

Get Shot Done: *Student Vaccine Confidence Research Report*

A comprehensive research report produced by Syracuse University student teams with Hill Communications and TNH Agency in partnership with Real Chemistry

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This report was developed based on digital survey responses from 472 Syracuse University students involved in a multitude of campus organizations and communities. The goal of our research was to better understand both students' confidence and hesitations toward the COVID-19 vaccine relative to their individual experiences on campus.

Key Survey Findings

What we learned from students

Statements:

- **Concerns and hesitations**
 - “It’s being so pushed [down] our throats to get it that it makes me wonder if I truly have freedom in this situation.”
 - “Some of the **side effects make me nervous**, especially with how exhausted and run down some people have felt afterwards and having to balance it with school work, but it’s not enough to turn me away from getting it.”
 - “I’d like to see how other people react to it in the long run. I’d like to have many kids in the future and I’d rather not get it so quickly and wait it out.”
 - Not sure the point of it if **we still have to wear masks, social distance, and not go back to normal lives** even though there are multiple strains”
 - “I want be able to have kids in the future”
- **Indifference**
 - “I’m not gonna get it but I’m completely supportive of everyone who wants to get it to get it! I think it’s awesome we have a vaccine, I just don’t want to get it yet.”
- **Trust**
 - “Because **I trust that it’s effective** and the sooner everyone can do their part to limit the COVID cases in the country/world/etc., the sooner we can get back on track to “normal” life.”
 - “Because I’ve read the research behind the vaccine and **I trust the science behind it**. It would make me feel safer in my community as well and I would protect others by not spreading the virus.”
- **Protection and safety**
 - “**I want to protect those around me**, and I want to contribute to hopefully achieving herd immunity in the future. Most Syracuse students aren’t from Syracuse or even upstate New York, and by continuing to be irresponsible or waiting to get vaccinated, we are causing significant harm to people in surrounding communities.”
- **Desire to go back to “normalcy”**
 - “Because **I want to not be in fear of getting sick every day**, and also I want Syracuse to let us into other dorms.”
 - “I want to return to normalcy as soon as possible. I’m tired of living my life in **isolation** and having **every part of my life be impacted** by this virus.”
 - **STATISTICS**
 - 2 responses said the pandemic has affected or damaged “**literally everything**”
 - 15 mentioned “**everything**” being affected

Statistics and Figures

The numbers behind the knowledge

In our survey of 472 Syracuse students, **87.9%** of respondents are white, **0.39%** are American Indian/Alaska Native, **5.2%** are Asian, **3.2%** are Black/African American, **0.37%** are Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, **2.9%** are other

- **86% of students** said they **are** open to taking the COVID vaccine as soon as it's made available to them
- **10.7% of students** said they **may be** open to taking the COVID vaccine as soon as it's made available to them
- **3.1% of students** said they **are not** open to taking the COVID vaccine as soon as it's made available to them

Reasons Why

- **Family**
 - Family is the primary reasoning behind why students want to get vaccinated
 - **75.2% of responses selected family** as one of the reasons for wanting to get it
- **Normalcy**
 - Students want life to "get back to normal"
 - **82% of students** mentioning this in their open-ended responses

Reasons Why Not

- **Side Effects / Long Term Effects**
 - For those who may/may not be open to getting the vaccine as soon as it's made available, **61% of respondents** said they were nervous about the side effects and long term effects of the vaccine
- **Speed of which is was approved**
 - For those who don't want to get the vaccine **7.6% said because of how fast it was expedited**

What is most impacted by COVID

- **95% of students** said they would get the vaccine if it meant a return to classrooms and regular Syracuse social life on campus
- **79.8%** of respondents listed "I want to prevent myself from getting COVID-19" as a main reason for wanting to get the vaccine
- **62.6%** said the aspect of life most impacted by COVID is **people** (socializing, meeting people, seeing friends)
- **20.8%** chose academic/learning/class
- **11%** chose mental health
- **5.8%** of people miss partying and "going out" most

Hesitation

- 80% of those who don't want to get vaccinated reported it was because they were nervous about **side effects**
 - 60% of those who don't want to get vaccinated do not know enough about **what's in the vaccine**
 - 60% of those who don't want to get vaccinated **do not believe they're at risk of a serious illness** from COVID

Key Social Listening Findings

What we learned from social media

Sentiment

- 59.5% neutral
- 27% positive
- 13.5% negative

Sentiment around “vaccine” keywords is about half positive, half negative, with a spike in activity between March 10 and 12. This spike perhaps has to do with President Biden’s latest press conference, where he shared information about vaccine distribution and when we can expect to get back to normal.

- The word “vaccinated” is becoming increasingly popular in social posts, which demonstrates not only that people are getting vaccinated, but that they are very willing to let their social network communities know that they did

#1: Social media is the #1 driver for vaccine misinformation, mainly in the form of memes or personal anecdotes

- High quantities of unproven facts in the form of memes and social media posts are circulated, generating vaccine skepticism amongst college students
- Image of tweet from @__inCANdescent which reads “Y’all are worried about the long term effects of the vaccine but not the long term effects of covid itself” alongside a picture from the popular children’s show “Arthur”

#2: Distrust and hesitancy to get vaccinated stems from a lack of understanding of what is in it, what the approval process looked like, and what the short and long term implications of getting it may be.

- This can be dispelled by sharing information on the different vaccines, how they work, what the approval process looked like and what the possible side effects could be
- Information can be shared in memes, short videos or digestible infographics on social media
- Tweet from @ellaaesthelflaed: “they aren’t anti vaccine nor anti masks. take a look at their IGs to see them wearing one. they follow the rules. brie even said she would take it if it is necessary. i think being concerned & having fears about the side effects is understandable!
- From conspiracyanalyst.org: “COVID-19 Hysteria and Panic: [there’s] a 99% chance of not dying from it. This math should help you put the danger of COVID into a proper perspective and help you decide if you want to take a chance of a vaccine that doesn’t yet have a history for its long term effects. Additionally, these statistics should give you comfort...”

#3: Political affiliation has a strong impact on the hesitancy around a vaccine

- NPR conducted [a survey](#) of 1,227 individuals to examine political affiliation against willingness to get the vaccine, with the statistics noted in a tweet from @versharma: “Among Republican men, 49% said they did not plan to get the shot, compared with just 6% of Democratic men who said the same. Among 2020 Trump supporters, 47% said they did not plan to get a vaccine compared with just 10% of Biden supporters.”

Key Focus Group Findings

What the students have to say

In hope of achieving a more thorough analysis of student perceptions around the COVID-19 vaccine, our team conducted two focus groups that prompted a conversation between 10 students of different academic years and backgrounds. We've compiled a collection of the five most powerful and passionate quotes that reflect the thoughts of the Syracuse University student sampling.

Student quotations:

- “A lot of people are spooked about how fast the vaccine came around and the fact that it has mRNA. I don't think a lot of people have taken enough time to educate themselves on what that exactly means. I think people are afraid of side effects, especially with the Johnson & Johnson one and the news that just came out. I think it's important to look at it in the grand scheme of things.”
- “This isn't going away anytime soon. There's so many different new mutations of the virus that are changing everything. If everyone is vaccinated that's the best way that we can try and reach herd immunity.”
- “Who am I to question the scientists and Dr. Fauci about what's being put in our bodies right now? I take birth control every day. And that has so many other issues that aren't talked about nearly as much as what's going on with the vaccine.”
- “Studies have shown that the long term side effects of having COVID are worse than the side effects of getting the vaccine. So you're better off with just getting the vaccine and preventing yourself and anyone else in the foreseeable future from getting COVID.”
- “Listen, if you want to go back to going to bars all the time, if you want to go back to frat parties, if you want to go back to blacking out and hooking up with strangers, just get the vaccine. We all miss it.... so get your [f***ing] vaccine.”