

SumOfUs.org and Parents Together commissioned YouGov Blue to conduct a poll among adult American parents of children who are under 18 and enrolled in school or daycare. This survey included an oversample of parents who say they are unsure about getting the vaccine (“vaccine hesitant”) and parents who say they will not get it (“vaccine refusers”). Looking at both vaccinated and unvaccinated American parents, this report focuses on understanding the differences between these groups with respect to their use of and opinions about social media.

## Poll Highlights

- 75 percent of unvaccinated parents distrust mainstream media sources and get most of their information from social media. In contrast, 58 percent of vaccinated parents prefer to get most of their COVID-19 information from mainstream media.
- About half of American parents who are worried about catching or spreading the Delta variant blame social media for the spread of this variant.
- Two out of three of all parents agree that health misinformation is a problem in social media.

## Vaccinated parents are more likely to get COVID-related information from mainstream media while unvaccinated parents tend to get it from social media

Vaccinated parents are more likely to report getting COVID-related information from mainstream media while unvaccinated parents are more likely to report getting such news from social media. We asked respondents,

*Even if it isn't exactly right, which of the following is closest to your view?*

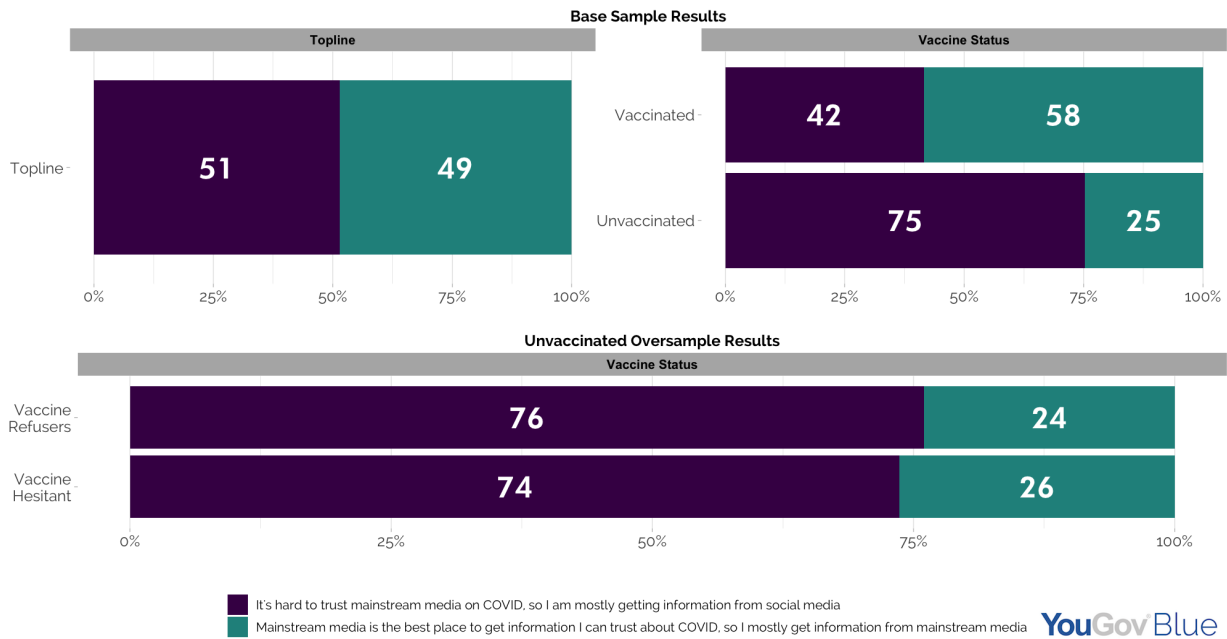
*<1> It's hard to trust mainstream media on COVID, so I am mostly getting information from social media*

*<2> Mainstream media is the best place to get information I can trust about COVID, so I mostly get information from mainstream media*

Here, we can see that overall trust in mainstream media vis-a-vis social media is divided among the parent population (51 percent trust social media and 49 trust mainstream media). When we look at these results broken out by vaccination status, however, we find a striking pattern: **75 percent of unvaccinated individuals say that they find it hard to trust the mainstream media on COVID-19, so they get their information from social media.** Only 42 percent of vaccinated respondents said that they prefer to get their information on social media, and 58 percent said that mainstream media is the best place to get trustworthy information. Trust in social media as a news source is much higher among the unvaccinated.

This poll also included an oversample of unvaccinated respondents, allowing us to analyze more in depth those who say they are unsure about getting vaccinated (“Vaccine Hesitant” respondents) and those who outright refuse to get the vaccine (“Vaccine Refusers”). Three

out of four unvaccinated respondents say they mostly get information from social media because they find it hard to trust the mainstream media. There is no significant difference in this question between vaccine refusers and vaccine hesitant respondents.



## Vaccinated parents worry about their kids getting COVID-19, while unvaccinated parents worry about COVID-19 vaccine side effects

We also asked respondents,

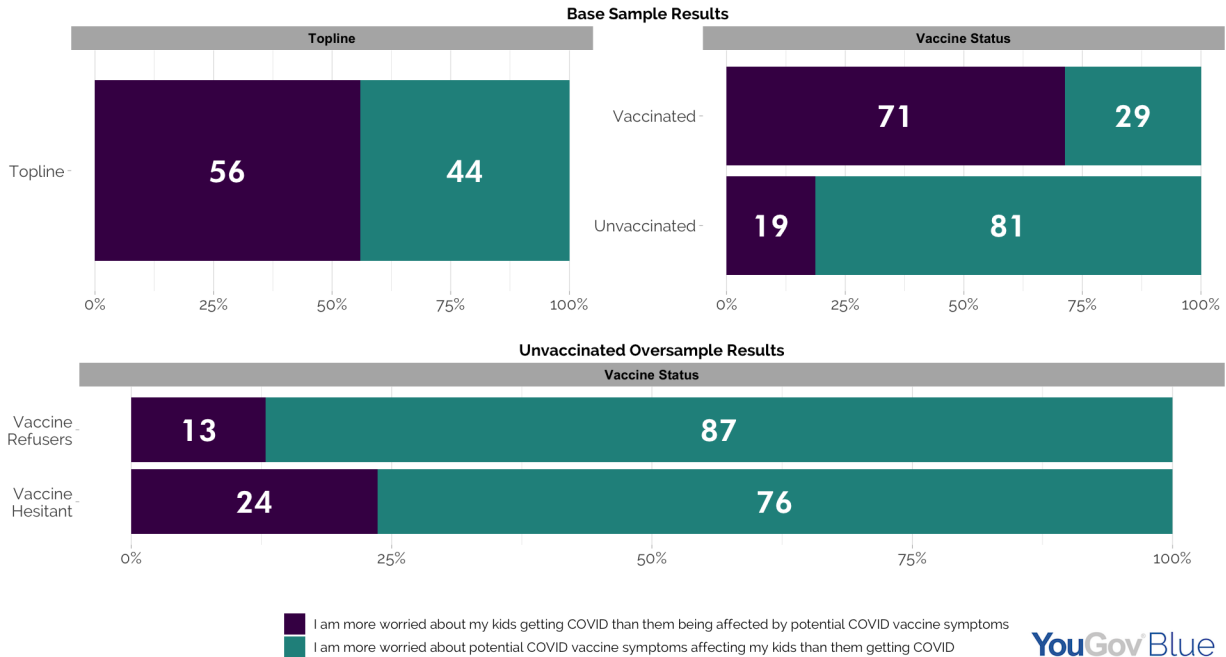
*Even if it isn't exactly right, which of the following is closest to your view?*

*<1> I am more worried about my kids getting COVID than them being affected by potential COVID vaccine symptoms*

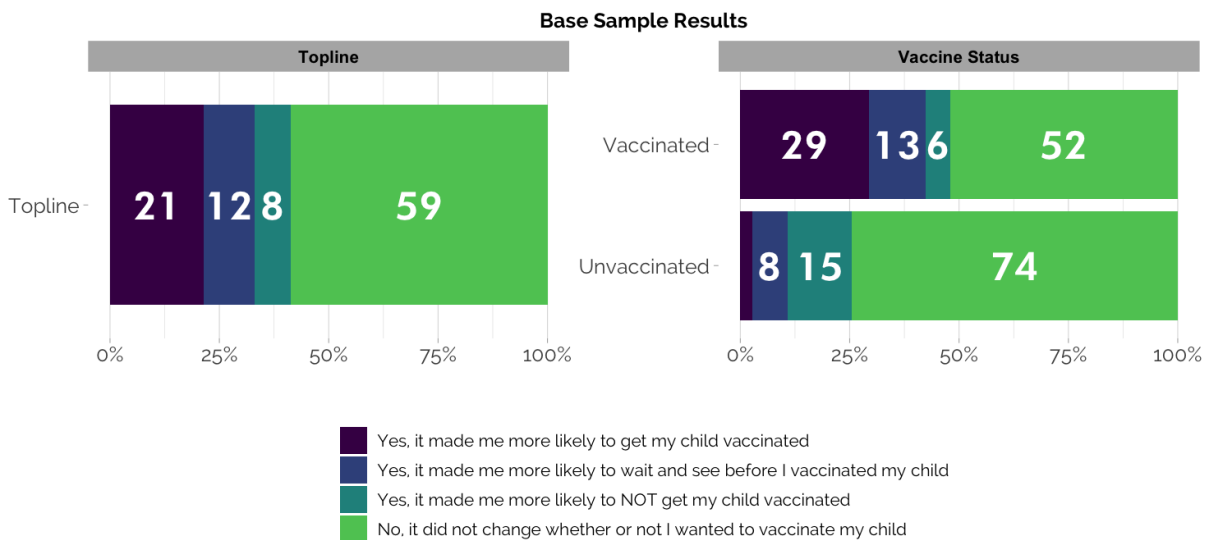
*<2> I am more worried about potential COVID vaccine symptoms affecting my kids than them getting COVID*

Parents overall are relatively split on this question -- 56 percent of those in the base sample say they are more worried about COVID while 44 percent are more worried about vaccine side effects. The differences, however, appear to be driven by the parents' vaccine status: **nearly three out of four parents who are vaccinated are worried about their kid getting COVID-19, while about four out of five parents who are not vaccinated are worried about the vaccine affecting their kids.** There are some differences across other demographics, but the starkest contrast happens with vaccine status.

Vaccine hesitant parents are slightly more likely to be worried about COVID-19 than are vaccine refusers, but this difference (7 percentage points) pales in comparison to the difference between vaccinated and unvaccinated respondents.



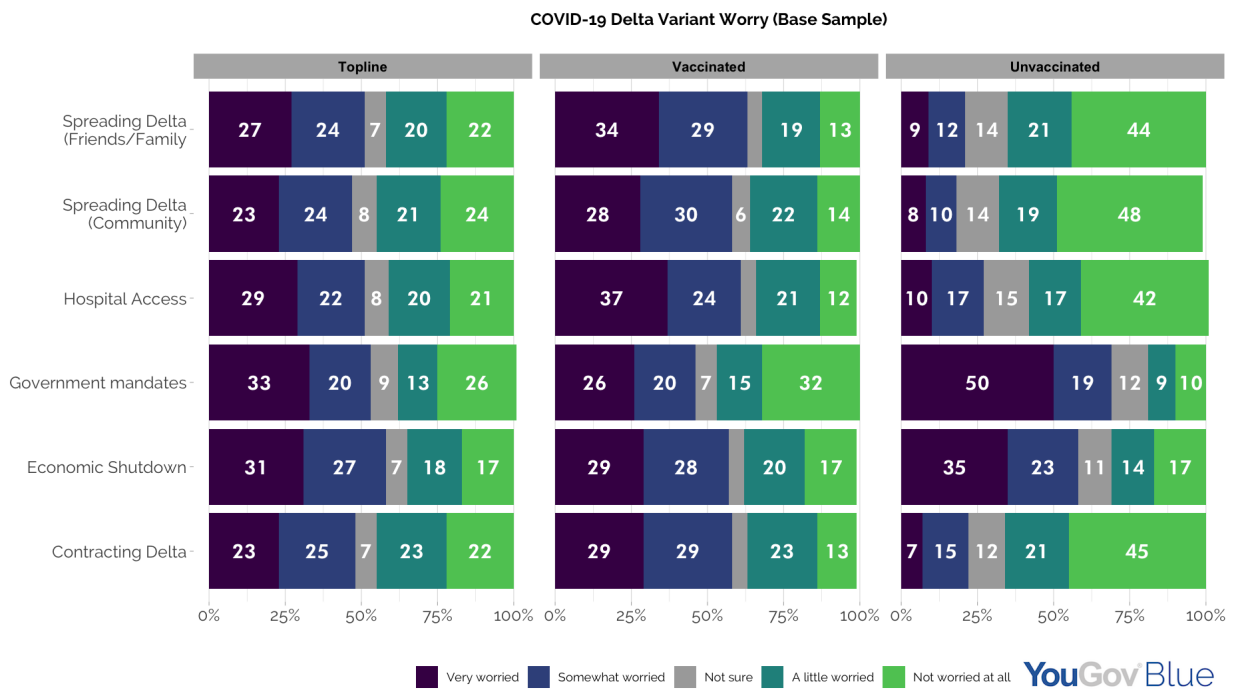
Moreover, approximately 15 percent of unvaccinated respondents say what they saw on social media made them more likely not to vaccinate their child, and another 8 percent said what they saw on social media made them more likely to wait and see before vaccinating their child. Among vaccinated parents, we see an opposite effect of social media, with social media making them more likely, on net, to vaccinate their child.



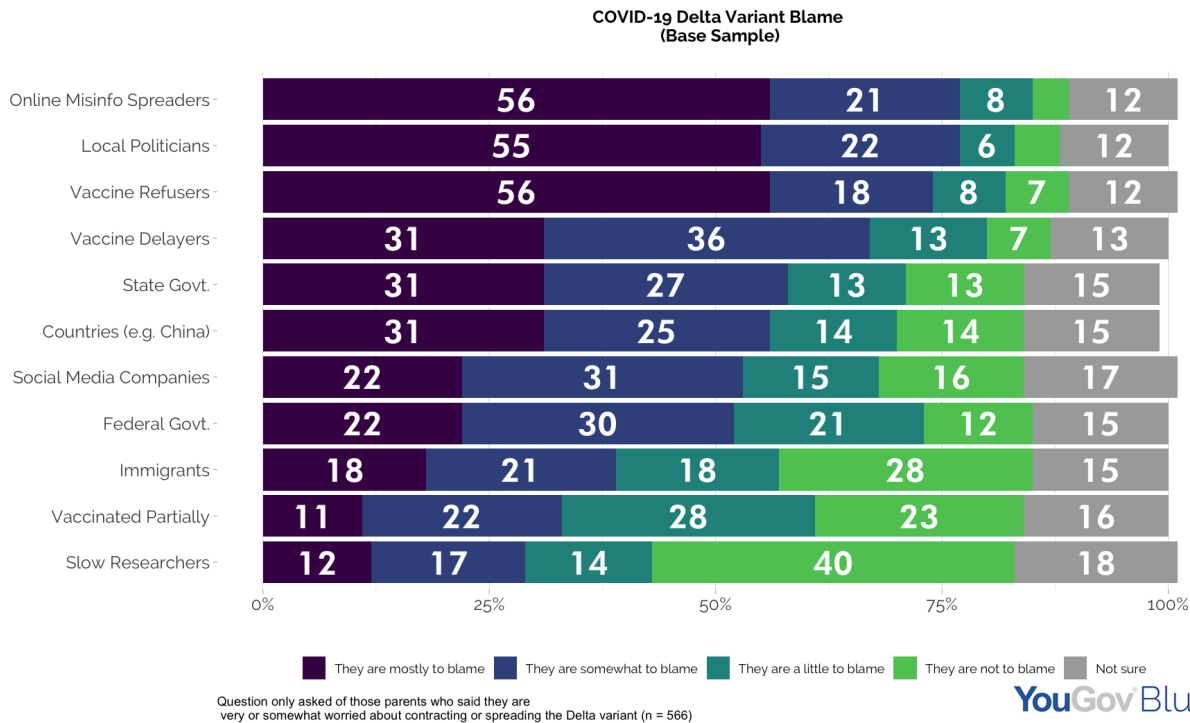
And since the beginning of the pandemic, based solely on your research online and on social media sites, have you changed your mind about whether or not you would vaccinate your child, whenever they are eligible?

## American parents who are worried about COVID-19 blame online misinformation spreaders for the spread of the Delta variant

This survey included a battery of questions to gauge what parents are worried about with regards to the Delta variant. The graph below highlights the answers to these questions in the base sample and breaks them out by respondent vaccination status. Overall, American parents are worried about different aspects of the Delta variant: **unvaccinated respondents are generally more worried about new government mandates and the economy shutting down, while vaccinated individuals are more worried about the Delta variant itself** (whether it is spreading it, contracting it, or it impacting hospital access).



This survey also included a question asked of those who were either very or somewhat worried either about (a) contracting the Delta variant or (b) spreading the Delta variant (n = 566 in the base sample). We find that **nearly 4 in 5 respondents who are worried about the Delta variant blame people who spread misinformation online for the rise of this strain of the Coronavirus. Additionally, 53 percent of these respondents also blame social media companies like YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter for the spread of the Delta variant.** Other culprits for this blame include local politicians (77 percent), vaccine refusers (74 percent), vaccine delayers (67 percent) and local state governments (56 percent). Respondents were less likely to blame slow research or those who are partially vaccinated.



## Almost two thirds of American parents agree that health misinformation is a problem in social media sites

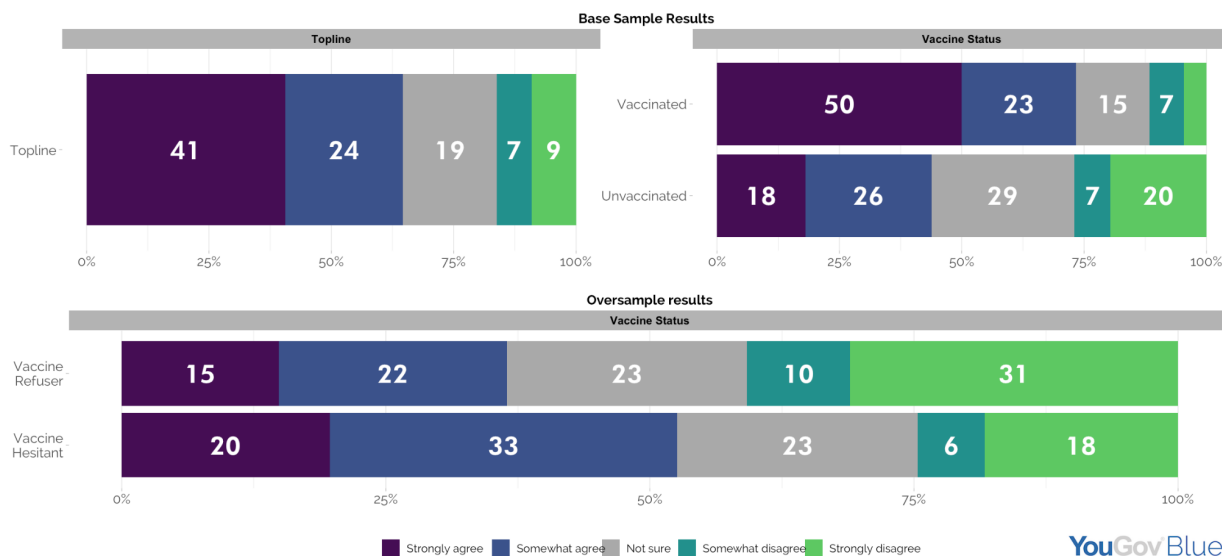
Recently, the Surgeon General, the nation's top doctor, has spoken about his concerns regarding COVID-19 misinformation being spread online, especially on social media. While we did not expect that most survey respondents would be familiar with this statement before the survey, we used the survey to tell them about it in a neutral way and ask their opinion on it. We asked respondents,

*Recently, the Surgeon General, the nation's top doctor, issued an advisory warning about misinformation about COVID-19, particularly spread online on social media sites. He said in an interview, "And we know that health misinformation harms people's health. It costs them their lives. Health misinformation takes away our freedom and our power to make decisions for us and for our families." Do you [agree or disagree] with the Surgeon General's report that misinformation is a problem online on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter?*

- <1> Strongly agree
- <2> Somewhat agree
- <3> Somewhat disagree
- <4> Strongly disagree
- <5> Not sure

Nearly two thirds of American parents said they either strongly (41 percent) or somewhat agree (24 percent) that health misinformation is a problem in social media platforms today. When we break these results out by vaccination status, we see that nearly three in four American parents who are vaccinated (73 percent) think that misinformation in social media is a significant problem. Conversely, only 44 percent of those who are unvaccinated said that they agree with the Surgeon General's statement. Part of these results can be explained by partisanship -- more conservative or Republican individuals are less likely to agree with the Surgeon General. These results are also driven by attentiveness to COVID-19 news -- those who are less likely to pay close attention to the state of the pandemic are also less likely to say that health misinformation online is a significant problem.

When we break out these results among the oversample of unvaccinated respondents, we see some significant differences across respondents who are vaccine refusers and hesitant: about half of those who are vaccine hesitant either strongly (20 percent) or somewhat (33 percent) agree with the Surgeon General's report, while 37 percent of those who are vaccine refusers do the same. On the other hand, 41 percent of refusers either strongly or somewhat disagree with the report, but 24 percent of hesitant respondents disagree. A similar share of hesitant and refuser respondents are unsure about whether they agree with the report.



**Conclusion**

American unvaccinated parents are significantly more likely to use social media outlets for their COVID-related news, while vaccinated parents are more likely to consume content from traditional media outlets. Even though most of them use it, American parents generally see social media as problematic--almost two thirds of parents agree with the Surgeon General's report about the dangers of COVID misinformation online and about half of parents blame disinformation in social media for the spread of the Delta variant.

### ***Methods Statement***

The base sample of this survey is based on 1224 interviews conducted by YouGov on the internet of parents of children under 18 whose children are enrolled in school or daycare. The oversample is based on 675 interviews conducted by YouGov on the internet of unvaccinated parents of children under 18 whose children are enrolled in school or daycare. Both samples were weighted according to gender, age, race/ethnicity, education, US Census region, and voter registration status based on voter registration lists, the U.S. Census American Community Survey, and the U.S. Census Current Population Survey, as well as 2016 and 2020 Presidential vote and vaccination status. The weights of the base sample range from 0.17 to 5.61 with a mean of 1 and a standard deviation of 0.6, while the weights of the oversample range from 0.12 to 6.13 with a mean of 1 and a standard deviation of 0.67. The margin of error (a 95% confidence interval) for the base sample is approximately 3.3% and for the oversample is approximately 4.6%. Some questions are held for future release.