

TO: American Federation of Teachers
FROM: Guy Molyneux and Geoff Garin, Hart Research
DATE: April 6, 2021
RE: Survey of AFT Members on COVID-19 Vaccination

From March 26 to April 1, 2021, Hart Research Associates conducted a telephone survey of 1702 AFT members, including 893 K-12 members (teachers and PSRPs), on the issues of COVID-19 vaccination and safe opening of schools. The survey included oversamples to yield substantial samples of Black members (225 interviews) and Hispanic members (225 interviews).

K-12 OVERVIEW: Surveys of AFT's K-12 members have consistently shown that they support opening school for in-person instruction as long as essential safety precautions are in place. This new survey demonstrates they are doing their part to make that happen.

- **Eight out of nine (88%) K-12 members work in a school that is providing in-person instruction.**
- **Just 11% of K-12 members feel their school system has gone too far in resuming in-person instruction.**
- **K-12 members are embracing vaccination. Fully 86% have already gotten the vaccine (73%), have a vaccination scheduled (6%), or say they will get one (7%).**
- **85% of K-12 members say that protecting the students and staff at their school is an important motivation for getting vaccinated.**

MEMBER VACCINATION STATUS: AFT members, both in education and other fields, are getting vaccinated at a very high rate: fully 81% have either been vaccinated (76%) or have a vaccination appointment (5%). Members not yet vaccinated divide fairly evenly between saying they will get vaccinated (8% of all members) or will probably or definitely not get a vaccine (10% of all members). The vaccination rates and intention to get vaccinated varies among the AFT's divisions, as well as along lines of age, partisanship, and race.

Fully four out of five AFT members are already vaccinated (76%) or have a vaccination appointment (5%). Most have been vaccinated at a state or local government site (60%), while 15% received their vaccinations at a pharmacy and 11% at work (including 79% in Healthcare and 31% of Public Employees).

AFT Members' Vaccination Status

	Vaccinated	Will get vaccinated	Won't get vaccinated
ALL MEMBERS	81%	8%	10%
K-12 Teachers	80%	6%	12%
PSRPs	69%	13%	15%
All K-12	79%	7%	13%
Higher Education	79%	16%	5%
Healthcare	85%	7%	8%
Public Employees	72%	13%	15%
Retirees	87%	7%	5%
18-39 (active)	71%	12%	16%
40-54	81%	7%	10%
55+	85%	7%	8%
Whites	85%	6%	9%
Hispanics	72%	13%	14%
Blacks	66%	17%	16%
Blacks under 50	56%	17%	26%
Blacks age 50+	73%	18%	8%
Democrats	88%	7%	4%
Independents	71%	11%	16%
Republicans	71%	7%	21%

Division. Retirees (87%) and Healthcare members (85%) report the highest vaccination rates, while Public Employees (72%) and PSRPs (69%) report lower than average rates. The lowest rates of vaccine resistance (won't get vaccinated) are found in Higher Ed (5%), Healthcare (8%), and Retirees (5%), while that rate exceeds 10% among Teachers (12%), PSRPs (15%), and Public Employees (15%).

Age. A consistent pattern is that younger members are less likely to already be vaccinated, and more likely to express resistance to vaccination, than older members. Active members under 40 (16%) are twice as likely as those age 55 and over (8%) to say they won't get vaccinated (and three times as likely as retirees). Surely this reflects in part the higher health risk facing older people from the disease; in addition, younger members are more likely to have already had COVID-19 (including 25% of unvaccinated members under age 40).

Party. Polls consistently find a partisan split in vaccination behavior and attitudes, with Democrats generally being pro-vaccine, Republicans less so, and independents in between. So it's especially impressive that 72% of AFT's GOP members are already vaccinated or have an appointment. At the same time, Republican members who remain unvaccinated are much more likely to have made a conscious decision not to do so. As a result, fully 21% of Republican members (and 16% of independents) say they won't get vaccinated, compared to just 4% of Democrats.

Race and ethnicity. Both Hispanic members (72%) and Black members (66%) are less likely than white members (85%) to be vaccinated at this point. However,

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unvaccinated white members express less willingness to get the vaccine than either Hispanic or Black unvaccinated members. Still, members of color overall are more likely than white members to say they will not get vaccinated. Black members under age 50 especially stand out here (26% say they won't get vaccinated), while few older Black members (8%) express resistance.

THE UNVACCINATED: The main reason members delay vaccination (or plan not to do it) is concern about the safety of the vaccine, and fear of side effects, much more than doubts about efficacy. However, a considerable portion of the unvaccinated express only moderate levels of concern and remain open to vaccination.

The unvaccinated fall into two groups of roughly equal size: those who say they probably or definitely will get vaccinated (45%) and those who say they won't (48%) or are unsure (7%). These groups have very different views of the vaccine and the risks it entails, so it would be a mistake to think of the unvaccinated as all "resisting" the vaccine. For many, vaccination may be a low priority, or they may have some safety concerns, but they have not rejected vaccination.

Concerns Among Unvaccinated

	<u>All Unvaccinated</u>	<u>Will get vaccine</u>	<u>Won't get vaccine</u>
I worry about the safety and long-term side effects of the vaccine	56%	33%	75%
I think the vaccine approval process was rushed, without adequate time to test for safety and effectiveness	51%	29%	69%
I do not think the vaccine will be effective.	17%	3%	29%
I do not think I will get very sick even if I do get COVID-Nineteen	16%	11%	21%
I do not trust vaccines in general	18%	3%	29%
I have a health condition that makes it risky for me to get the vaccine	17%	9%	24%

Messengers. Addressing the safety concerns of unvaccinated members and persuading them to get the vaccine is work that must be done by trusted messengers. Many of them do not trust government information sources or the media. Fortunately, the survey reveals that the union, along with vaccinated co-workers, is among the most trusted sources of information for these members. They also express strong confidence in their doctor, their pharmacist, and the CDC.

Most Trusted Information Sources for Unvaccinated Members

	All <u>Unvaccinated</u>	<u>Will get vaccine</u>	<u>Won't get vaccine</u>
Your doctor	76%	95%	61%
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or CDC	64%	92%	43%
Your pharmacist	58%	81%	39%
A co-worker who recently received the vaccine	54%	80%	36%
Your union	48%	67%	32%

Motivations for vaccination. Consistently, the most powerful motivator to get the vaccine is concern for the member's family and loved ones, even above concern for their own health. In addition, we find many AFT members are moved by a desire to protect the health of co-workers and the people they serve.

Strong Reasons to Get Vaccinated.

	All <u>Unvaccinated</u>	<u>Will get vaccine</u>	<u>Won't get vaccine</u>
To protect my family and loved ones.	66%	93%	44%
To save lives.	65%	91%	44%
To get back to normal life and resume normal activities.	59%	89%	35%
To keep my community healthy and safe.	57%	89%	31%
To protect students and staff at my school (K12)	55%	83%	39%
To protect myself	55%	86%	29%

Unvaccinated Hispanic members. Hispanic AFT members represent an important opportunity for expanding vaccination: one in seven (13%) are not vaccinated but say they probably or definitely will get the vaccine.

- Just 26% know more than five people who have been vaccinated (compared to 57% of all AFT members).
- 23% have already had COVID.
- 58% believe receiving the vaccine is painful, and 65% expect severe side effects.
- 38% say they have a health condition that makes it risky to receive the vaccine.
- 44% do not trust vaccines in general.

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- 61% say getting back to normal life and resuming normal activities is strong motivator.
- Most trusted messengers: the CDC, their doctor, Anthony Fauci, President Biden, a vaccinated co-worker.

Unvaccinated African-American members. Black members represent another opportunity for expanding vaccination: 17% are not vaccinated but say they probably or definitely will get the vaccine (and another 16% say they likely will not get vaccinated).

- Just 21% know more than five people who have been vaccinated (compared to 57% of all AFT members).
- Only 9% have already had COVID.
- 39% do not trust vaccines in general.
- 69% say getting back to normal life and resuming normal activities is strong motivator.
- Most trusted messengers: their doctor, the CDC, President Biden, Michelle Obama, and their pharmacist. Many also trust the union and their pastor.