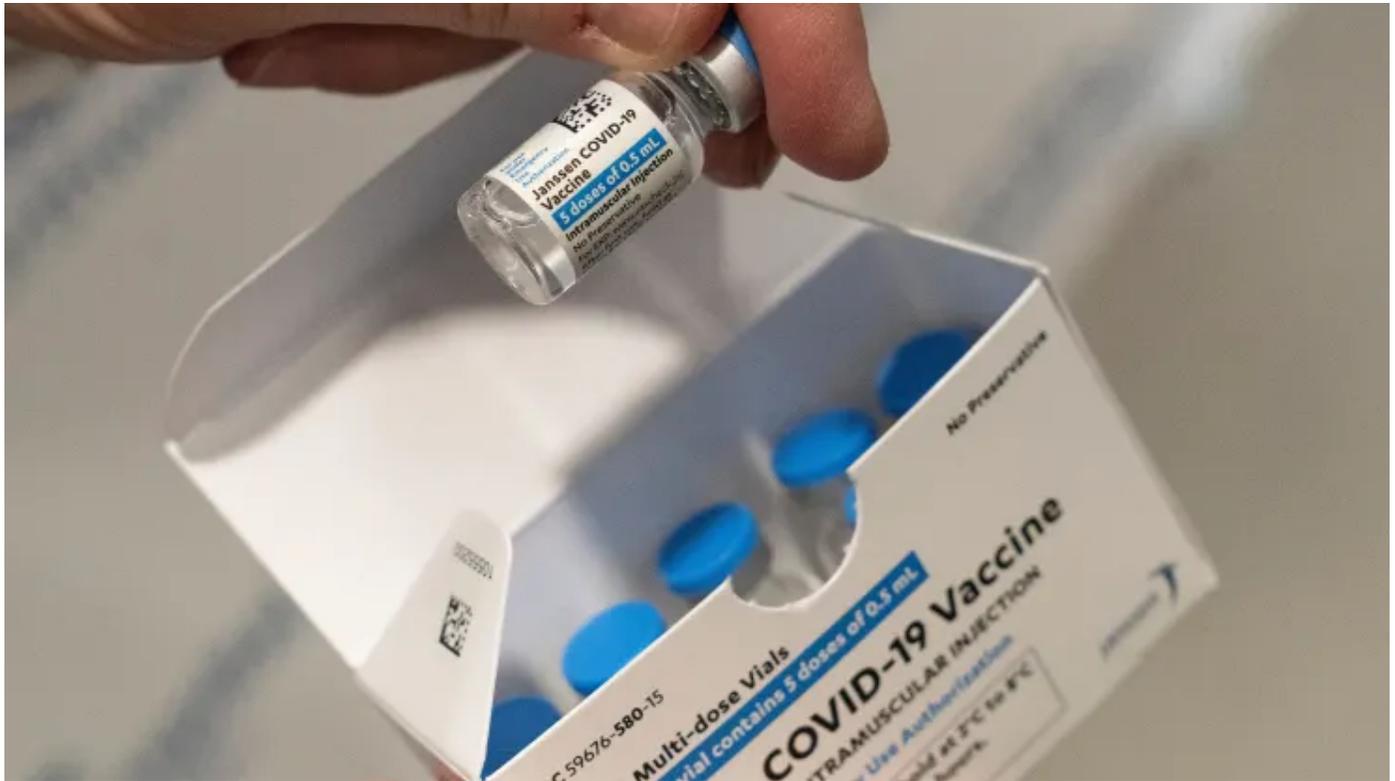


The U.S. Is About to Run Out of People Who Want the Vaccine



A pharmacist holds a vial of the Johnson & Johnson covid-19 vaccine at a hospital in Bay Shore, N.Y.

Photo: Mark Lennihan (AP)

This week, all 50 states officially opened up eligibility for covid-19 vaccination to all adult residents. But while millions of Americans are still lining up to get their dose, experts warn that the country is quickly approaching a vaccine surplus, with too few takers to meet the supply we have available. Once that happens, it's still a question as to whether the U.S. will dole out its unwanted vaccines to countries desperately in need of them, or even provide them the opportunity to make their own.

On Tuesday, an analysis from the Kaiser Family Foundation [concluded](#) that the U.S. will reach a tipping point in enthusiasm for covid-19 vaccination

within the next two to four weeks.

Currently, just over 50% of eligible adults have received at least one dose of the vaccine. According to the KFF's most recent polling in late March, about 61% of eligible adults have gotten or are definitely interested in getting vaccinated. But there remains a steady contingent of Americans—10% to 15%, based on various polls—who overtly say they'll never get a vaccine willingly. And even under the best scenario—where half of the people still iffy on the vaccine eventually change their mind—it still would probably only take 28 days for everyone who wants a vaccine to get it, the KFF estimates.

Likely as soon as this week, the country will meet President Biden's earlier [stated goal](#) of administering 200 million doses within the first 100 days of his presidency. And it's likely that our projected levels of vaccine coverage will still be enough to sharply curtail the pandemic's spread and limit deaths and serious illness caused by covid-19, similar to what's happened in countries like the UK and Israel. But we may not reach herd immunity—levels of vaccine coverage and natural immunity that would fully protect people unable or unwilling to get vaccinated from localized outbreaks. Once enthusiasm dries up, the U.S. vaccine supply is also at risk of wasting away, even as most of the world remains unvaccinated.

Earlier this month, Vanity Fair [reported](#) that talks within the Biden administration had begun on how the U.S. would donate their future unwanted doses. But these discussions were put on hold as the country continued to experience relatively high levels of new cases and many experts feared that a fourth peak of the pandemic would emerge. Since then, while a few states such as Michigan have experienced alarming spikes in new cases, the U.S. as a whole has remained at a precarious plateau. It isn't just local troubles that have delayed these efforts, though. Many of the government's existing contracts with vaccine manufacturers—negotiated by

the Trump administration— would have to be reworked first, since the current language appears to prevent them from giving surplus doses to other countries.

The U.S. and other wealthy countries, as members of the World Trade Organization, have also previously [impeded](#) attempts by poorer countries to secure doses by temporarily waiving patents that would allow them to produce their own vaccines locally at much less cost. And despite [recent pleas](#) by some lawmakers to change the administration's mind and throw its support behind these waivers before the next WTO general meeting this May, it's not clear if the U.S. will do so.

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All of these setbacks and intentional decisions could leave the U.S. mostly, but not entirely, protected from the pandemic, while many of the world's poorest nations would remain mostly unprotected until 2024, according to some [recent projections](#).