

Kentucky ranks low when it comes to vaccinations

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To paraphrase William Shakespeare, “to vax or not to vax, that is the question.” According to a recent study by WalletHub.com, Kentuckians fall into the latter category, ranking No. 47 in the 2025 States that Vaccinate the Most study.

Despite overwhelming scientific proof that vaccines are safe and effective, a growing number of individuals are opting not to vaccinate their children. Florida recently decided to start dismantling school vaccine mandates, a move that no other state has undertaken in modern U.S. history. In a recent interview with CNN’s Jake Trapper, Florida Surgeon General Dr. Joseph Ladapo confirmed his department did no data analysis or projections on how the charge could affect outbreaks of diseases like measles, polio, or whooping cough, saying “ultimately, this is an issue very clearly of parents’ rights.”

Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., who has no medical training and has spoken out against vaccines, said at a recent hearing before the Senate Finance Committee, “we at HHS are enacting a once-in-a-generation shift from a sick-care system, to a true health care system that tackles the root causes of chronic disease,” to defend President Trump’s administration “Make America Healthy Again” policies. On Aug. 27, the government announced new restrictions on eligibility



for COVID vaccinations, which prompted some health organizations to warn the policy could cause confusion.

“Seeing as being anti-vaccination has become trendy in some circles and misinformation is all over the internet, it’s more crucial now than ever to spread awareness of the benefits of vaccines and make sure as many people as possible receive potentially life-saving immunizations,” said Chip Lupo, WalletHub analyst. “The states that vaccinate the most provide the safest environments when it comes to public health, as the likelihood that the next outbreak will begin or spread there is minimized.”

Kentucky ranks 32nd in influenza vaccination rate in children aged 6 months to 17 years old, 48th in the share of teenagers aged 13-17 with up-to-date HPV vaccinations, 44th in the share of teenagers aged 13-17 with Men ACWY vaccination, 35th in flu vaccination coverage rate among adults, 33rd in the share of adults with tetanus vaccination,

50th in the share of adults aged 60 or older with Zoster vaccination, 38th in the share of children 19-35 months old living in poverty with combined 7-vaccine series, and 24th in the share of children under 6 years old participating in an immunization information system.

Vaccinations represent one of the most significant advancements in modern medicine, preventing 4 to 5 million deaths worldwide per year, according to the World Health Organization. Vaccines have greatly reduced the incidence of numerous diseases, such as polio, tetanus,

measles, and chickenpox. Smallpox has been completely eradicated, with the last natural case recorded in 1977. The COVID-19 vaccines significantly lowered infection and death rates. They are extremely safe, and according to WHO, vaccine-related deaths are so rare that assessing the statistical risk is challenging.

Kentucky scored 32.96, with only Georgia, Alabama, Nevada, and Mississippi ranking lower. Kentucky ranked 45th in children and teenagers’ immunization rates, 46th in adult and elderly vaccination rates, and 40th in immunization uptake disparities and influencing factors.

Massachusetts is the state that vaccinates the most, and it’s also one of only 18 states that allow minors to receive vaccinations without parental consent, which allows young people with anti-vaccine parents to choose to become vaccinated. The Bay State also requires children to be vaccinated against common diseases before attending kindergarten.

New Hampshire is the state with the second-best vaccination coverage, with

Washington ranking third. Six of the top 10 states are located in New England.

Martine Hackett, Associate Professor of Population Health, Chair at Hofstra University, said there are steps local authorities can take in order to counter the current anti-vaccination trend.

“Local authorities can promote the availability of vaccines in their communities and the reasons why they are so effective,” Hackett said. “By focusing on disease prevention, local authorities are making an investment for the future by keeping residents from getting sick and spreading disease.”

She also said the media should play the role of truth tellers and emphasize the efficacy of the majority of vaccines, and highlight those who have benefitted from receiving vaccines.

“The media should not present the supposed threats

of vaccination as accurate or valid,” she noted. “People who are vaccine-hesitant are often using false and misleading information as if it is true, when it is not. The media needs to call out those false claims.”

Despite Florida’s recent action, Hackett feels that it is necessary for the U.S. to introduce a “no jab, no school” policy, requiring mandatory vaccination before enrolling in school.

“Yes, it is necessary for there to be mandatory vaccination before enrolling in school,” she said. “The vast majority of children will benefit from the vaccines and will be protected from disease, and those who cannot receive vaccines due to medical reasons will be protected.”

To view the entire report, visit <https://wallethub.com/edu/states-that-vaccinate-the-most/66237>.

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