



Boosting Mass. COVID Vaccinations

A survey of parents of children 6 months – 17 years in Massachusetts

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Survey Background

- Results are based on a statewide survey of 1,342 parents of children age 6 months – 17 years in Massachusetts, including oversamples of Black, Latino, and Asian parents.
- Conducted March 11-26, 2023 via live telephone and online interviewing in English and Spanish.
- Data was weighted to known population parameters by age, gender, race, education, and region.
- This project is funded by the State of Massachusetts via the Massachusetts Bureau of Infectious Diseases and Laboratory Sciences. Major design input was provided by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

Key findings

- Concerns about side effects of the COVID vaccine are widespread among parents, even among those who have gotten their children vaccinated. More than half of parents are at least somewhat concerned about side effects, both short (58%) and long term (61%) including majorities of many demographic groups.
- Pediatricians play a key role in addressing concerns about side effects and further boosting pediatric vaccination rates. This represents an opportunity for pediatricians to provide critical information to parents whose children are not vaccinated.
- The survey follows the contours of state data, with older children more likely to be fully vaccinated. Parents of younger children are more likely to report their household is mixed vaccination status with more older children vaccinated and more younger children not vaccinated.

Key findings

- Though most do not say the pandemic is over, COVID is broadly seen as less dangerous than it used to be, and not an issue of frequent discussion. Less than half of parents see current variants as very or somewhat dangerous.
- Vaccines are seen as more potentially risky for younger children than for older children. Younger children are also the most likely to remain unvaccinated.
- Views on the COVID vaccine are part of a broader constellation of opinions and identity factors, including partisanship, education levels, race, and views of other childhood vaccines.

Key findings

- If they were to look for vaccine appointments, parents of unvaccinated children say their preferred location would be doctors' offices and pharmacies.
- Logistical barriers to COVID vaccines are a less important barrier at this stage. Those whose children are not vaccinated point to other reasons and mostly say it would be easy to do so if they wanted to get them vaccinated.

Views of the pandemic

- Parents still think the pandemic is ongoing but see it as much less dangerous than before. Most do not perceive much worry among friends and family.

Most parents see the COVID pandemic as less dangerous, though not over
% who say they strongly / somewhat agree with _____

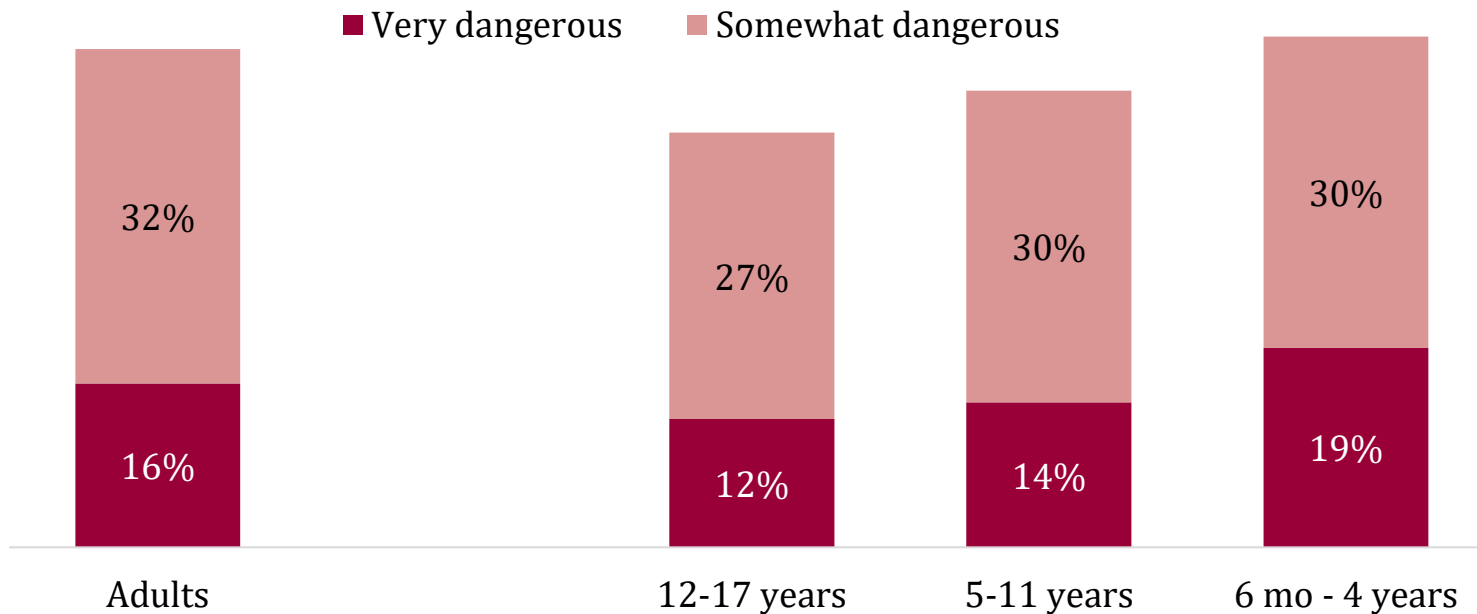
	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Total Agree
My friends and family don't worry very much about COVID-19 these days	33%	37%	70%
COVID-19 used to be more dangerous than it is today	32%	34%	65%
The COVID-19 pandemic is over	19%	23%	42%

COVID still seen as dangerous

- Half or less see current variants as somewhat or very dangerous. Few say “very dangerous.”

Parents see COVID as more dangerous for younger children

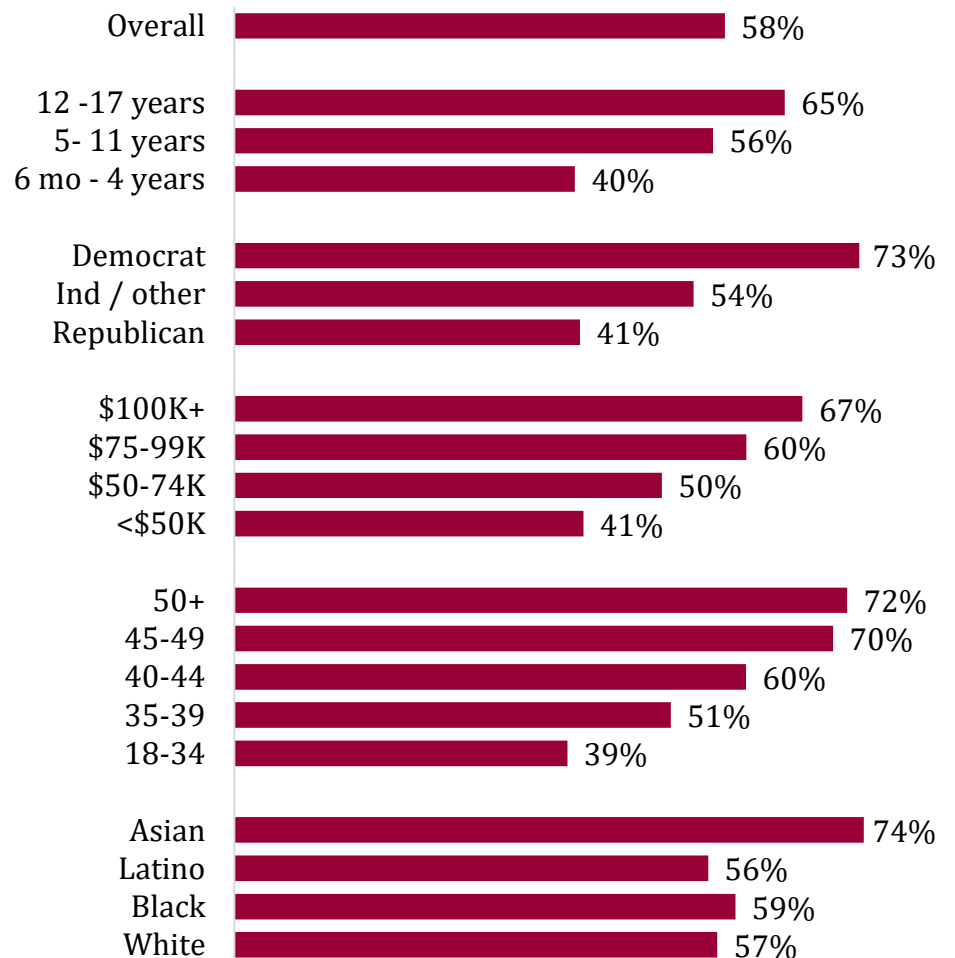
% who see COVID variants as _____ to each group



How many families are vaccinated

- Family vaccination status varies considerably by demographics and politics.
- Democrats, older people, parents with older children, those in higher income households, and Asian parents report the highest levels of full family vaccination.

Families who are fully vaccinated, by demos
% of parents who say they / their children are all vaccinated

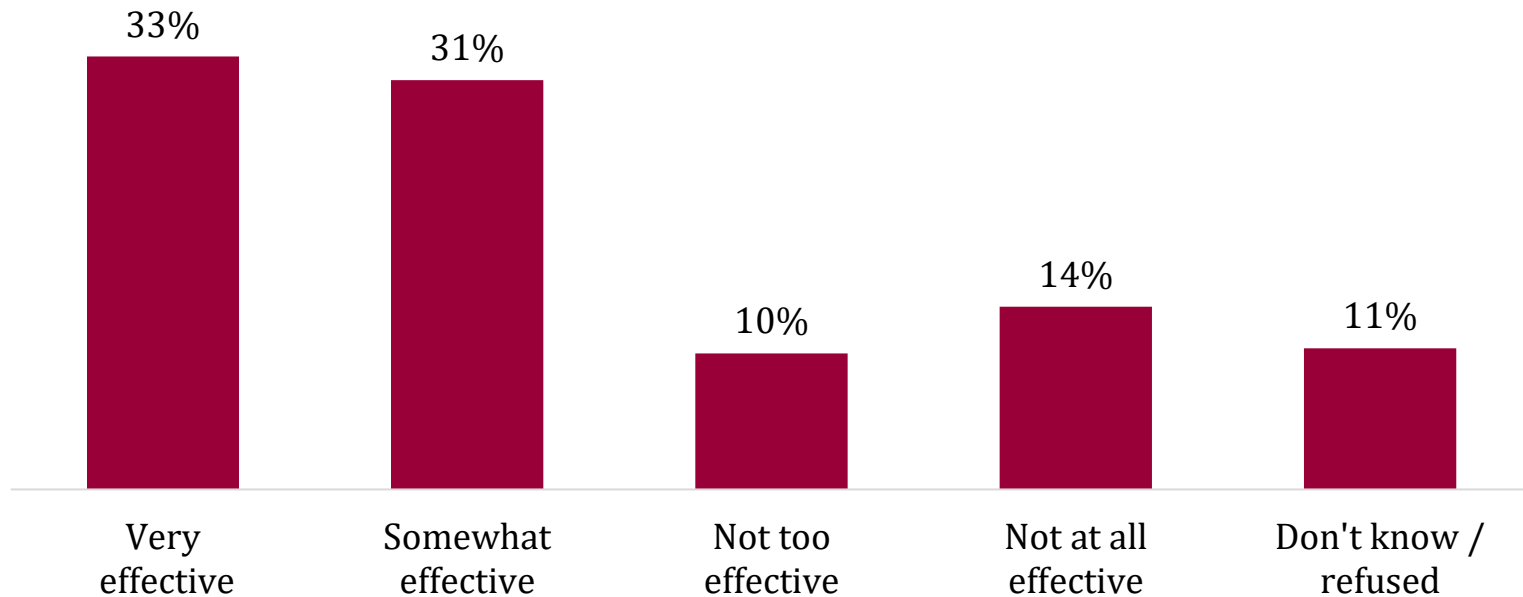


Most see the vaccine as effective

- A majority of parents see the vaccine as effective against severe disease, though many are also skeptical or don't know.

Most see the vaccine as somewhat or very effective against severe disease

% of parents who say the vaccine is _____ at preventing severe disease in children who get it

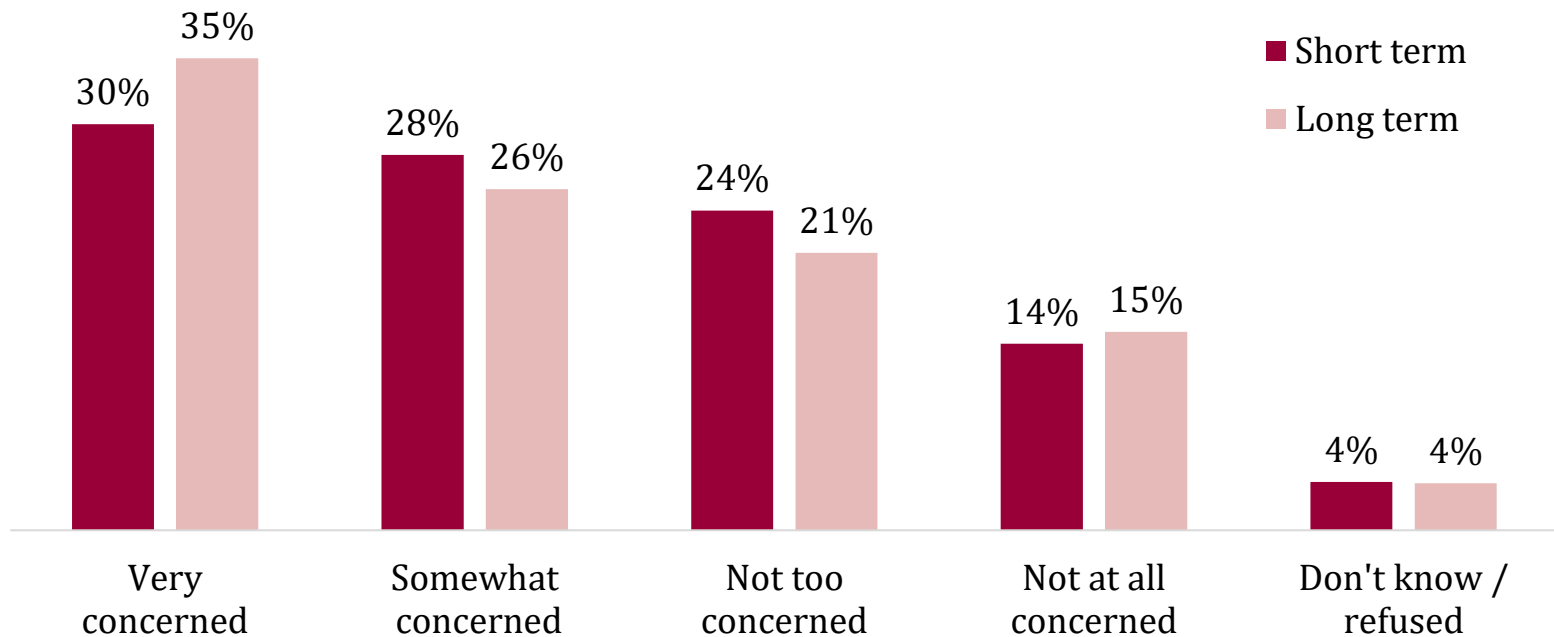


Concerns about side effects

- More than half are at least somewhat concerned about side effects, both short (58%) and long term (61%).

Short, long term side effects of COVID vaccine weigh on most parents' minds

% of parents who are _____ about the side effects of the COVID vaccine

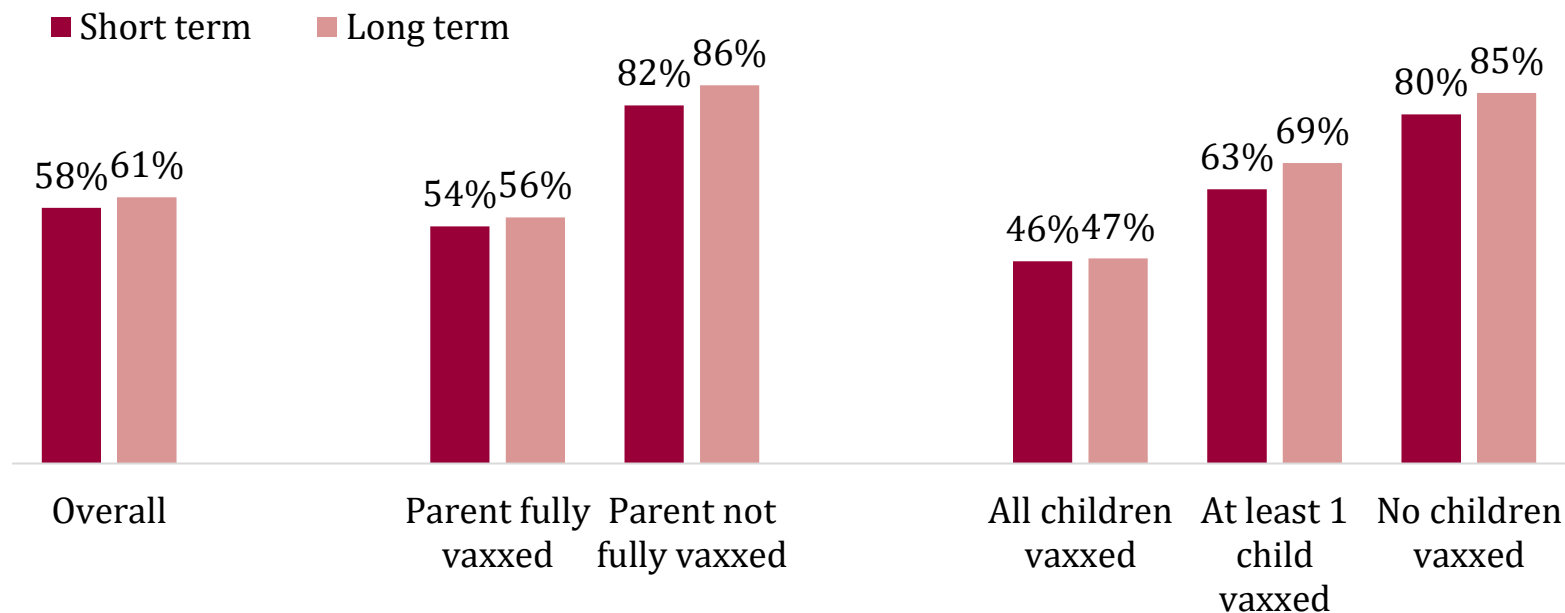


Concerns about side effects

- Even among parents who are vaccinated and who have had their children vaccinated, concerns about side effects are widespread.

Many express concerns about COVID vaccine short- and long-term side effects

% in each group who are very / somewhat concerned about the _____ side effects of the vaccine

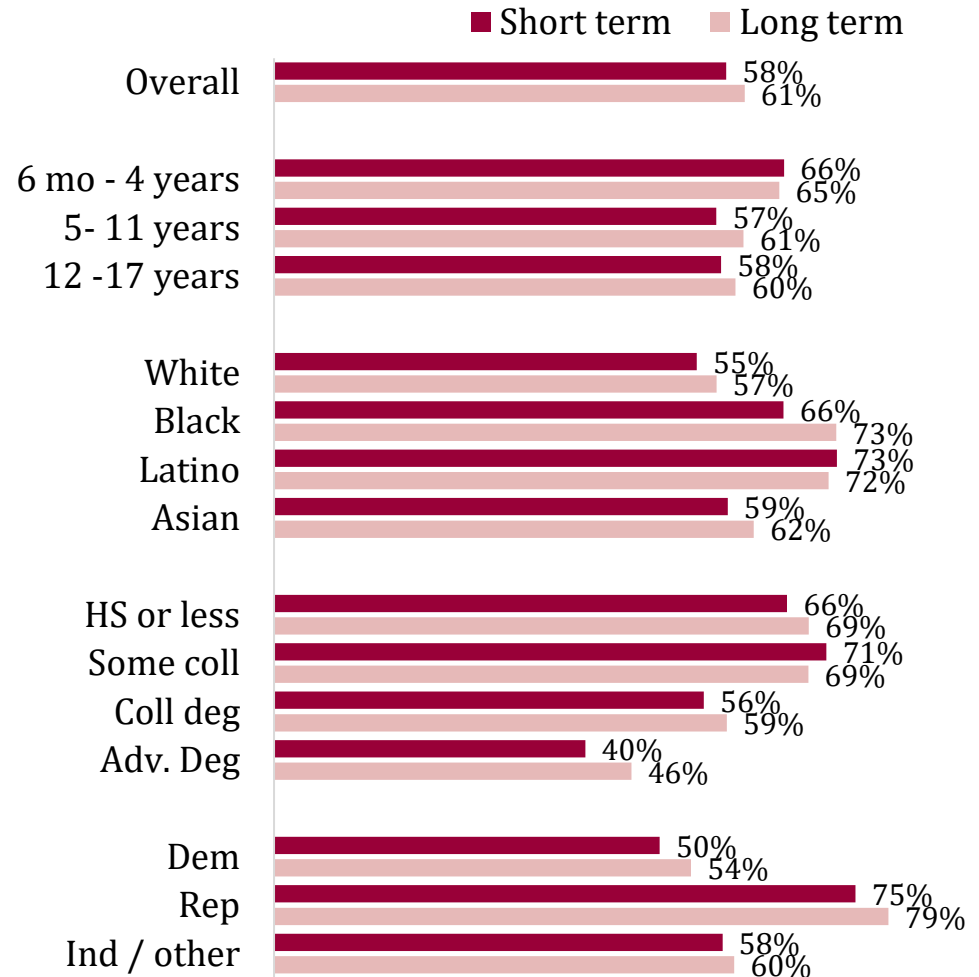


Concerns about side effects

- Majorities of many demographic groups are at least somewhat concerned with side effects, though some groups are far more concerned.
- Republicans, Black and Latino parents, and those without college degrees tend to express more concern.

Concerns about side effects vary, remain common across demos

% in each group concerned about side effects of vaccine



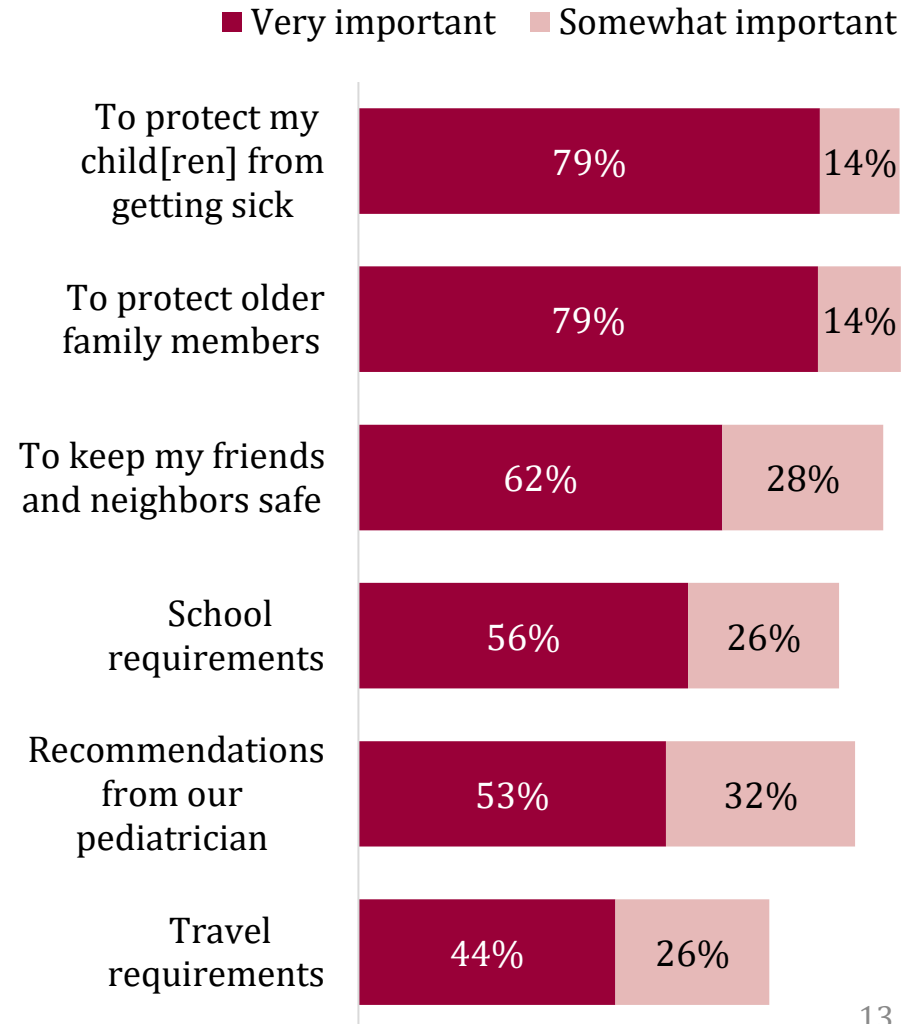
Why parents opted in

- Keeping their children and others safe were the top reasons parents said they got their children vaccinated.
- Requirements to get vaccinated were overall less important than community protection.

Q: When deciding to get your child[ren] vaccinated, how important were each of the following factors?

Reasons parents got their children COVID vaxed

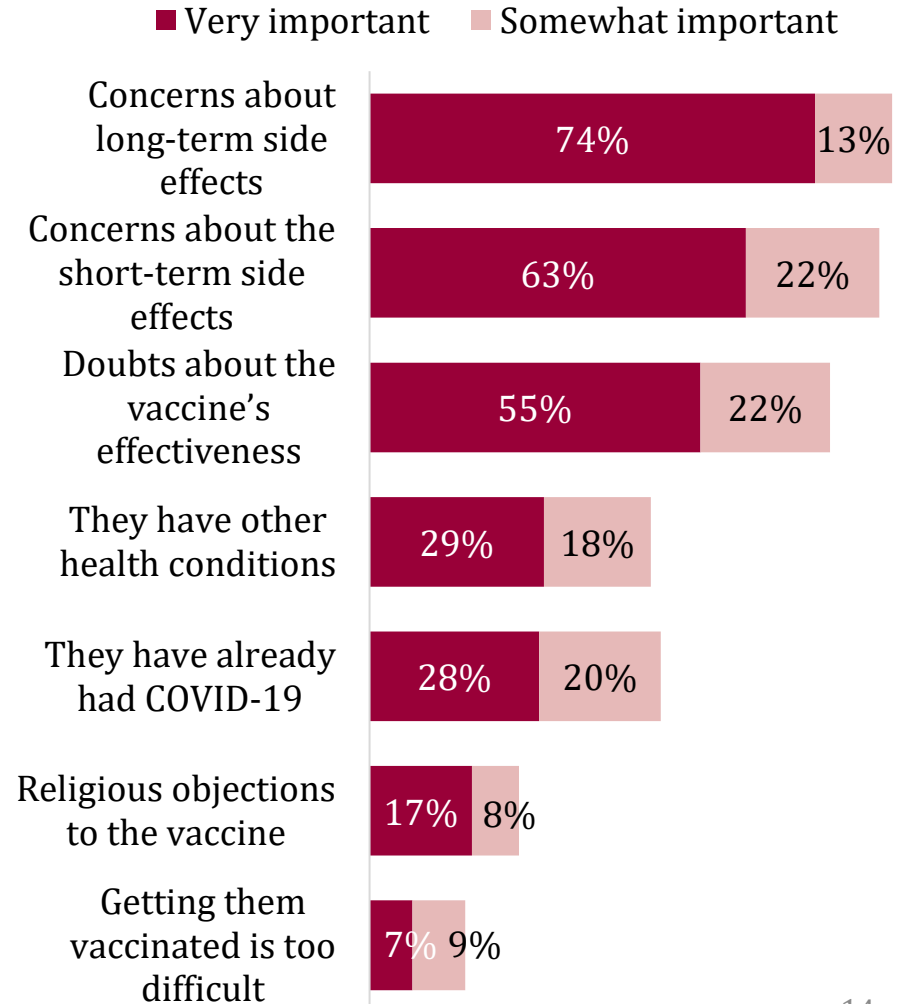
% who say each reason was _____ in deciding to vaccinate their children



Why parents opted out

- Concerns about side effects topped the list of reasons parents have chosen not to vaccinate their children.
- Logistical barriers were the least common reason for not getting children vaccinated, echoing other dynamics earlier in the survey.

Reasons parents have avoided the COVID vax
% who say each reason was _____ in deciding not to vaccinate their children



Q: You mentioned (some of) your child[ren] is/are not currently vaccinated. When deciding not to get your child[ren] vaccinated, how important were each of the following factors?

Why vaxxed parents didn't vax their kids

"To many possible side effects."

"I'm not sure if my 8-month-old is eligible."

"My employer forced me to get vaccinated, in order to keep my current job."

"I was advised by her doctor not to."

"We learned thru media vaccines don't work an its dangerous to him."

"According to information received young children are not at risk."

"We all got the initial and it doesn't stop spread. The risk outweighs the benefits. Too political as well."

Why parents only vax some kids

“Mandated to participate in extracurricular activities.”

“The younger ones were not eligible at the time and they ended up getting Covid. Their reaction was mild and everyone in our family has gotten Covid at least once now.”

“Only approved for their ages at the time they received the vaccines and these are the 2 children that go to school so much higher risk for exposure.”

“I need more info for my baby to be vaccinated.”

“She travels and was required to do so.”

“The pediatrician did not advise me to be vaccinated at this time, perhaps later.”

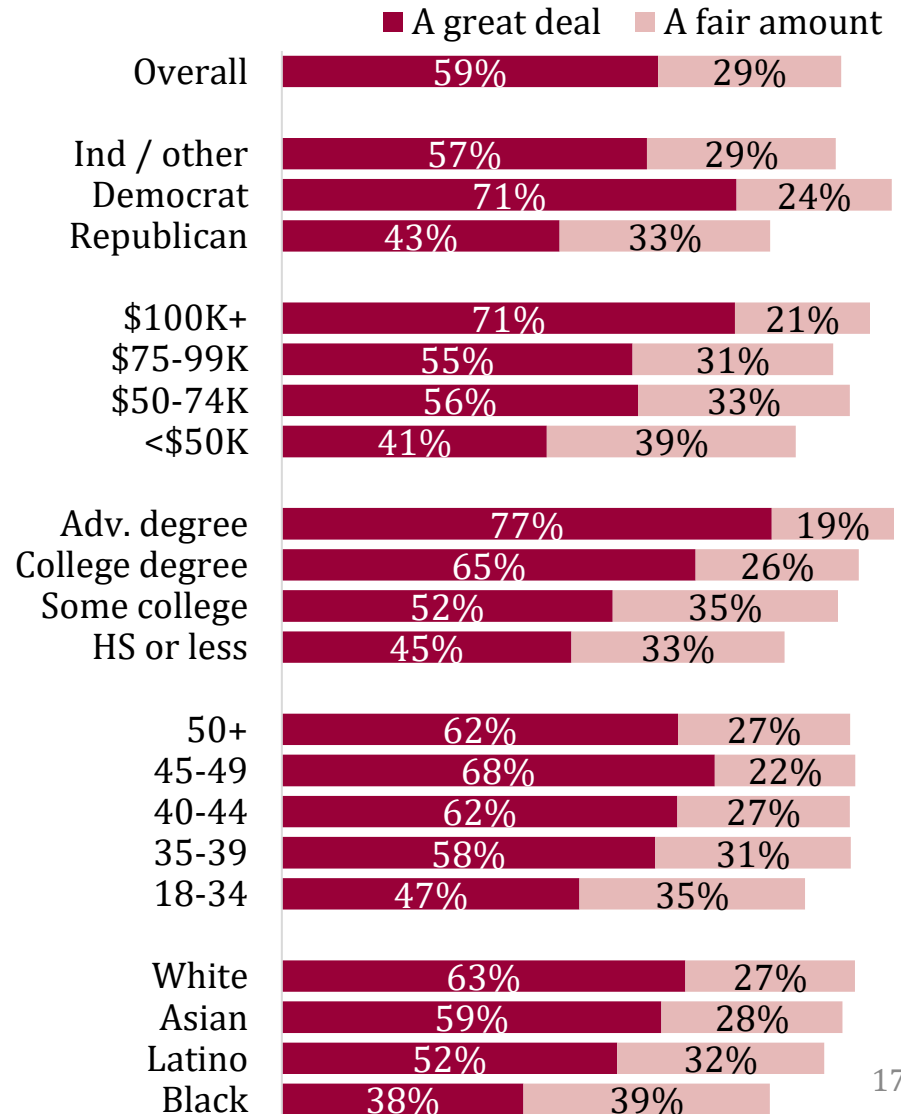
“Has not been convenient.”

Routine vaccination trust

- Even routine vaccinations bring wide differences in trust levels between demographic groups.
- This has not translated into major differences in routine vaccination rates, with 90% or more of every group saying their children are up to date.

Differences in routine vaccines trust

% who say they trust routine vaccinations _____



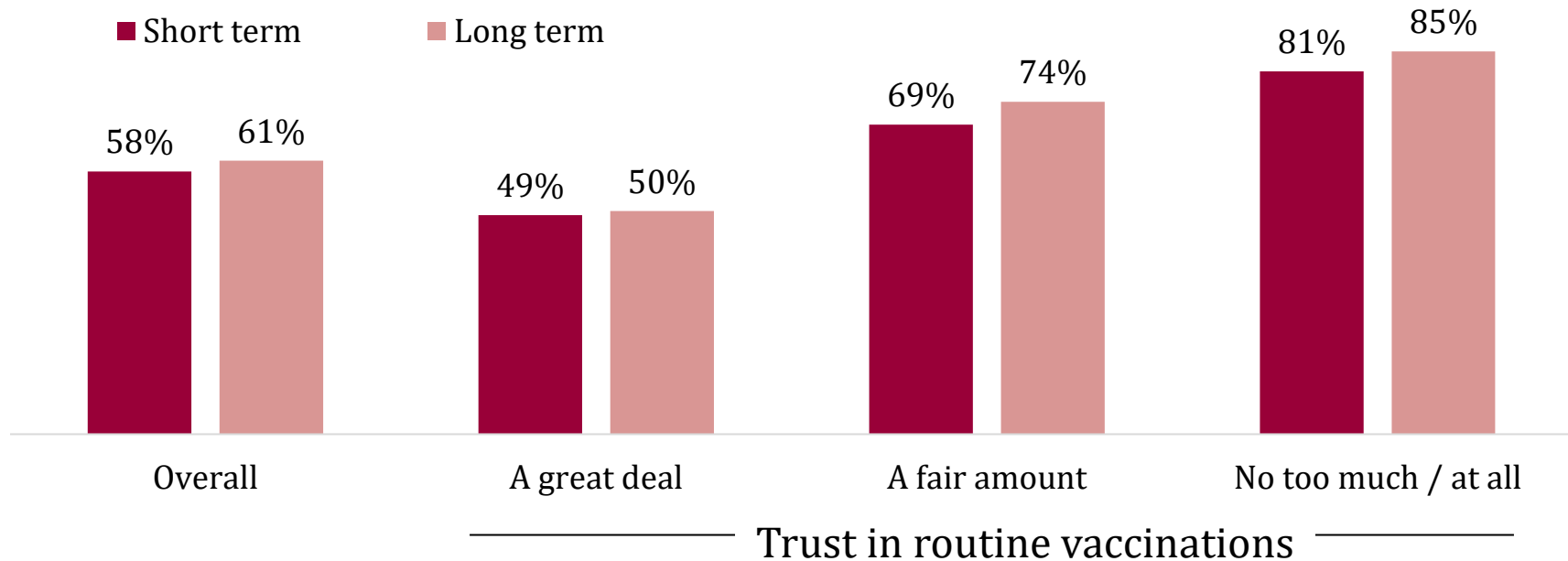
Q: How much do you trust routine vaccines children receive, such as for Measles, Mumps, Rubella, Polio, and other illnesses?

Impacts of trust in other vaccines

- Those that express less trust in routine vaccines are also more concerned about COVID vaccine side effects.

Trust in routine vaccines is linked to concerns about COVID vaccine side effects

% who say that they are very / somewhat concerned about side effects by trust in routine vaccinations

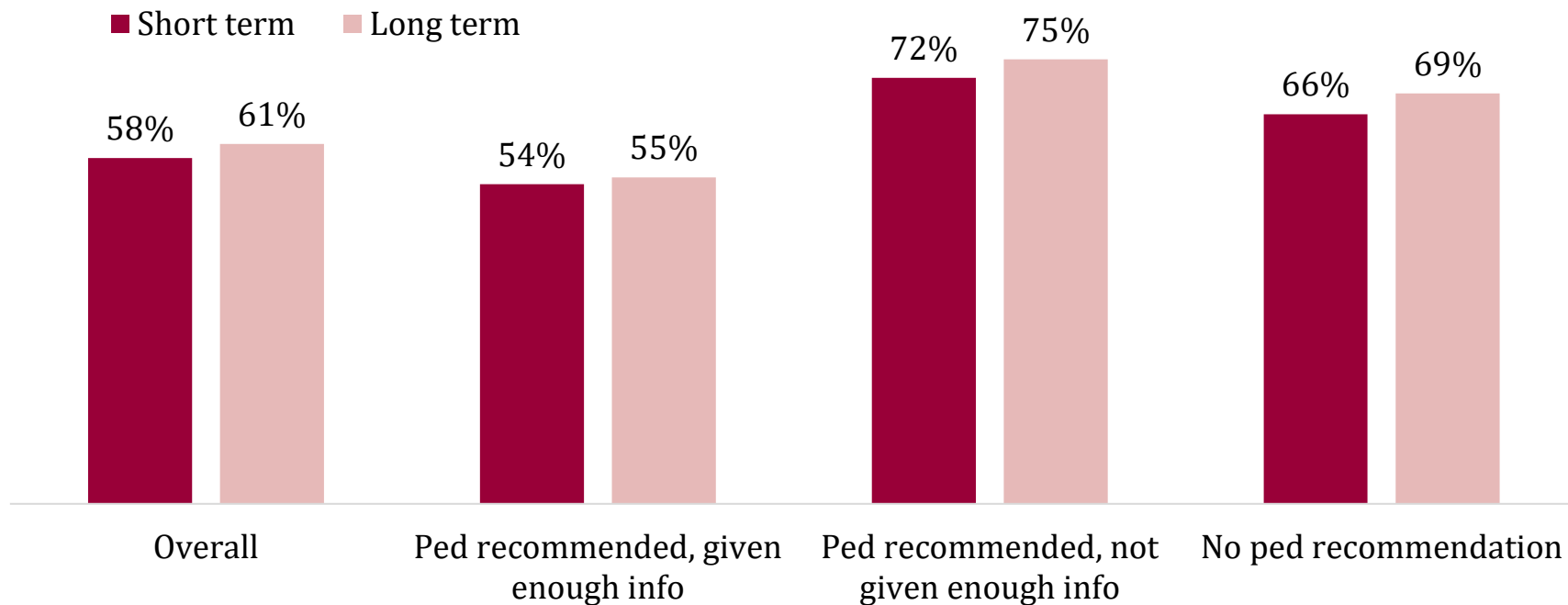


Pediatricians help ease parent concerns

- Pediatricians spending the time to give enough information to parents can help ease concerns about side effects.

Concerns about side effects decrease when parents get enough info from pediatrician

% who are very / somewhat concerned about side effects by pediatrician recommendation and info provided



Who got a recommendation?

- Just 60% say they have gotten a recommendation from a pediatrician and received enough information to make an informed decision.

Most say a pediatrician has recommended vaccines

% of parents who say their pediatrician has recommended and info given about the COVID vaccine

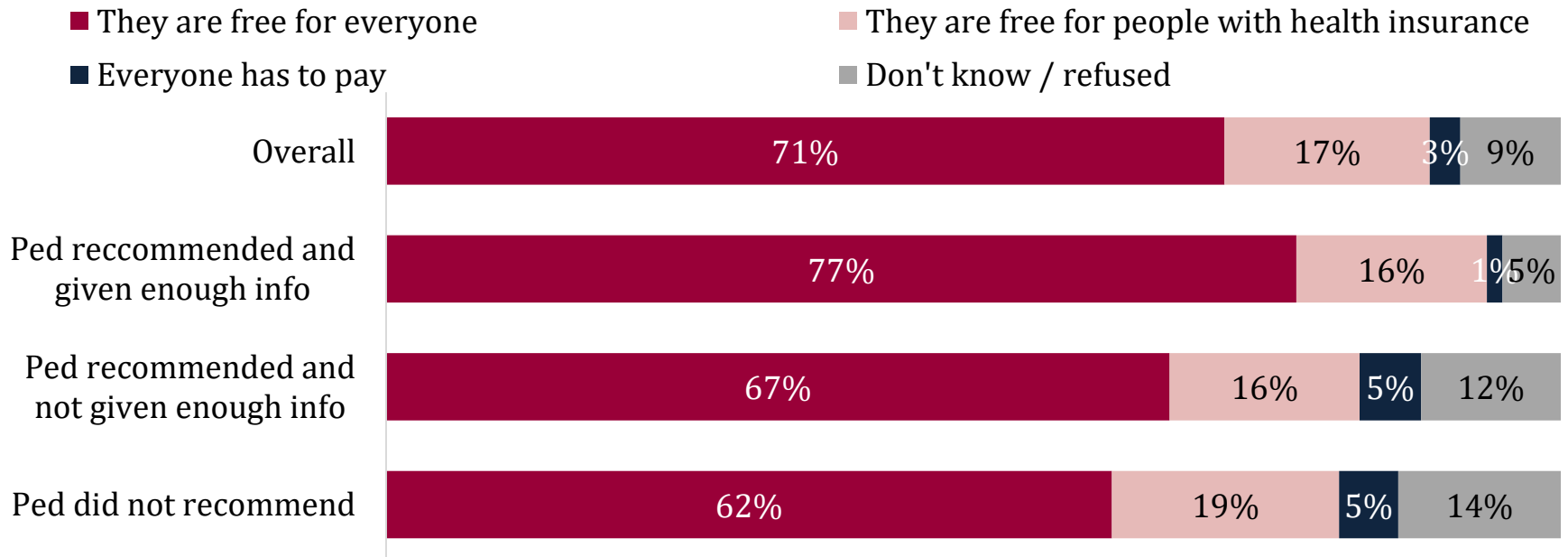
Recommended vaccine and given enough info	60%
Recommended vaccine and not given enough info	8%
Not recommended vaccine	18%
Family has no pediatrician	6%
Don't know / refused	8%

Understanding vaccine costs

- A majority of parents know that the COVID vaccine is free for everyone. Fewer know this among parents who don't have a pediatrician or whose pediatrician didn't provide enough info.

Pediatricians help more parents understand vaccines are free for everyone

% parents who say _____ about COVID vaccines by pediatrician recommendation and info provided

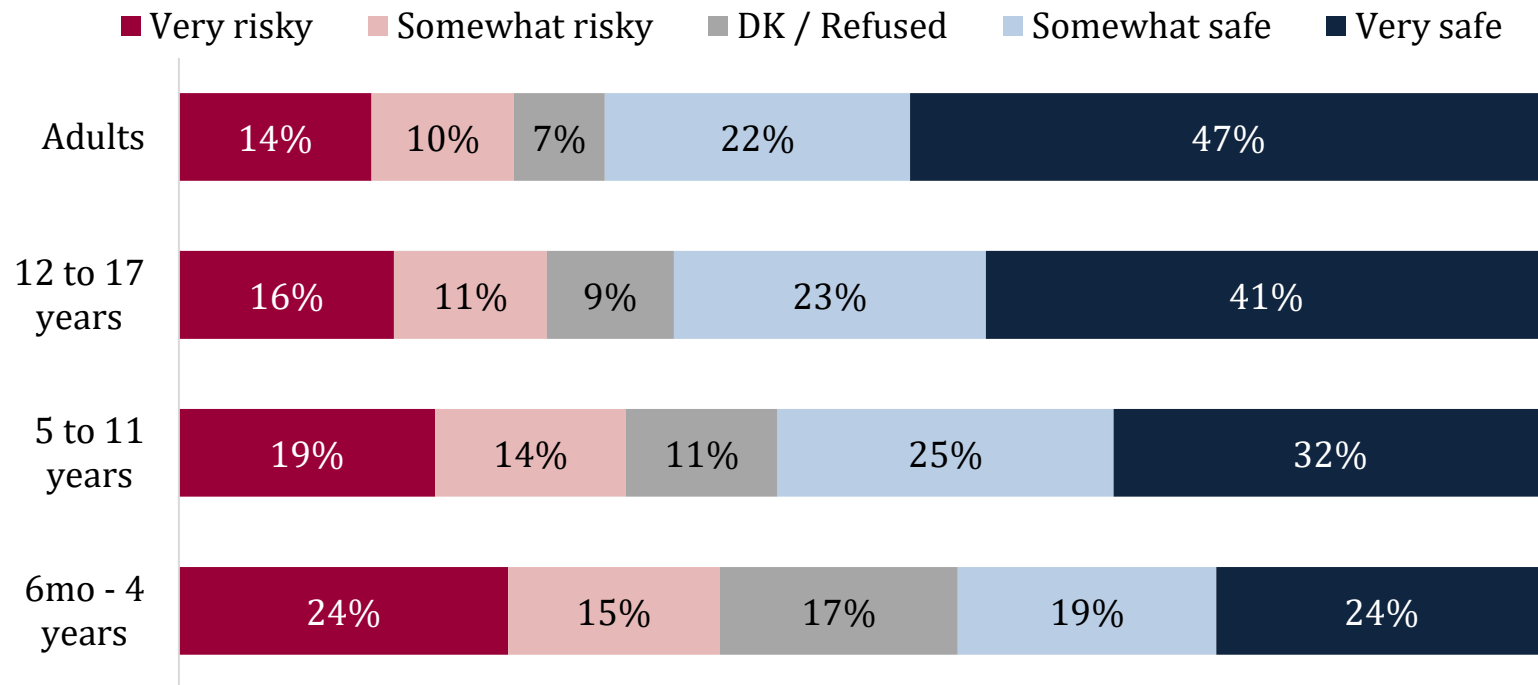


Perceived risk decreases with age

- Parents think the vaccine is riskier for younger children than for older children or adults.

Parents perceive more risk and uncertainty for younger children

% of parents who say the COVID vaccine is _____ for each age group

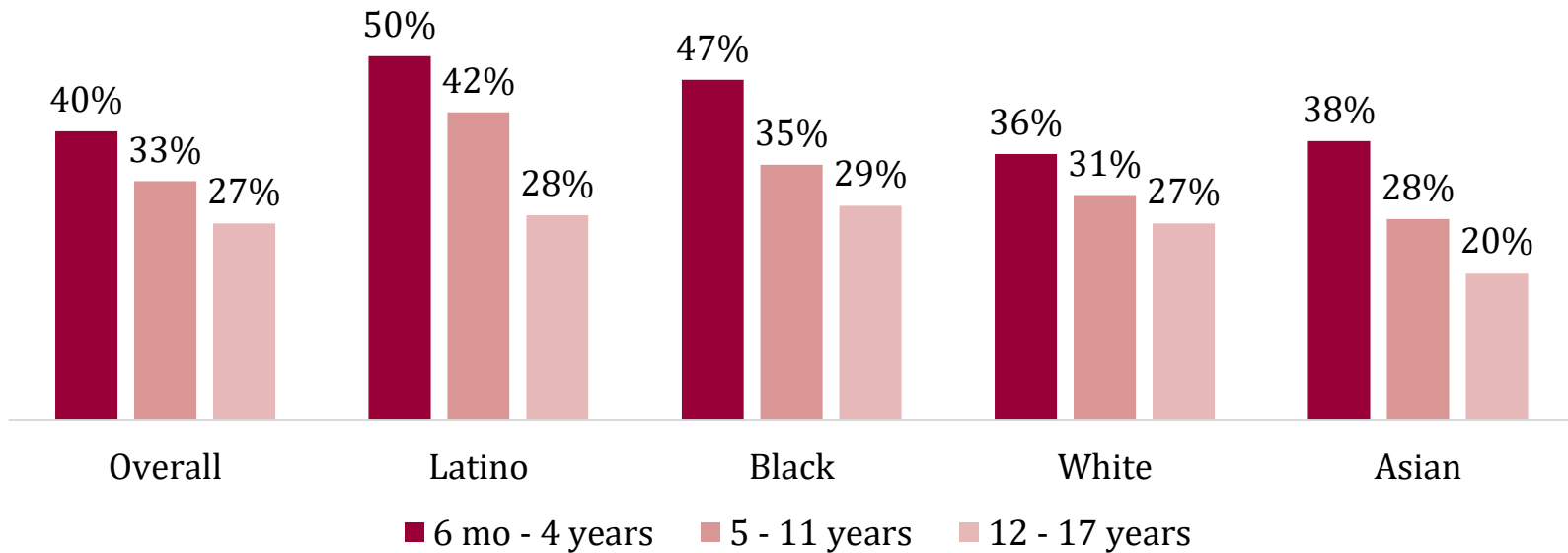


Black, Latino parents perceive more risk

- Black and Latino parents are more likely to think that vaccines are risky for all age groups, but this is especially pronounced for children ages 6 months to 4 years old.

More Black and Latino parents think COVID vaccines are risky

% of parents who say the COVID vaccine is very / somewhat risky for each age group

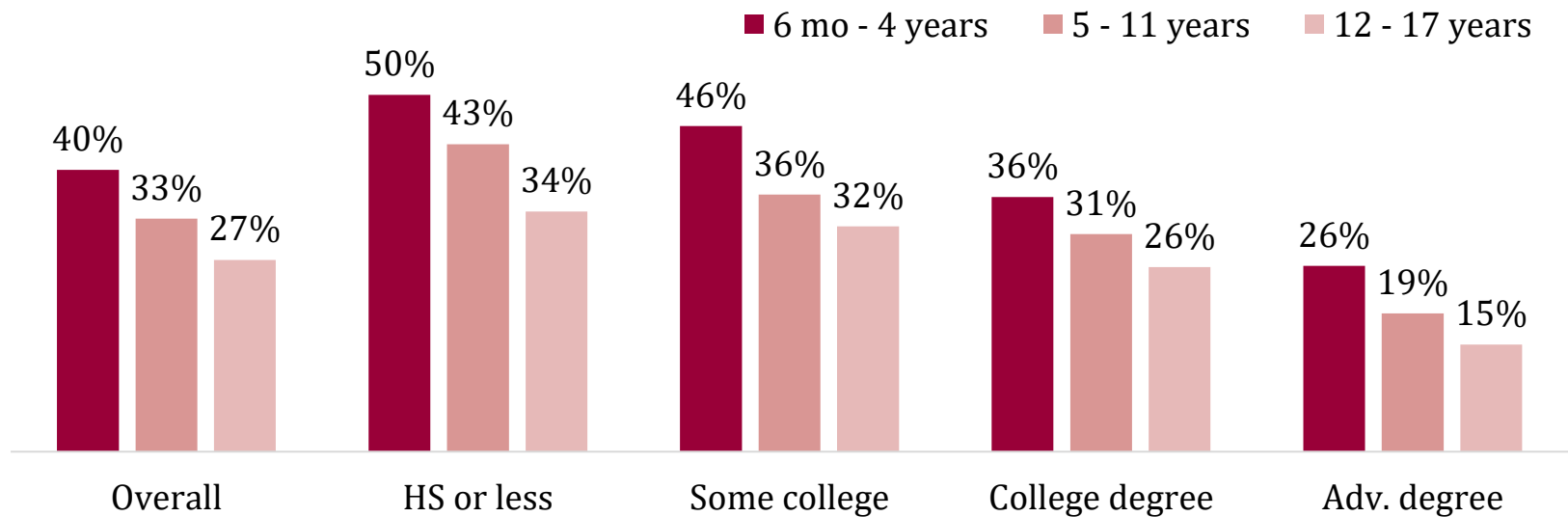


Vaccine risk and education

- Those with higher education levels are more likely to think COVID vaccines are safe for all age groups. More parents think vaccines are risky at for younger children.

Parents with more education think the COVID vaccine is safer across age groups

% of parents who say the COVID vaccine is very / somewhat risky for each age group

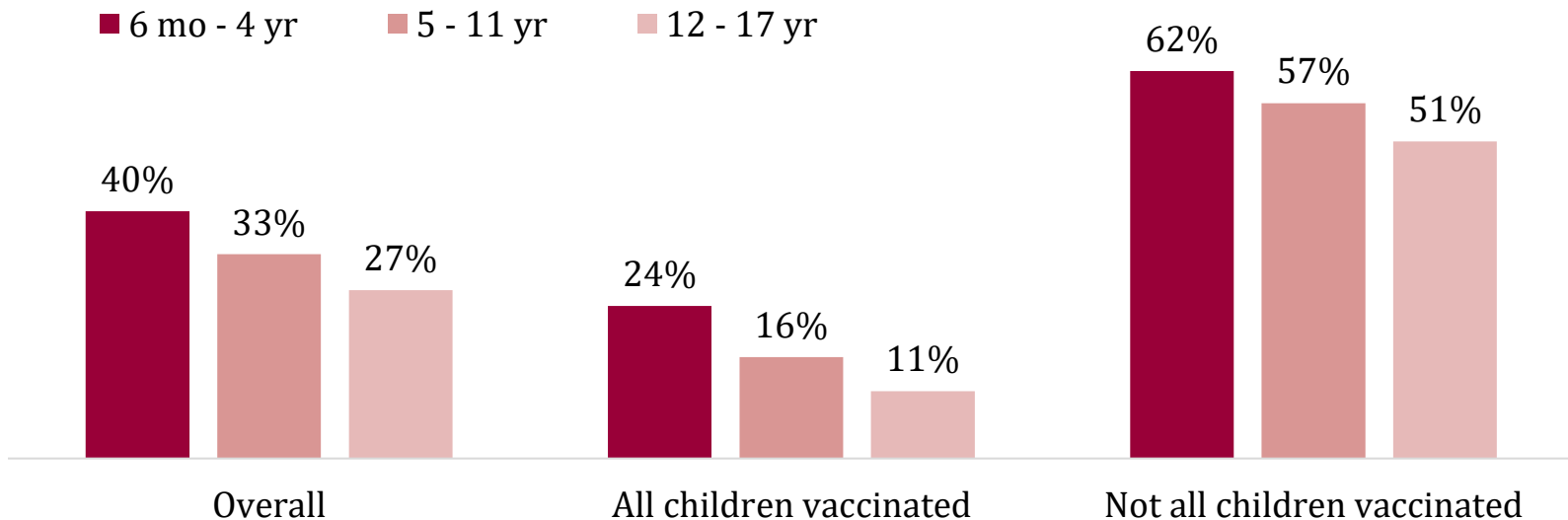


Vaccine risk by child vax status

- Those whose children are not vaccinated are far more likely to perceive the vaccine as risky, suggesting this remains a key barrier to boosting vaccination rates.

Parents of vaccinated children less likely to perceive risk of vaccinations

% of parents who say the COVID vaccine is very / somewhat risky for each age group

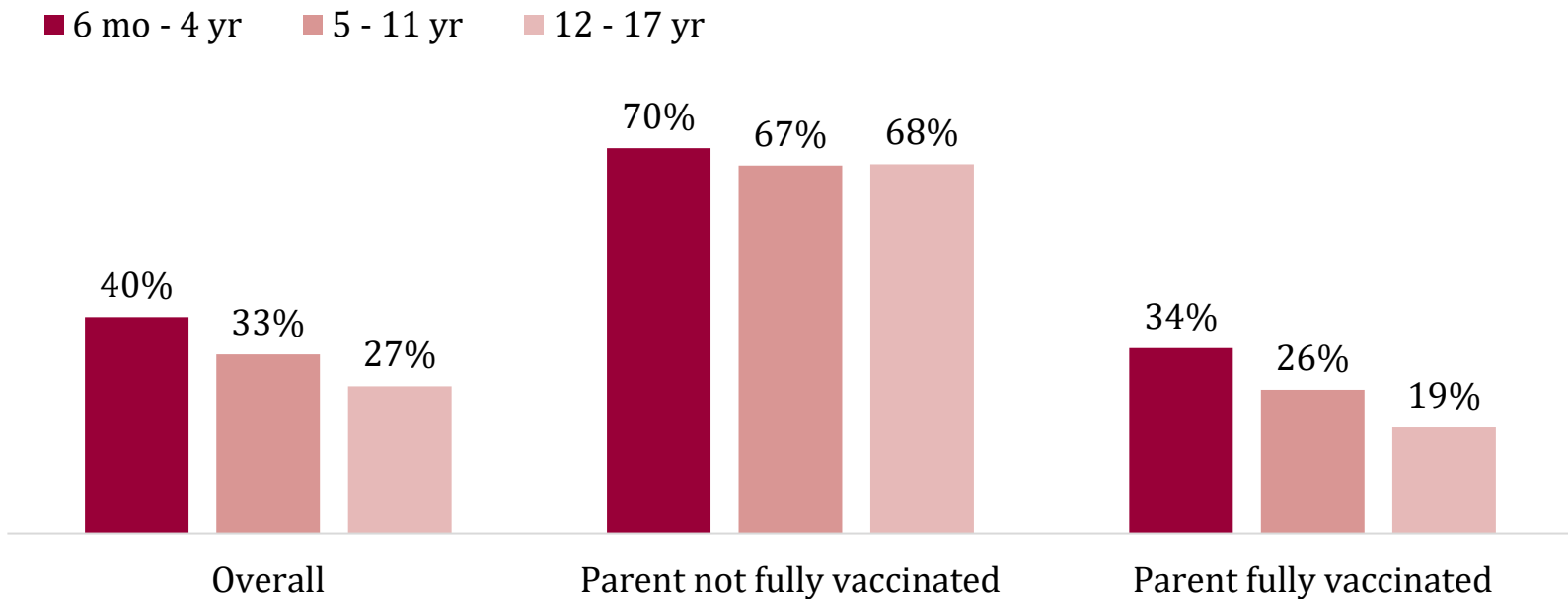


Vaccine risk by parent vax status

- Parents who are vaccinated themselves think the vaccine is safer for all age groups of children.

Vaccinated parents think the COVID vaccine is safer for children

% of parents who say the COVID vaccine is very / somewhat risky for each age group

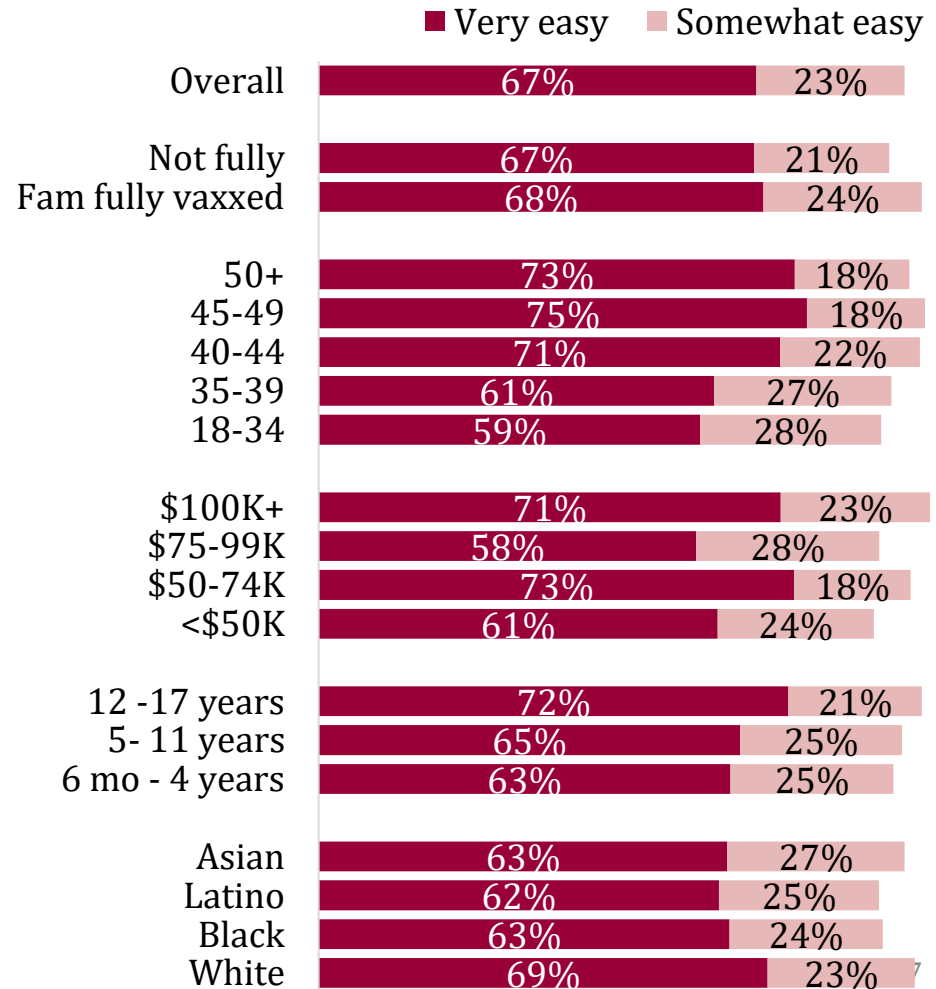


Access appears less of a barrier

- Those whose families are not fully vaccinated are no more or less likely to say it would be difficult to get appointments.
- Younger parents and those with younger children are somewhat less likely to say it would be “very easy.”

Getting appointments does not appear to be a key barrier to vaccinations

% of parents who say it would be _____ to get a vaccine appointment close to home



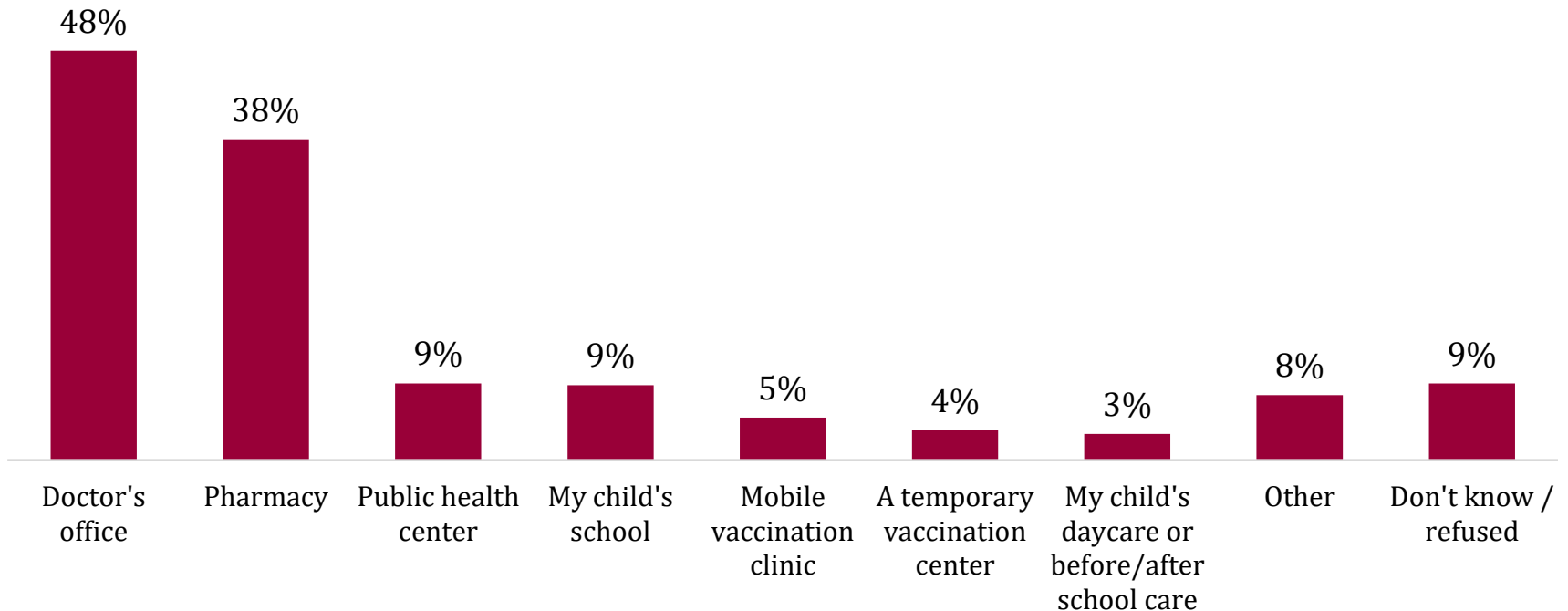
Q: If you wanted to get your child vaccinated soon, how easy or difficult do you think it would be to find a vaccine appointment close to your home?

Easiest locations are doctors, pharmacies

- Most parents with unvaccinated children say doctors' offices and pharmacies would be the easiest place to get them vaccinated.

Doctors, pharmacies would be easiest for parents of unvaccinated children

% of parents with unvaccinated children who say ____ would be the easiest location to get a vaccine



Key barriers to child vaccine access

- Overall, drop-in appointments and the family getting vaccinated at the same time are the most popular in making getting the COVID vaccine easier.
- About half (47%) of those with unvaccinated children don't see any of these options as making it easier.

Drop-in appointments and whole family vaccinations make getting child vaccines easier

% who say _____ would make getting the COVID vaccine easier for their child, by child vaccination status

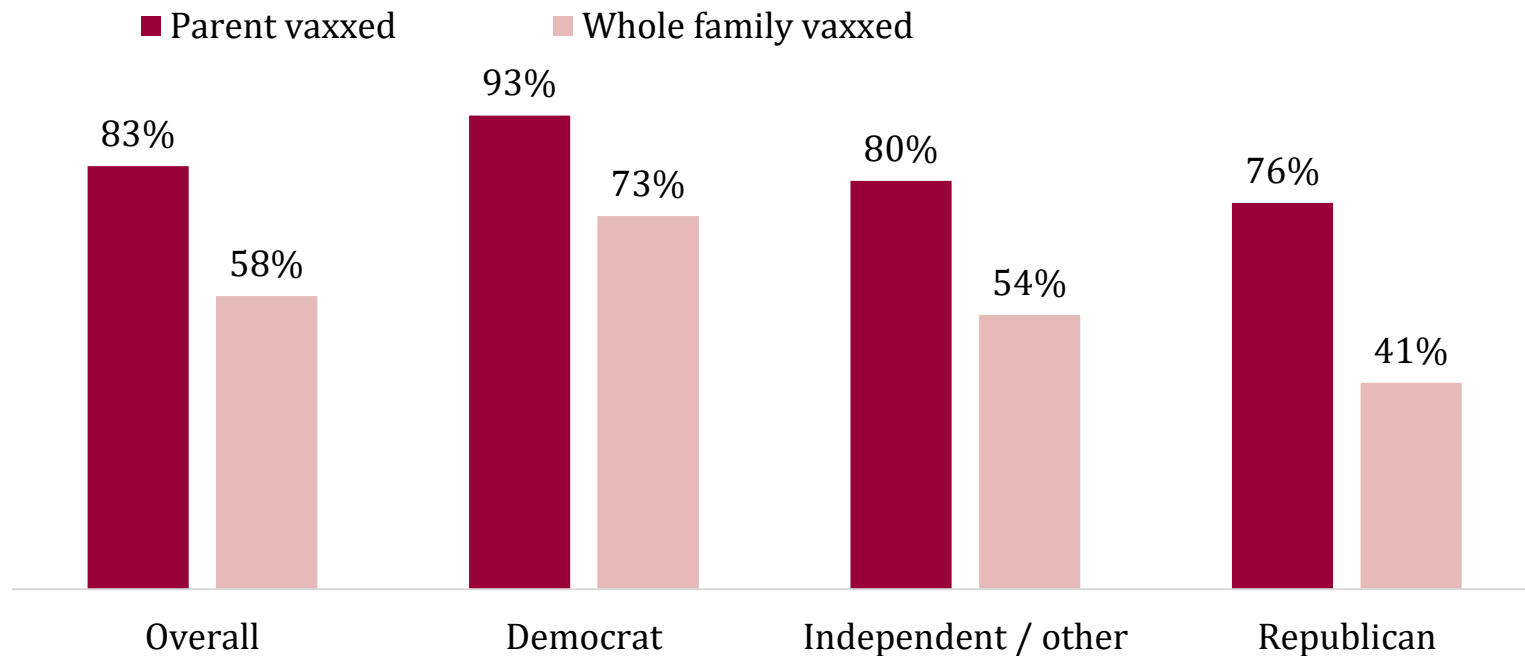
	Overall	All children vaccinated	Not all vaccinated
No appointment required (Drop-in/walk-in clinic)	34%	42%	22%
Allow my whole family to be vaccinated at the same time	29%	41%	12%
COVID-19 vaccine services close to the community I live or work in	23%	30%	14%
Paid time off from work to get vaccinated	22%	28%	14%
Culturally safe and welcoming vaccination settings	15%	19%	10%
Vaccination information in the language I understand best	14%	17%	10%
Having transportation to/from vaccination clinics	13%	17%	8%
Improve access to vaccination services for children with disabilities	12%	16%	6%
None of the above	26%	12%	47%

Vaccine rates and partisanship

- Partisanship is key when analyzing COVID vaccination patterns as has been shown in many polls and analyses.

Democrats are most likely to be vaccinated and to vaccinate their children

% who say that they or their whole family is fully vaccinated by political party



Parties are worlds apart on vaccines

- Democrats express greater trust in vaccines in general and see the COVID vaccines as safer. Even so, many are still concerned about side effects.

Views and beliefs about vaccines vary widely by political party

% parents who say _____ by political party

	Overall	Democrat	Indep / other	Republican
Trust routine vaccines great deal / fair amount	87%	95%	87%	76%
Vaccine very / somewhat effective preventing severe disease due to COVID	65%	82%	62%	49%
Very / somewhat concerned long term side effects	61%	54%	60%	79%
Very / somewhat concerned short term side effects	58%	50%	58%	75%
Strongly / somewhat agree the COVID pandemic is over	42%	28%	47%	61%

Parents of younger children

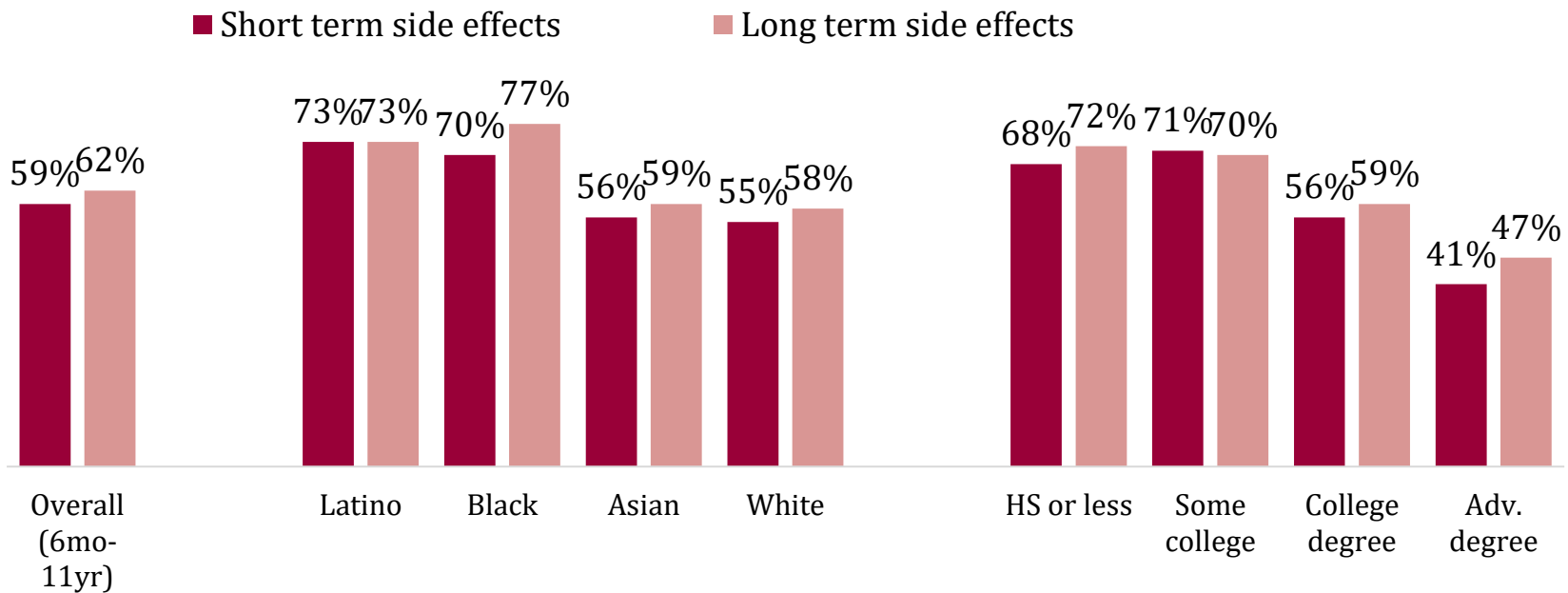
- Vaccine rates are much lower for younger children (6 months – 11 years) compared to older children (age 12-17).
- The following slides explore the views of parents with younger children.

Side effects by demographic (6mo-11yr parents)

- Among parents of younger children, Black and Latino parents and those without college degrees tend to be more concerned about side effects.

Many parents share concerns about short- and long-term side effects

% parents of 6mo to 11-year-olds who are very or somewhat concerned with _____ side effects

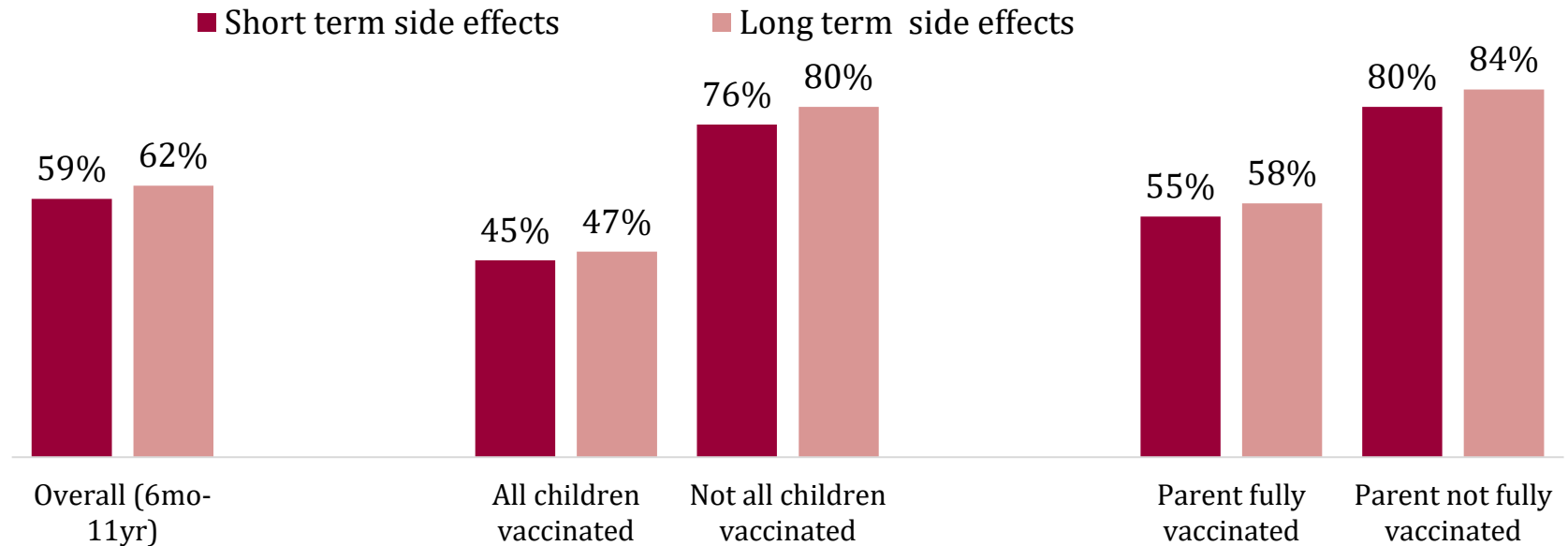


Side effects by vax status (6mo-11yr parents)

- Among parents of younger children, those who have not been vaccinated themselves express more concerns about side effects, as do parents who have unvaccinated children.

Vaccinated parents and parents of vaccinated kids less concerned with side effects

% parents of 6mo to 11-year-olds who are very / somewhat concerned with side effects



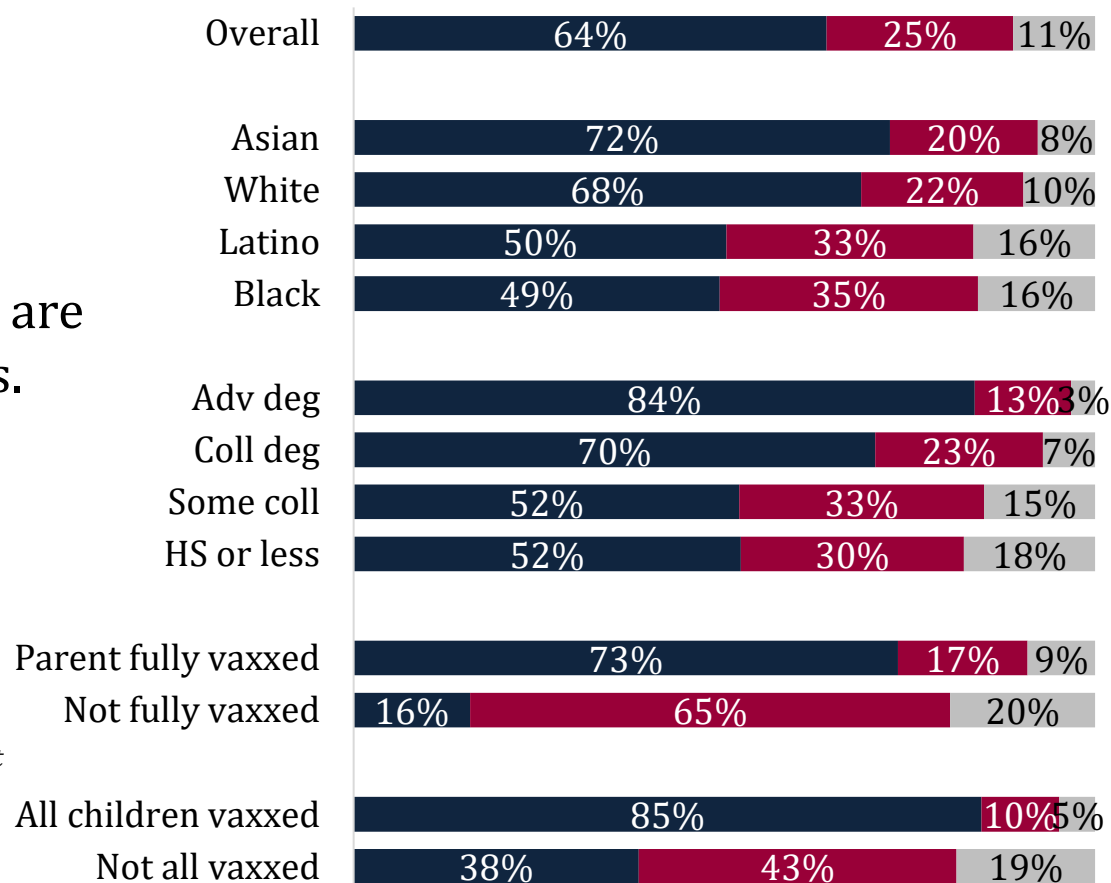
Vaccine effectiveness (6mo-11yr parents)

- Most parents overall see the vaccine as very or somewhat effective at preventing severe disease among those who get COVID.
- Those with degrees and who have gotten the vaccine for themselves, or their children are most sold on its effectiveness.

Differences in belief of child vaccine effectiveness

% parents of 6mo-11yr olds who say COVID vaccines are _____ at preventing severe disease

■ Very / somewhat effective ■ Not too / not at all effective
 ■ Don't know / refused



Q: To the best of your knowledge, how effective are COVID-19 vaccines at preventing severe disease among children who do get COVID-19?

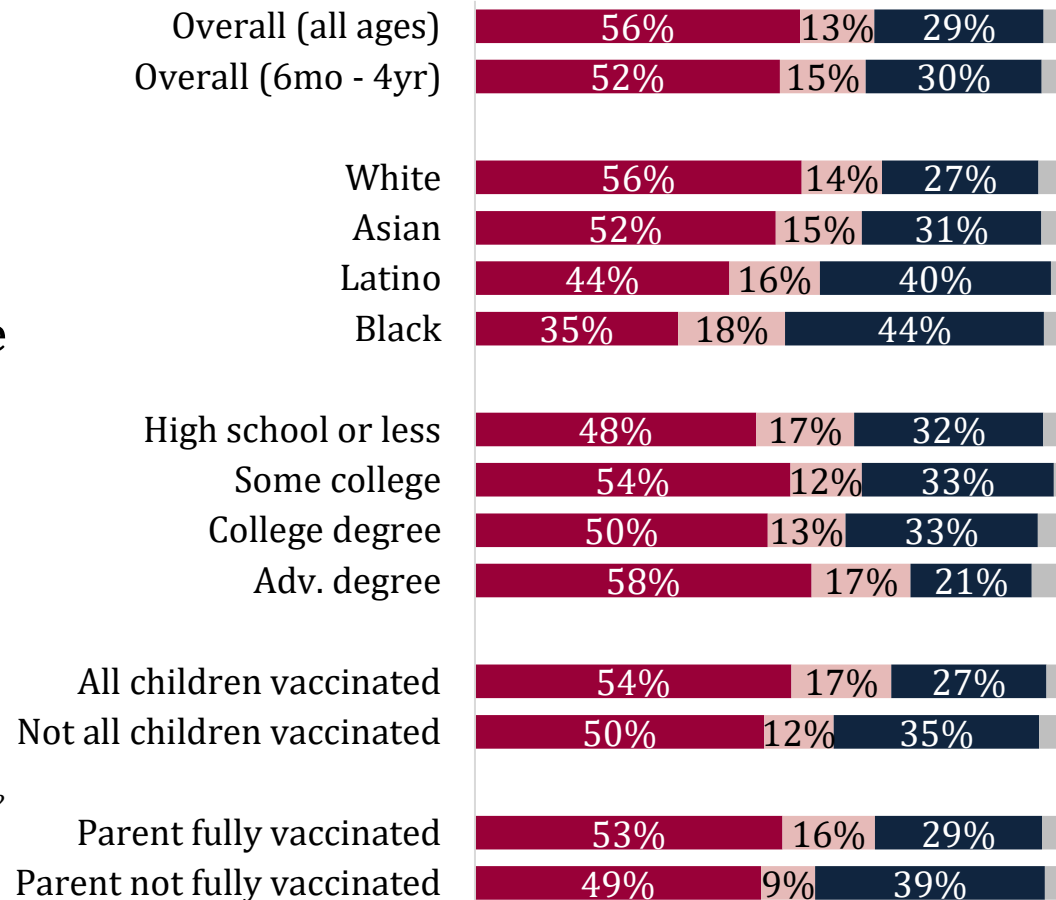
Who has had COVID (6mo-11yr parents)

- Most parents believe all or some of their children have had COVID.
- More white parents, those with advanced degrees, and those whose families are vaccinated say they have had COVID.
- This may be due to higher home testing levels among certain demographics, which other surveys have documented.

Who reports their children have had COVID

% of parents of 6mo-11 yr olds who say _____

- All children have had COVID
- At least 1 child has had COVID
- No children have had COVID
- Don't know / refused



Q: To the best of your knowledge, have your child[ren] had COVID-19?



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