

Should businesses require vaccines? That's fine, most California voters say

May 19 2021, by Edward Lempinen



In California, opinions on the COVID-19 vaccination — whether to get it, and whether businesses should be allowed to mandate it for employees and customers — are inextricably tied to politics and ideology, according to the latest report from the UC Berkeley Institute for Governmental Studies. Credit: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention via Unsplash

Despite ongoing controversy over COVID-19 vaccines, a clear majority of California voters say it's appropriate for some businesses to require customers and employees to be vaccinated, according to a new poll from the UC Berkeley Institute for Governmental Studies (IGS).

By a margin of nearly 2 to 1, respondents to [the new Berkeley IGS Poll](#) said that businesses such as concert venues, sports stadiums, casinos and [cruise ships](#) should be allowed to deny entry to customers who can't verify their vaccinations or a negative COVID-19 test. Similarly, 61% of the voters said that certain classes of [business](#) should be able to require that their employees be vaccinated.

But the poll found deep partisan divisions. Compared to Democrats and those with no party preference, Republicans and conservatives were far less likely to be vaccinated and far more likely to oppose the power of businesses to mandate vaccinations. Further, Republicans were more strongly opposed to a role for government in setting standards for vaccine verification.

"Even at this later stage, politics powerfully shapes the way that Californians think about vaccination and the reopening of society," said IGS co-Director G. Cristina Mora.

The new [poll](#) reflects the same deep partisan and ideological divides that were first detailed in [a Berkeley IGS Poll a year ago](#). In May 2020, it found that supporters of then-President Donald Trump were less concerned that they would infect other people and more worried about the economy.

[In February 2021](#), the pollsters reported that California Republican voters were far less likely than other voters to seek a [vaccine](#) and less supportive of small businesses, [health care workers](#) and other at-risk workers.

As effective vaccinations have come online in 2021, public health officials have said that high rates of vaccination are essential for controlling the pandemic and safely reopening businesses, schools and public events. But the [new Berkeley IGS Poll](#) shows that the gulf persists between Republicans and conservatives on one side and Democrats and liberals on the other:

- Customer vaccinations: Among Democrats, 82% agreed that select businesses should be able to verify a customer's vaccination or negative COVID test. Among those with no party preference, agreement fell to 67%. Among Republicans, however, only 31% felt businesses should have that authority, while 66% were opposed.
- Employee vaccinations: Nearly 80% of Democrats would give employers in unspecified sectors the right to require vaccinations among their workers. That fell to 62% among those with no party preference. Among Republicans, only 33% favored such authority over employees, with 63% opposed.
- The government's role: While there is no clear consensus among California voters on the government's authority in setting standards, 50% of Democrats, compared to just 12% of Republicans, say the government should be responsible for setting a uniform verification system. Nearly 60% of GOP voters said the government should not be involved at all in setting those standards.

The Berkeley IGS Poll was conducted online, in English and Spanish, from April 29 to May 5, and is based on the responses of 10,289 California registered voters. The margin of error is plus or minus 2.5 percentage points.

More information: [Berkeley IGS Poll](#)

Provided by University of California - Berkeley

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