vaccines; there is only a 10% difference between largest percentage (34% who strongly agree) and the lowest percentage (24% who strongly disagree). The largest percentage of those who have less than a high school (8.8%) or a high school education (30.2%) strongly agree with having concerns about the safety of vaccines. Out of those who have less than a high school or high school education, very few strongly disagree or disagree about having concerns about the safety of vaccines. These findings suggest that as education increases, the concern about the safety of vaccines decreases.

As COVID-19 has been shown to generally impact older populations more drastically than younger populations, the opinions of vaccines among those in different age groups may differ. Table 3 indicates the levels of agreement to the belief that the benefits of vaccines are greater than the risks among 18-29 year old's, 30-49 year old's, 50-64 year old's, and those who are 65+.

Table 4: Age and Vaccine Risk



Source CSAF, Wave 7, Chapman University

As seen in Table 4, the youngest group of respondents, those who are 18-29 years old seem to mostly disagree (26.9%) or strongly disagree (33.3%) that the benefits of vaccines are greater than the risks. This contrasts with the opinions of those in the oldest group of respondents (those who are 65 years old or higher). The largest percentage in this group strongly agree (29.4%) that the benefits of vaccines are greater than the risks and the lowest percentage (6.7%) strongly disagree. Those who are in the age group of 30-49 year old's seem to largely disagree (45.6%) with the benefits of vaccines being greater than the risks with smaller percentages indicating to agree or strongly agree with the statement. This contrasts with those who are in the age group of 50-64 year old's, as the largest percentage (29.6%) agree that benefits of vaccines outweigh the risks. This seems to suggest that younger populations are more likely to have disagreement with the benefits of vaccines being greater than the risks and older populations are more likely to agree.

In general, a variety of factors influence one's opinion about a vaccine, including their political affiliation, age, and education level. While certain patterns can currently be seen regarding opinions of vaccines and different demographic groups, it will be important to continue to monitor the views surrounding COVID-19 vaccine as time goes on. This is especially true as understanding vaccine perceptions from the public may be fundamental to aiding COVID-19 relief efforts.