



Voices of Child Health in Chicago REPORT

Volume 3 Number 8
October 2021

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

More than half of Chicago parents (55%) agreed that schools should be able to mandate COVID-19 vaccines for children to attend school in person, and 56% agreed that employers should be able to mandate COVID-19 vaccines.

Fewer than 1 in 4 Chicago parents said they disagreed with COVID-19 vaccine mandates in schools and in workplaces.

Mothers were less likely to agree with COVID-19 mandates in schools and workplaces than fathers.

Chicago Parents' Attitudes about COVID-19 Vaccine Mandates

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact families in Chicago and across the country, with a recent national poll showing that 86% of the general public say the pandemic isn't yet over in the United States.¹ One critical step in ending the pandemic is achieving high levels of vaccination against COVID-19. In Chicago, over half (57%) of Chicago residents were fully vaccinated by September 30, 2021, including over half of Chicago youth between 12–17 years old.² Vaccines are expected to become available for younger children in the coming months, and experts suggest that vaccinating younger children, as well as more adults, will be crucial to ending the COVID-19 pandemic.³

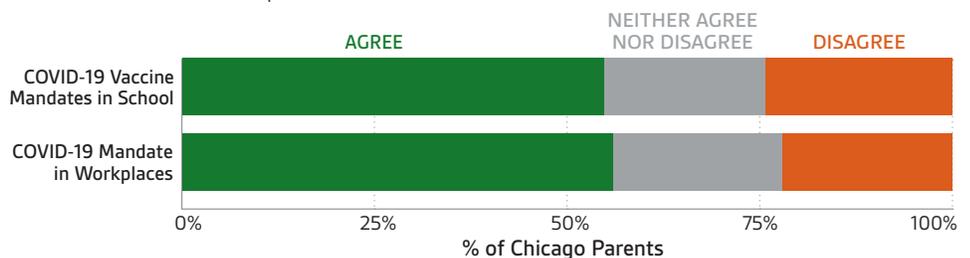
With recent surges of COVID-19 infections in Chicago and across the country, new variants of the COVID-19 virus that are more infectious and the potential for rise of new variants, some employers and schools have mandated COVID-19 vaccines. In this month's *Voices of Child Health in Chicago Report*, we examine parents' attitudes about requiring vaccines against COVID-19 in different contexts. We asked 1,620 Chicago parents from all 77 community areas in the city about their thoughts about requiring the COVID-19 vaccine, as well as questions about themselves and their families.

COVID-19 vaccine mandates for students

To assess parents' attitudes about mandating vaccines for children, we asked parents to indicate how much they agreed with the following statement: "Once a COVID-19 vaccine is available for children, schools should be able to require students get a COVID-19 vaccine to attend class in person."

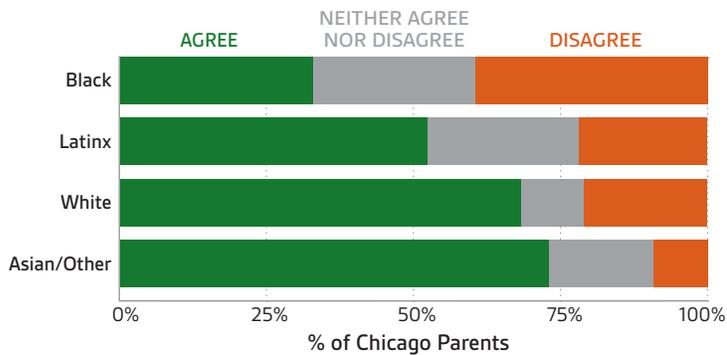
Overall, more than half (55%) of Chicago parents agreed with this statement, 21% neither agreed nor disagreed and 24% disagreed (Figure 1). This finding aligns with a national poll that indicated 55% of U.S. adults support requiring COVID-19 vaccines for students attending in-person classes.¹ In our survey, mothers were significantly less likely to agree with mandating COVID-19 vaccines than fathers (49% vs. 63%), which is consistent with some of our previous findings that indicated that mothers express more hesitancy about the COVID-19 vaccine than fathers do.⁴ Parents with household income below the federal poverty level (FPL; in 2021 the FPL is \$26,500 for a family of four)⁵ and those between 100–399% of the FPL were less likely to agree with school mandates (40–51%) than parents with household income 400% above the FPL (67%).

Figure 1. Proportion of Chicago parents who agree, neither agree nor disagree, or disagree with COVID-19 vaccine mandates in schools and workplaces



When we explored parent attitudes by race and ethnicity, we found that 73% of Asian/Other race parents and 68% of White parents agreed with a school mandate, followed by 52% of Latinx parents and 34% of Black parents (Figure 2). Parents with a college degree or higher were more likely to agree with a school mandate for COVID-19 vaccines (69%) than parents with some college or a high school

Figure 2. Parent attitudes about school mandates for COVID-19 vaccines for students, by parent race/ethnicity



degree or below (41–49%). There was not a significant difference in agreement with school mandates for vaccines by the ages of the children in the household, or by the type of school children attended (e.g., public vs. private).

We found that parents who were the least likely to agree with school mandates for the COVID-19 vaccine were those who also said they were not likely to vaccinate their children or not sure about vaccinating their children. Among those parents, only 11% said they agreed with school COVID-19 vaccine mandates, compared with 68–70% of parents who were likely to vaccinate their children or whose children had already received a dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. In every state in the nation, schools require children to be vaccinated against multiple diseases in order to attend school; requiring vaccination against COVID-19 would follow that precedent, based on principles of public health and personal safety. The Los Angeles public school district recently became the first major school district to mandate the COVID-19 vaccine for students 12 years old and older.⁶

COVID-19 vaccine mandates in the workplace

We also assessed Chicago parents' attitudes about requiring vaccines in the workplace by asking parents to indicate how much they agreed with the following statement: "Employers should be able to require their employees get a COVID-19 vaccine."

Consistent with our findings on vaccine mandates in schools, more than half (56%) of parents agreed that employers should be able to require their employees get a vaccine, 22% neither agreed nor disagreed and 22% disagreed (Figure 1). Similar to what we found for vaccine mandates in schools, mothers were less likely to agree with employer mandates for the COVID-19 vaccine compared with fathers (51% vs. 64%). Asian/Other race parents were most likely to agree with COVID-19 vaccine mandates in the workplace (82%) followed by White parents (64%), Latinx parents (56%) and Black parents (34%).

Again, parents with a college degree or higher were more likely to agree with workplace mandates (68%) than parents with some college or a high school education or below (39–55%). Parents who were not likely to get vaccinated themselves or who were unsure about getting a vaccine for themselves were least likely to agree with employer mandates (15%), compared with parents who were likely to get vaccinated (50%) and those who were already vaccinated (64%).

Additionally, there was an association between parents' attitudes about COVID-19 mandates in the workplace and in schools. Among parents who agreed with COVID-19 mandates in the workplace, 86% also agreed with mandates in schools.

REFERENCES

1. SSRS/CNN Poll. Aug 3–Sept 7, 2021.
2. [Chicago Department of Public Health's COVID-19 Summary](#)
3. Schleiss MR, John CC, Permar SR. Children are the key to the Endgame: A case for routine pediatric COVID vaccination. *Vaccine*. 2021;39(38):5333–5336. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.vaccine.2021.08.005>.
4. Heffernan ME, Davis MM, Smith T, Bendelow A, Bhatti P, Casale M. Racial/ethnic and other demographic differences in Chicago parents' intentions to vaccinate their children against COVID-19. 2021. Pediatric Academic Societies annual meeting.
5. <https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines/prior-hhs-poverty-guidelines-federal-register-references/2021-poverty-guidelines>
6. Blume H, Gomez M. L.A. school officials order sweeping student vaccine mandate, a first by a major district. *Los Angeles Times*. Sept. 9 2021. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-09-09/los-angeles-school-officials-approve-vaccine-mandate>

HOW THE SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED

This report is based on data from the Voices of Child Health in Chicago Parent Panel Survey. The survey is administered to a sample of Chicago parents by Lurie Children's and NORC at the University of Chicago via internet and telephone. The survey is administered to the same panel of parents three times each year. The data in this report was collected from May 2021 through July 2021. The sample consisted of 1,620 Chicago parents, step-parents, or guardians who had at least one child under 18 years of age in the household (referred to as "parents" in this report). Parents were from all 77 community areas in Chicago. The survey completion rate was 50% and the cumulative survey response rate was 1.5%. All analyses were conducted with statistical weighting so that the results are representative of the parent population in the City of Chicago during the time period of data collection. For more information about the VOCHIC Parent Panel Survey, visit luriechildrens.org/ParentPanel and our page on Open Science Framework at <https://osf.io/cjz82/>.

SUGGESTED CITATION

Davis MM, Heffernan ME, Kociolek LK, Smith TL, Bendelow A, Menker C. Chicago parents' attitudes about COVID-19 vaccine mandates, *Voices of Child Health in Chicago Report*. Vol 3, Number 8. Oct 2021. Available at luriechildrens.org/voices.

Stanley Manne Children's Research Institute™

Smith Child Health Research,
Outreach and Advocacy Center

Matthew M. Davis, MD, MAPP, Director
Marie E. Heffernan, PhD, Associate Director
Tracie L. Smith, MPH, Senior Epidemiologist
Anne Bendelow, MPH, Epidemiologist
Carly Menker, BS, Research Associate
Larry K. Kociolek, MD, MSCI, Expert Contributor

CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information on Voices of Child Health in Chicago, contact:

Mary Ann & J. Milburn Smith Child Health
Research, Outreach and Advocacy Center
Stanley Manne Children's Research Institute

Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago
225 East Chicago Avenue, Box 157, Chicago, IL 60611-2991

voicesofchildhealth@luriechildrens.org | luriechildrens.org/voices

This project is supported in part by an anonymous foundation, the Founders' Board of Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, the Patrick M. Magoon Institute for Healthy Communities and the Chicago Department of Public Health.