

‘Vaccine hesitancy scale’: Parents are especially suspicious of flu shots, study finds

About 1 in 15 US parents (6.1%) is hesitant about routine childhood vaccines, and more than 1 in 4 (26%) are unsure about flu vaccines, according to a [study](#) published [June 15] in Pediatrics.

Researchers surveyed 2,176 parents in February 2019 using an online panel and a modified five-point Vaccine Hesitancy Scale found that 12% strongly agreed, and 27% somewhat agreed, that they worried about perceived serious side effects of childhood and flu vaccines. And while 70% strongly agreed that routine childhood vaccines are effective, only 26% said they thought the same about flu vaccines... 70.1% of reluctant parents said they had deferred or refused flu vaccination for their child, versus 10.0% of non-reluctant parents.

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Factors predicting childhood and flu vaccine hesitancy included an educational level lower than a bachelor’s degree, household income less than 400% of the federal poverty level, residency in the western United States, having a child in the preschool years, having a higher number of children in the household, and being unmarried.

The authors noted that the World Health Organization has deemed vaccine hesitancy 1 of the 10 biggest threats to global health. In the United States, where yearly flu vaccination is recommended for children 6 months and older, only 58% of children were vaccinated in the 2018-19 flu season.

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The researchers said that messages that build on intention to vaccinate or focus on changing behavior rather than beliefs or attitudes will help providers convince more parents to vaccinate.

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