



Polling as an Effective Tool for Advocacy

Ali Hilton, MPA
Program Director

The Mid America Immunization Coalition

Nurture KC



OUR STORY

Collaborating for Healthy Babies and Families



OUR VISION

A Kansas City community committed to health equity for all families – regardless of race, place or circumstance – beginning with a child's birth through a continuum of care.

OUR MISSION

Nurture KC is a community collaboration dedicated to reducing infant mortality and improving family health. We work together to change policy for broad impact, transform systems to improve health outcomes at a local level, and provide one-on-one support to connect families.



Mid America Immunization Coalition Guidelines and Procedures

ARTICLE 1 – NAME OF ORGANIZATION AND ORGANIZATION PURPOSE

The organization shall be called the Mid America Immunization Coalition, shorted to MAIC, and serve as a program under the leadership of Nurture KC. Founded in 1992, MAIC provides critical education and advocacy to health professionals and community members on the value of vaccination as a pillar for preventing disease. MAIC provides these services in Johnson and Wyandotte Counties in Kansas and Jackson, Clay, and Platte Counties in Missouri.

ARTICLE II –MISSION OF ORGANIZATION

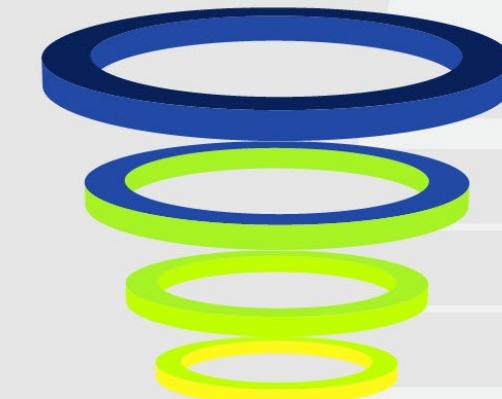
MAIC builds collaborative community partnerships to increase public awareness and improve access to life-saving immunizations. We ensure vaccine safety and trust are prioritized as we promote immunization for all of greater Kansas City's children, adolescents and adults against vaccine-preventable diseases.

ARTICLE III – VISION OF ORGANIZATION

MAIC, under the leadership of Nurture KC, is a community collaboration dedicated to reducing infant mortality and improving family health. MAIC works alongside Nurture KC and the subsequent community to change policy for broad impact, transform systems to improve health outcomes at a local level, and builds collaborative community partnerships to increase public awareness and improve access to vaccinations.



Coalition Structure



Community Impact

Wyandotte and Johnson counties in KS
Clay, Platte, and Jackson counties in MO

Membership at-large

Individuals, agencies, service providers, businesses, and other community members

Steering Committee

Core leaders from the general membership
Appx: 20

MAIC Director

Ali Hilton @ Nurture KC



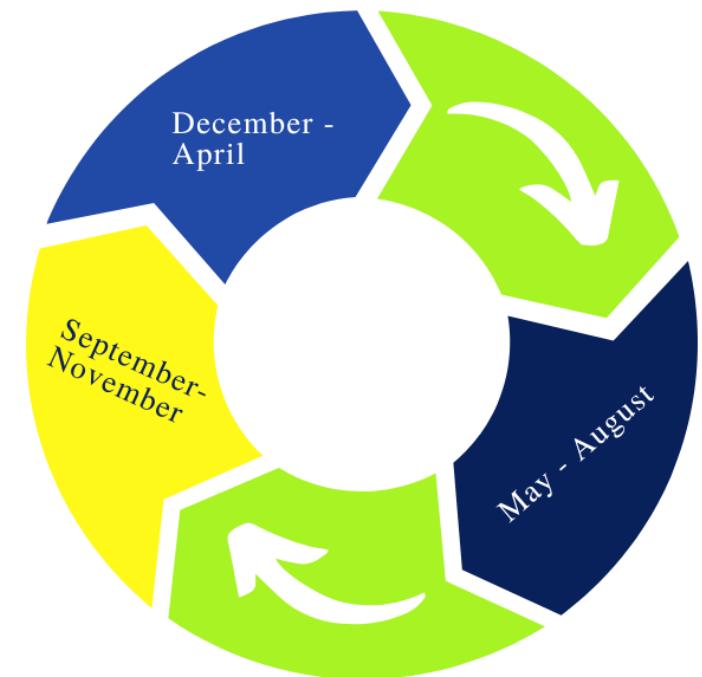
Goals

Community Impact Targets:

- Increase vaccination access and vaccination rates in high risk zip codes.
- Utilize social media and marketing materials to reach target population on the importance of vaccination.
- Expand community outreach and collaboration to enrich the coalition's diversity and mission.
- Engage in policy by providing data and information for educational purposes that will protect vaccines as a pillar of community health.



MAIC Priority Cycle





Why MAIC Engages in Legislative Advocacy:

- While anti-vax sentiment is not new, coordination and funding of these groups has escalated and they engage at the local and state level. In Kansas, there is a 501 c4 engaging in political endorsements and policies.
- COVID exacerbated a growing political divide on vaccination. Some candidates for office now proudly tout their anti-vax positions, mainstreaming the issue in a way that we did not see pre-pandemic.
- The threat of policies that undo a century of preventive vaccination is real and growing, resulting in legislation that gets further in the process each year.
- The loud minority voice with a daily presence at the capitol is contributing to a false perception that the public at large is unsupportive of mandatory vaccination.
- We believe the majority support vaccination and it is time for them to be heard.
- As a community vaccination organization with expertise on this issue, MAIC has an obligation to inform and advocate on the importance of vaccines to preventing disease.
- “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” – George Santayana. As time goes on, we lose the raw perspective of generations who experienced life when diseases, like polio, were rampant.
- Due to the success of vaccines in reducing our exposure to once deadly diseases, many do not understand the reality and ramifications of a return to that era.

The Anti-Vax Perspective is rooted in:

- ▶ Fear
- ▶ Genuine concern
- ▶ Protecting religious freedoms
- ▶ Protecting health freedoms
- ▶ Individual over community
- ▶ Parents know best
- ▶ Post-COVID trauma
- ▶ Governmental overreach
- ▶ Mis/disinformation and social media
- ▶ Political divide
- ▶ Peer pressure

2022 Legislation

Kansas

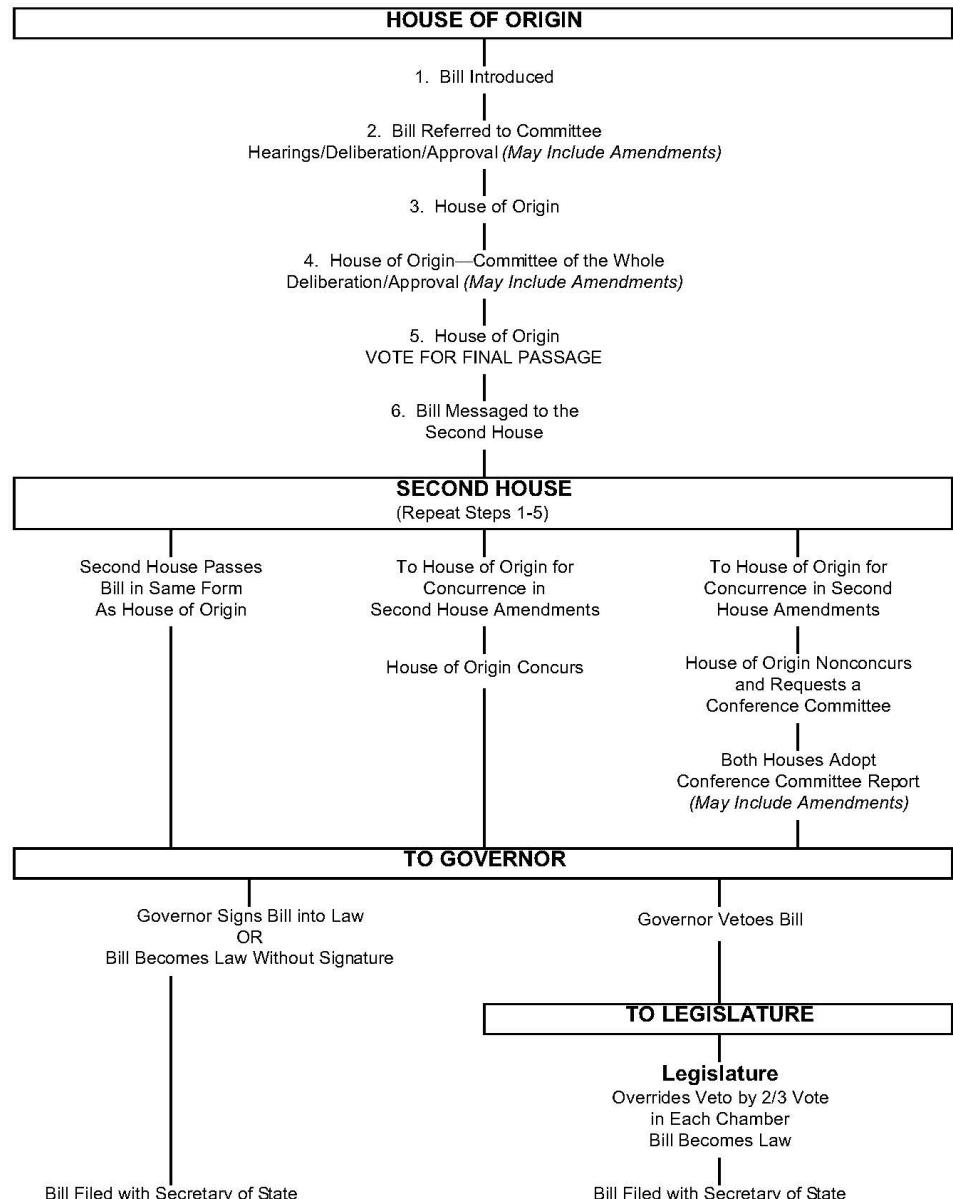
- ▶ S Sub HB 2280
 - ▶ Adding a philosophical exemption
- ▶ HB 2662 and SB 496
 - ▶ Parent Bill of Rights to make all healthcare decisions
- ▶ SB 489
 - ▶ Moving public health authority from KDHE to legislature
- ▶ SB 541 and SB 34
 - ▶ Anti-public health provisions that prohibit infectious disease control

Missouri

- ▶ HB 1995
 - ▶ Expansion of religious exemptions
- ▶ HB 2009
 - ▶ Parent Bill of Rights to make all healthcare decisions
- ▶ HB 2452
 - ▶ Removing vaccine mandate for private schools

HOW A BILL BECOMES LAW

The Kansas Legislature consists of Two Houses—The House of Representatives (125 members) and the Senate (40 members). A bill may be introduced in either house. The main steps in the process of a bill becoming a law are shown below.





2022 KANSAS LEGISLATIVE WRAP UP



Immunization			
No bills to note			
FAIL			
Bill Number	Position	Bill Description	Bill Action
<u>S Sub HB 2280</u>	Oppose	Would have authorized off-label use of some prescription medications, like ivermectin and hydroxychloroquine, to treat COVID-19. Would have modified religious exemption language to include a philosophical exemption as well as eliminate the ability to inquire regarding the sincerity of such religious beliefs.	Passed the Senate <u>Yea: 21 Nay: 16</u> But failed to pass the House No further action
<u>Sub HB 2662</u>	Oppose	Would have established the parents' bill of rights and academic transparency act which included the right for parents to make healthcare and medical decisions for such child, including vaccinations and immunizations.	Passed the House K-12 Budget Committee No further action
<u>SB 489</u>	Oppose	Would have removed certain regulatory authority concerning infectious or contagious diseases from the secretary of health and environment.	Passed the Senate <u>Yea: 24 Nay: 15</u> No further action
<u>SB 496</u>	Oppose	Would have established the parents' bill of rights for parents of students attending elementary or secondary school in this state which included the right to make healthcare and medical decisions for such child, including the right to make decisions regarding vaccinations and immunizations.	Passed the Senate <u>Yea: 24 Nay: 15</u> No further action
<u>SB 541</u>	Oppose	Would have prohibited government and public officials from requiring certain health mandates related to infectious diseases. This included a provision prohibiting discrimination against a student based upon COVID-19 vaccination status; requiring schools to recognize exemptions from vaccination requirements.	Passed the Senate <u>Yea: 24 Nay: 14</u> No further action
<u>SB 34</u>	Oppose	Would have prohibited governmental entities, including KDHE and public health departments from enacting mitigation strategies to contain infectious diseases including a prohibition on all mask mandates and quarantines.	Senate Health Conferees included the legislation in conference committee as part of an agreement on other issues of concern to the House. SB 34 passed the House <u>Yea: 64 Nay: 53</u> and passed the Senate <u>Yea: 23 Nay: 17</u> VETOED by Governor with no attempt to override

How did we prepare for the poll?

- Our goal was to obtain accurate public attitudes towards vaccines, regardless of results, to serve as a road map for our education efforts.
- We were strategic in who we selected to conduct the poll. The pollster was well known in Kansas and nationally, as well as an award-winning Republican pollster.
- We knew where the touch points and issues of greatest concern were and talked through the dynamics before submitting draft questions to be massaged by the pollster.
- While criticism is unavoidable when it comes to polling questions and process, we tried to mitigate much of that through choice of pollster and objectivity of the polling instrument.
- We did not poll on COVID vaccine attitudes as that is so politically divisive and did not want those attitudes to weigh on opinions regarding the routine vaccination schedule.



Kansas Statewide Survey: Attitudes Toward Vaccines

Key findings from a statewide survey of 600 registered voters
in Kansas, conducted January 27-February 3, 2022.

Glen Bolger

glen@pos.org



Jarrett Lewis

jarrett@pos.org



Project #220062



Methodology

Public Opinion Strategies is pleased to present the key findings of a statewide survey conducted in Kansas. The survey was completed January 27-February 3, 2022, among 600 registered voters, with 312 landline respondents and 288 online respondents, and has a margin of error of $\pm 4.0\%$.

Glen Bolger and Jarrett Lewis were the principal researchers on this project. Torie Bolger was the project director, and Katie Connolly provided analytical support.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE



Gender	% of Sample
Men	48%
Women	52%



Age	% of Sample
18-34	18%
35-44	20%
45-54	14%
55-64	21%
65+	28%



DMA	% of Sample
Kansas City	38%
Topeka	15%
Wichita	40%
Balance	7%



Party	% of Sample
Republican	43%
Lean/Independent	25%
Democrat	28%



Education	% of Sample
High School or Less	23%
Some College	29%
College Graduate	35%
Graduate/Prof	13%

Poll Representation by Geography

- 32% of the interviews were done in urban counties
- 35% in suburban counties
- 33% in rural counties

Wellness Vaccines	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Good Thing	95%	96%	94%
Bad Thing	4%	3%	4%

The three media markets include rural areas of the state, representing 93% of the population who voted in the 2020 presidential election.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. More than 9-in-10 Kansas voters (95%) believe taking vaccines for diseases like measles, mumps and polio is extremely or very important to maintaining good health. In fact, when it comes to maintaining good health, a larger share of Kansas voters believe it is more important to get wellness vaccines than it is to get an annual checkup at the doctor (94%).
2. Fully 95% of Kansas voters believe wellness vaccines are a good thing, including 77% who say they are ***a very good*** thing. And voters across Kansas strongly trust the safety and efficacy of wellness vaccines. Consider:
 - More than 9-in-10 of Kansas voters believes wellness vaccines are completely/mostly safe, including strong majorities of Republicans (96%), Independents (95%) and Democrats (98%)
 - More than 9-in-10 of Kansas voters believes wellness vaccines are completely/mostly effective, including strong majorities of Republicans (97%), Independents (95%) and Democrats (100%)
3. More than 9-in-10 Kansas voters support wellness vaccine requirements for children to attend K-12 schools or childcare facilities, including 70% who ***strongly*** support the requirements. 67% of voters would be more supportive of a political candidate if they supported existing wellness vaccine requirements (25% say it would make no difference), including majorities of Republicans (59%), Independents (61%) and Democrats (89%).



KEY TAKEAWAYS

4. Kansas voters support religious exemptions to wellness vaccines – but they support tightening those exemptions. Consider:
 - 65% believe both parents of a child should be required to provide a statement for religious exemptions to wellness vaccines;
 - 64% believe religious exemptions to wellness vaccines should require an annual review;
 - 61% believe religious exemptions to wellness vaccines should require documentation from a religious leader.
5. A majority of Kansas voters **reject** the idea that we should add more wellness vaccine exemptions. More than 6-in-10 disagree with the idea that we should add another wellness vaccine exemption that is based on philosophical objections.
6. Fully 85% of Kansas voters believe the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) is the appropriate entity to set wellness vaccine policy for children in Kansas. And nearly three quarters (73%) oppose legislation to move KDHE's authority over wellness vaccine policy to the Kansas legislature. Nearly two-thirds (65%) of Kansas voters **strongly** agree (85% agree overall) that moving wellness vaccine policy from KDHE to the legislature would be politicizing disease prevention.



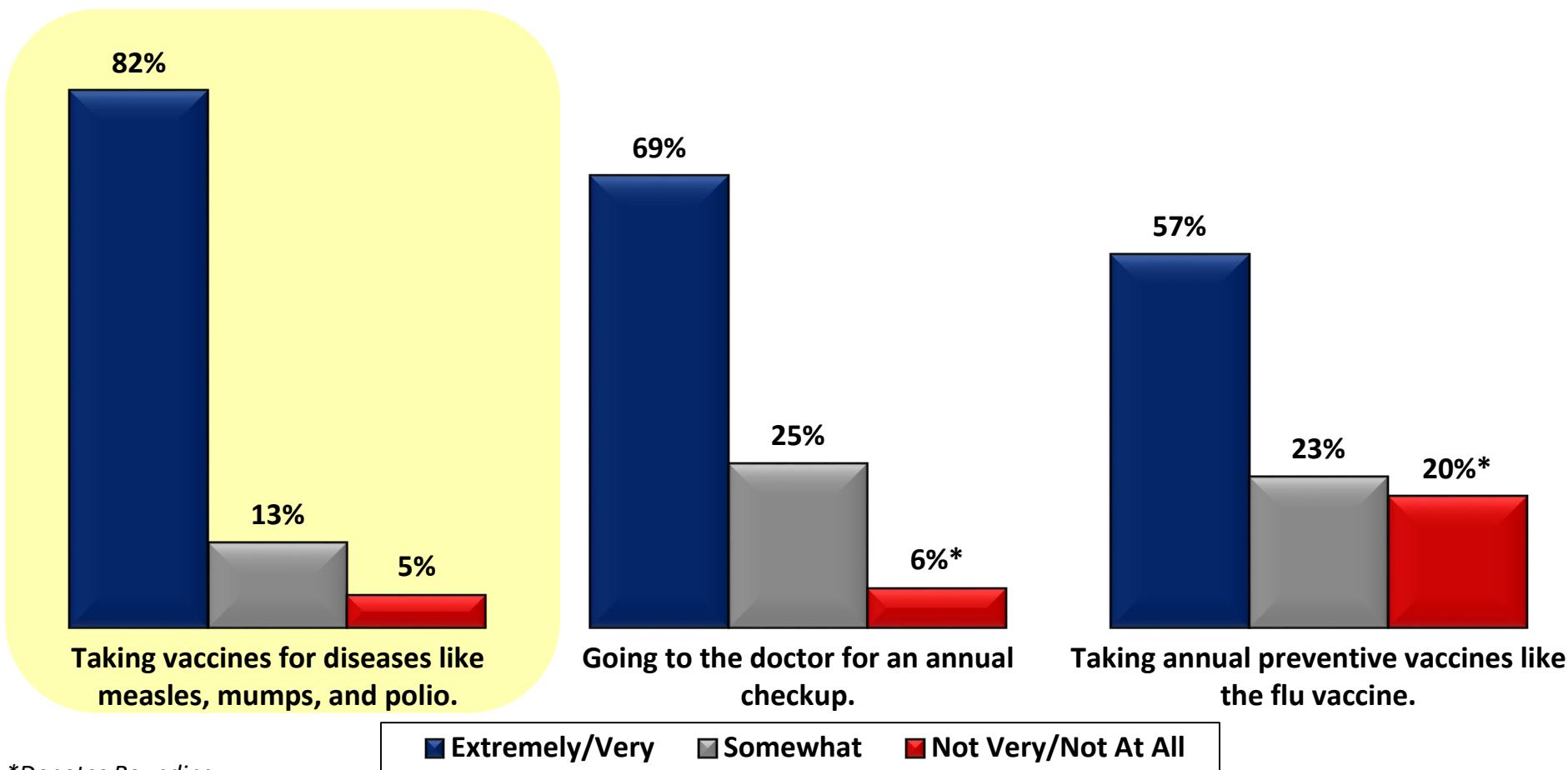
Wellness Vaccines

Wellness Vaccines Description

“Now, I would like to ask you a few questions about wellness vaccines. These are vaccines that are most commonly given to children at different points of their childhood and they are used to prevent diseases like measles, mumps, hepatitis, and polio. To be clear, these are different than the COVID-19 vaccine and I am not asking anything about the COVID-19 vaccine.”

Voters overwhelmingly believe it is very important to their health to take wellness vaccines.

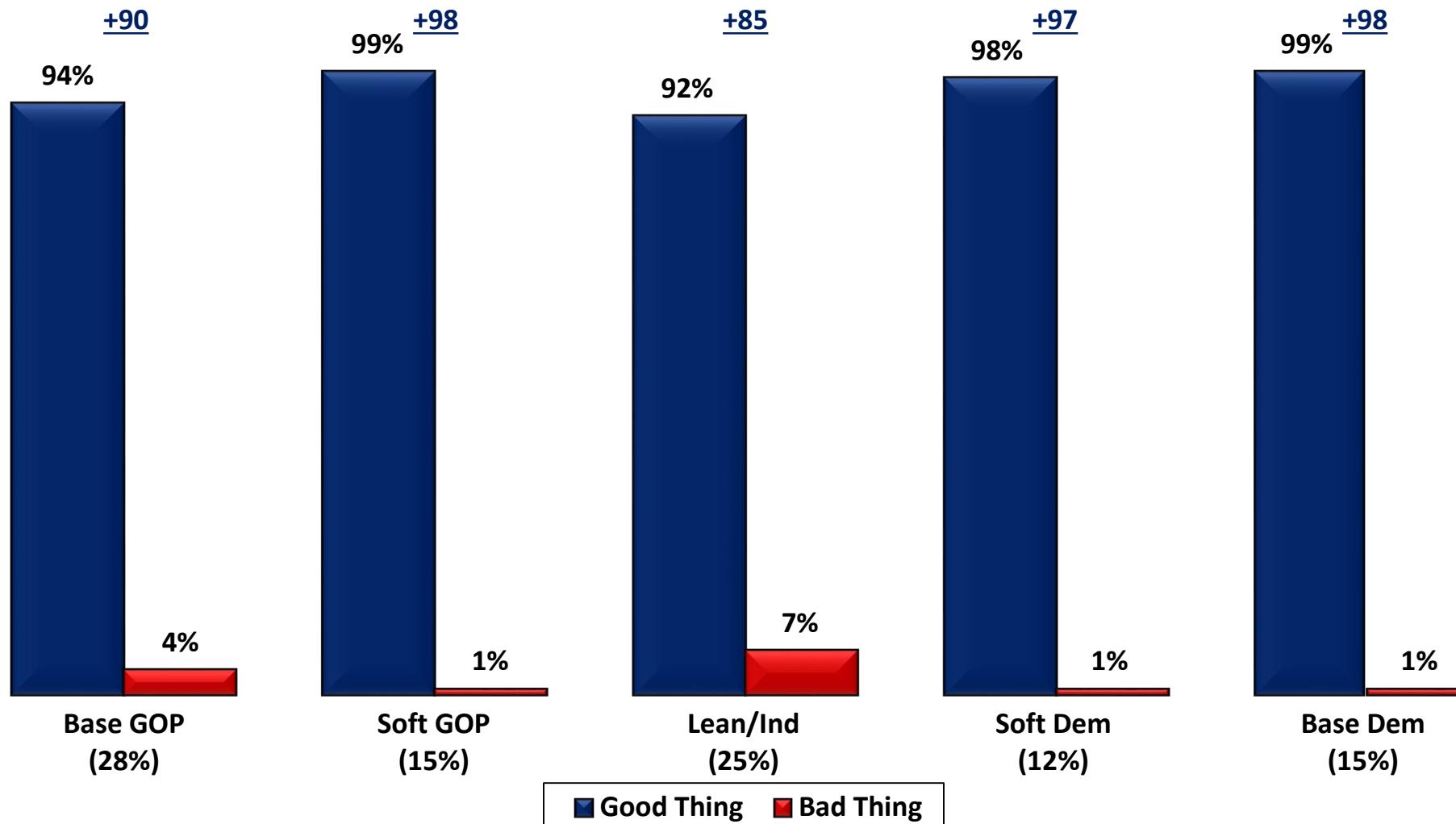
"I am going to read you some statements about health. After listening to each statement, please tell me how important each statement is to you for maintaining good health. Would you say that is extremely important, very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important?"



*Denotes Rounding.

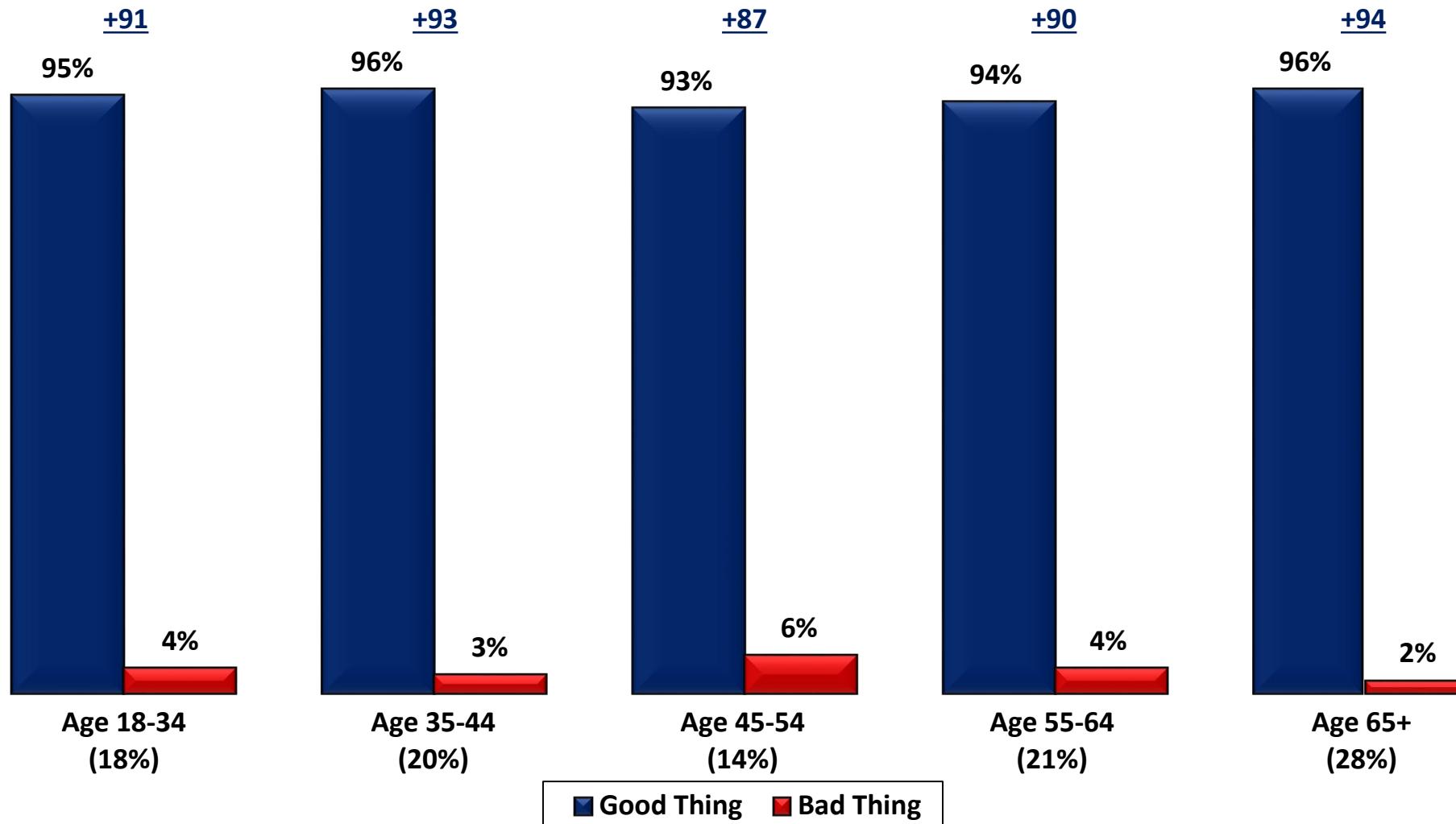
There is strong agreement across partisan lines that wellness vaccines are a good thing.

Wellness Vaccines Good Thing/Bad Thing by Party



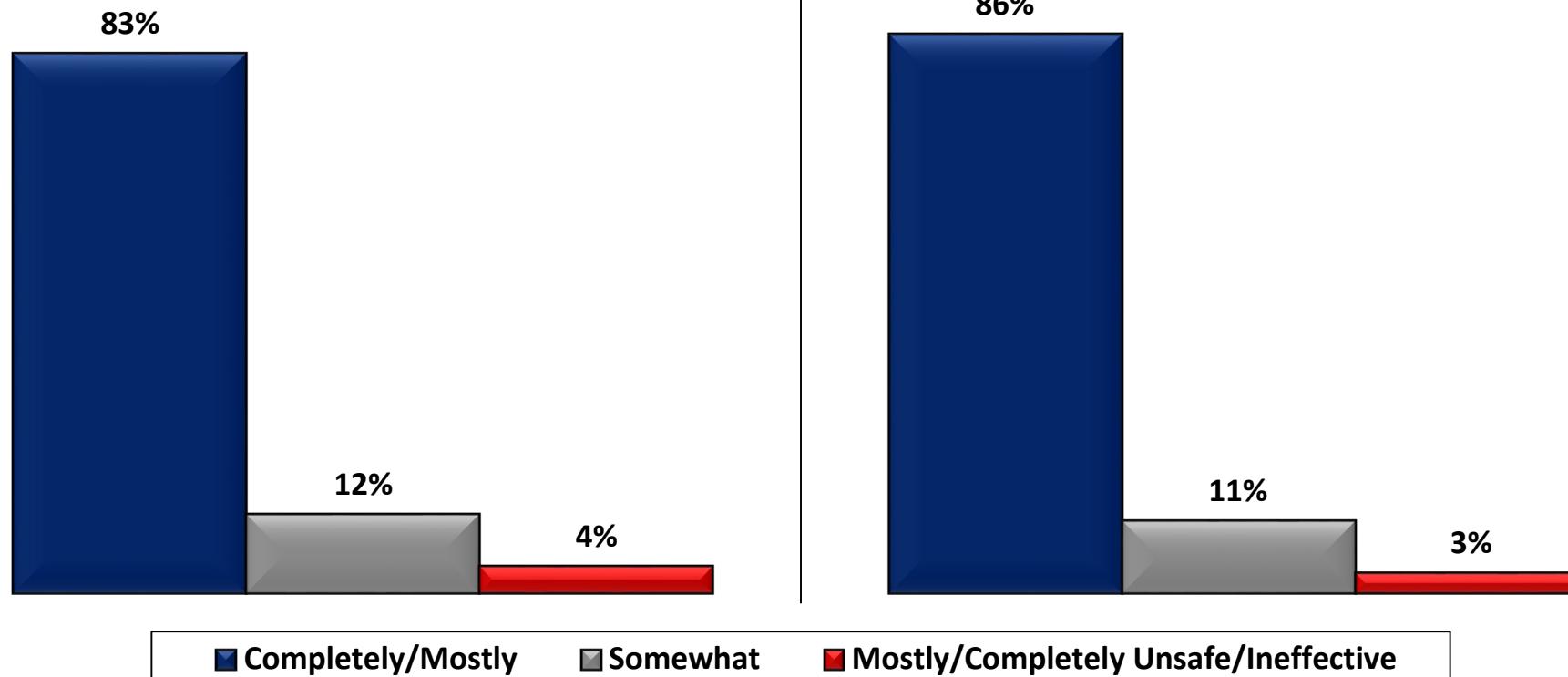
Voters of all ages believe wellness vaccines are a good thing.

Wellness Vaccines Good Thing/Bad Thing by Age



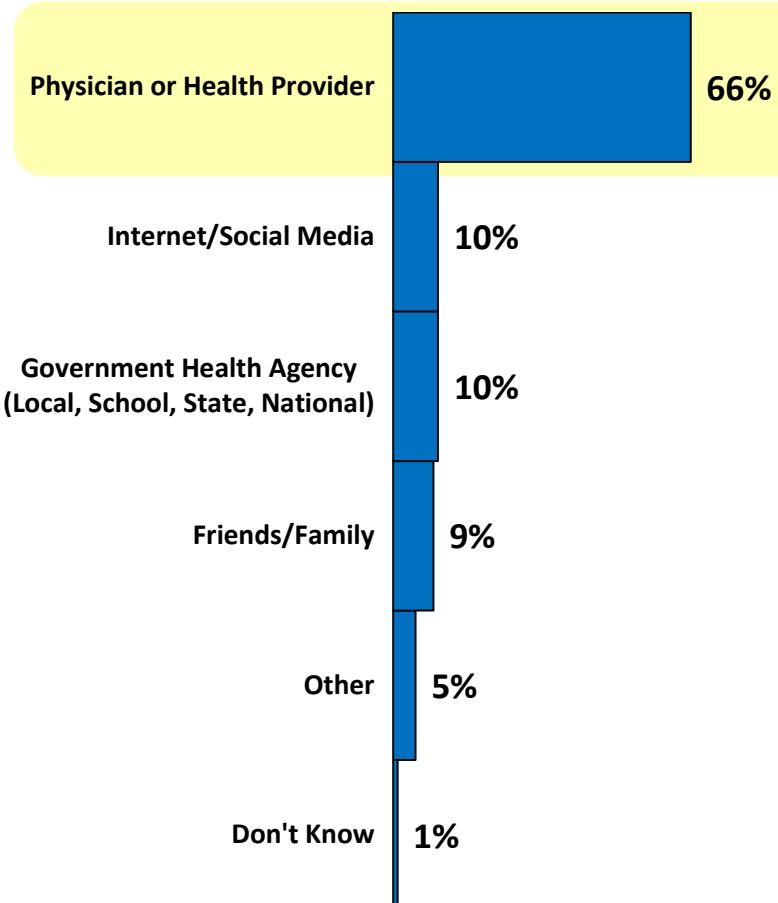
More than 80% of Kansas voters say wellness vaccines are completely/mostly safe and completely/mostly effective.

“Do you believe wellness vaccines are completely safe, mostly safe, somewhat safe, mostly unsafe or completely unsafe?”

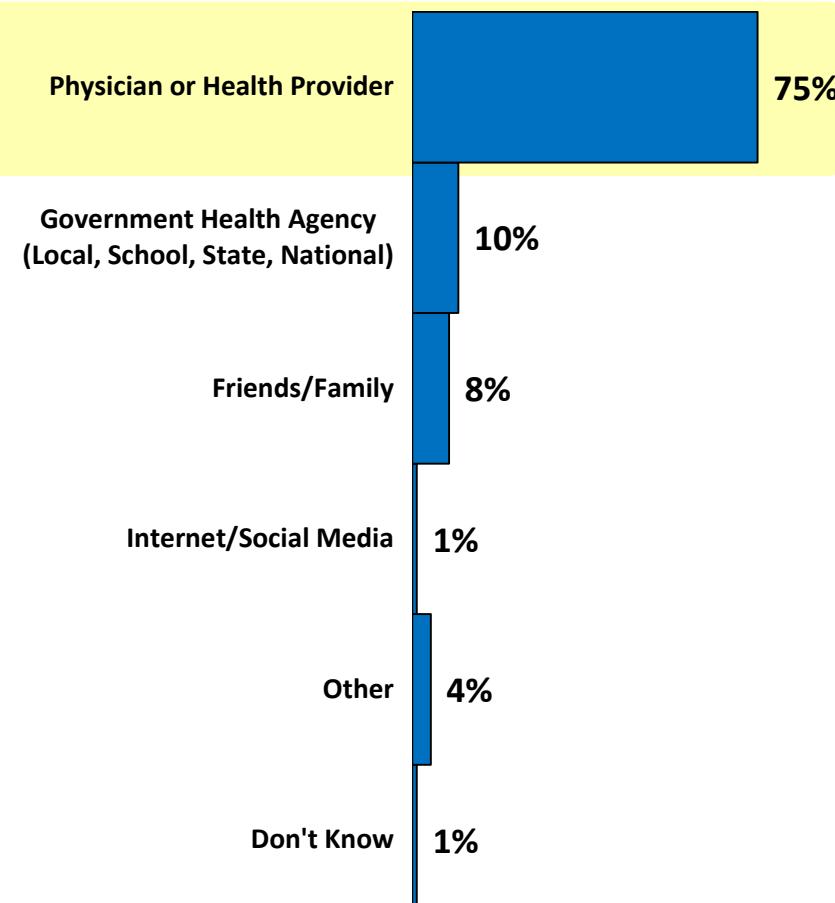


When it comes to wellness vaccine info, physicians are the dominant source of information and by far the most trusted.

“Where do you receive most of your information about wellness vaccines?”[^]



“What source would you say you trust the most when it comes to information about wellness vaccines?”^{^^}



[^]Split Sample A, N=296; ^{^^}Split Sample B, N=304.



All four messages in support of taking wellness vaccines resonate strongly; the polio example resonates the most.

"Now I'd like to read you some statements people have made in support of taking wellness vaccines, and after I read each statement, please tell me if you think that statement is very convincing, somewhat convincing, not very convincing, or not at all convincing as a reason to take wellness vaccines."

Ranked by % Very Convincing

We know that vaccines work. Before the polio vaccine was created in the 1950s, there were over sixteen thousand cases of polio in the U.S. every year. By 2019 there was not a single case of polio in the U.S.



We know that vaccines in the U.S. have saved lives and eliminated or significantly reduced the number of infectious diseases. Each year in the U.S. wellness vaccines given to children will prevent forty-two thousand early deaths and 20 million cases of disease.



The Kansas Medical Society, which represents nearly three thousand medical doctors across Kansas, strongly supports children receiving wellness vaccines.[^]



The Kansas State Nurses Association, which represents over forty thousand registered nurses across Kansas, strongly supports children receiving wellness vaccines.^{^^}



■ Very Convincing □ Total Convincing ■ Not At All Convincing □ Total Not Convincing

[^]Split Sample A, N=296; ^{^^}Split Sample B, N=304.





Wellness Vaccine Exemptions

A strong majority of voters know that children in Kansas are required to receive wellness vaccines to attend childcare or a K-12 school.

“Now, changing topics a little... To the best of your knowledge, are children in Kansas required to get wellness vaccines for diseases like measles, mumps, and polio in order to attend a childcare facility or a K-12 school?”

85%

Yes

8%

No

7%

Don't Know

Medical and Religious Exemptions

“Kansas law currently allows some exemptions for children in childcare facilities or K-12 schools to wellness vaccines, including for medical reasons and religious objections. A medical exemption requires written approval from a doctor based on evidence that the exemption is necessary for the health of the child.

A religious exemption for a child requires a statement by one parent attesting to the religious objection. It does not require any approval or documentation by a faith leader of the religion, like a pastor, priest, or rabbi. The religious objection is a permanent exemption and does not require annual review.”



A majority of Kansas voters support religious exemptions to wellness vaccines for K-12 school or childcare.

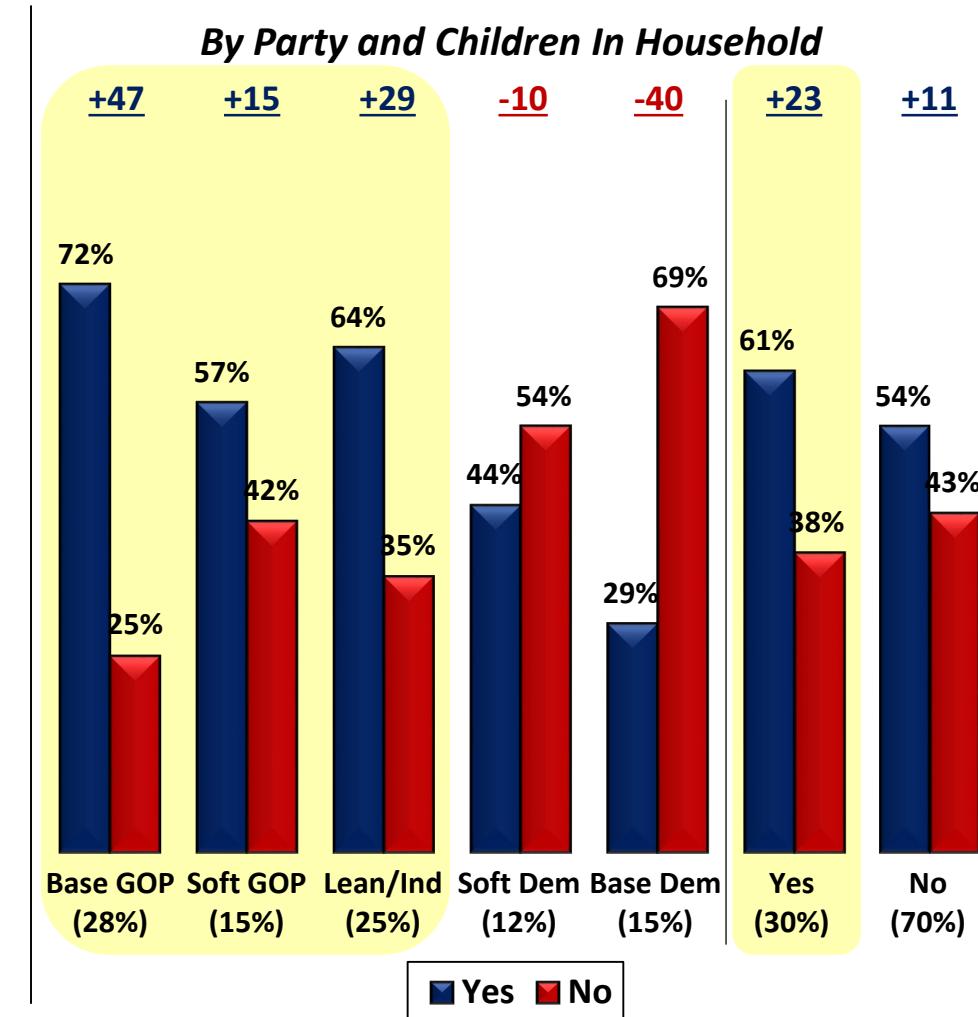
“Do you believe religious exemptions for wellness vaccines should be allowed?”

56%

Yes

41%

No

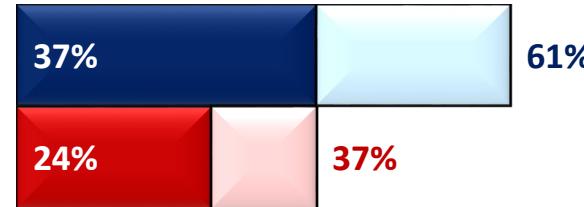


A majority of voters believe religious exemptions should require documentation, both parents should provide a statement and there should be an annual review.

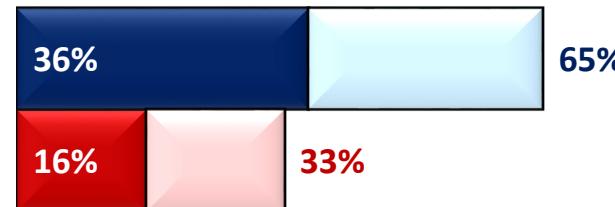
“Now, I'd like to read you some statements people have made about exemptions for wellness vaccines, and after I read each statement, please tell me if you agree or disagree with that statement.”

Ranked by % Strongly Agree

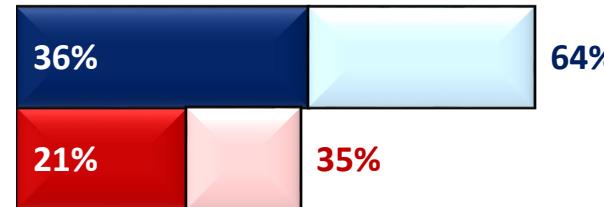
The religious exemption to wellness vaccines should require documentation by a religious leader, similar to the medical exemption that requires documentation by a physician.



If a child is being raised by two parents, both parents should be required to provide a statement detailing a religious exemption to wellness vaccines.



A religious exemption to wellness vaccines should not be permanent and should have to undergo an annual review.



■ Strongly Agree ■ Total Agree ■ Strongly Disagree ■ Total Disagree

Additional Documentation For Religious Exemptions

“Now, I would like to read you two statements you might hear about requiring more documentation for children requesting religious exemptions to taking wellness vaccines to attend childcare or a K-12 school in Kansas.

Please tell me which statement you agree with more, even if neither is exactly right.

Those who support requiring more documentation for religious exemptions say it is far too easy for a parent to claim a religious exemption even if there is nothing supporting that exemption within the religion. They say there are currently no major religions in the U.S. that support exemption from wellness vaccines on religious grounds.

...or...

Those who oppose requiring more documentation for religious exemptions say freedom of religion should be protected at all costs and that requiring documentation from a faith leader is an invasion of someone's religious beliefs and attitudes.”

A majority of voters support more documentation for religious exemptions. Base Republicans are divided.

Requiring More Documentation For Religious Exemptions

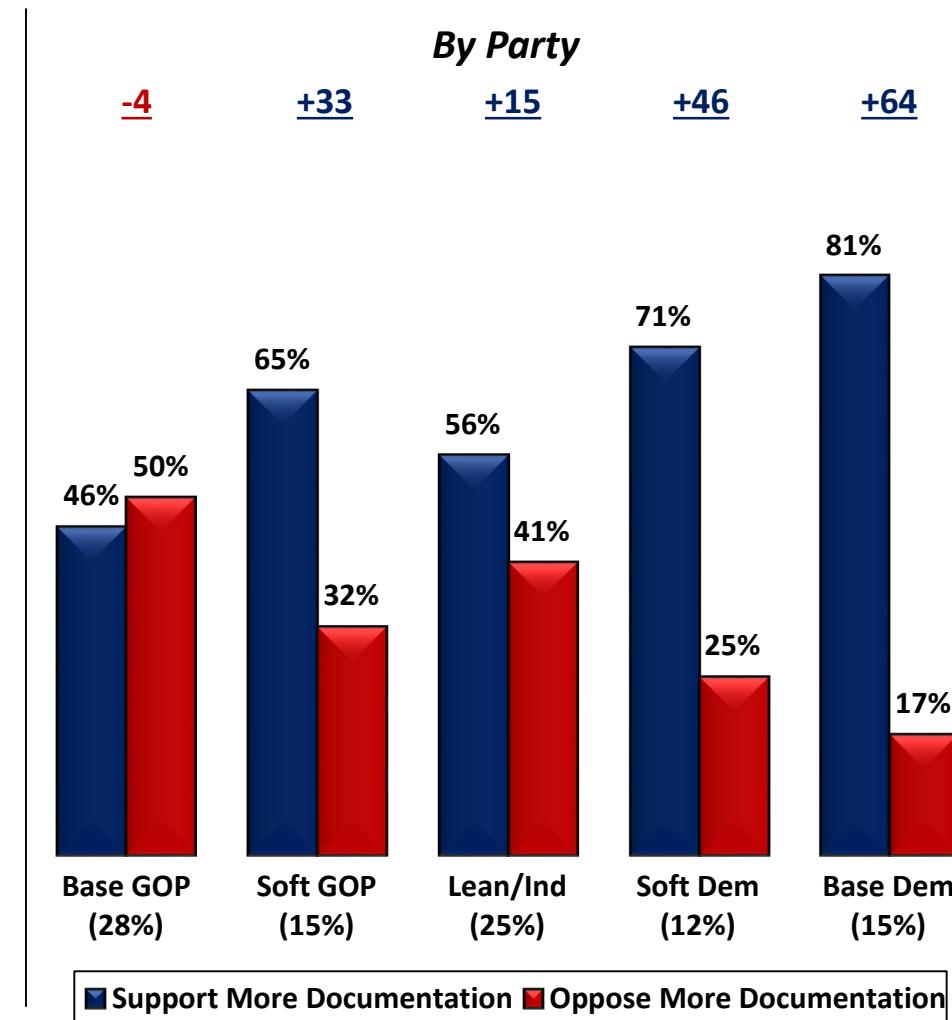
60%

Support More Documentation – Far Too Easy For Parent To Claim Exemption

36%

Oppose More Documentation – Freedom Of Religion Should Be Protected At All Costs

...or...



Philosophical Exemptions

“Now, I would like to read you two statements you might hear about allowing for philosophical objections to children taking wellness vaccines to attend childcare or a K-12 school in Kansas. Please tell me which statement you agree with more, even if neither is exactly right.

Those who oppose allowing philosophical objections for children taking wellness vaccines say allowing more children to opt out of these wellness vaccines that we have safely and effectively used for decades is dangerous.

They say we do not allow for philosophical objections that permit us to disobey other laws and rules, and this should not be any different.

...or...

Those who support allowing philosophical objections for children taking wellness vaccines say we should give parents as much freedom and flexibility when it comes to their children as we possibly can. They say parents know what is best for their children and that they should be allowed to make these decisions without interference.”

Voters across party lines say allowing philosophical objections for vaccines that we have safely used for generations is dangerous.

Allowing Philosophical Objections

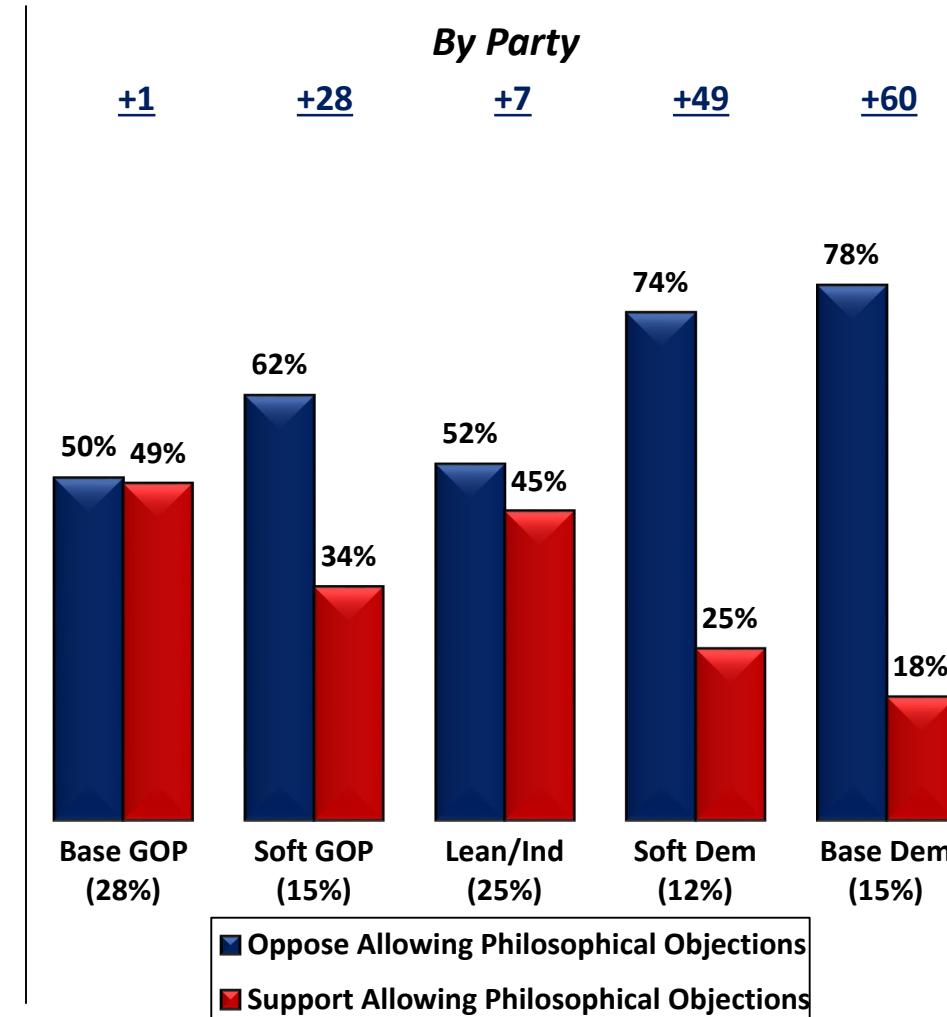
61%

Oppose Allowing Philosophical Objections – Allowing Children To Opt Out of Wellness Vaccines Is Dangerous

36%

Support Allowing Philosophical Objections – Give Parents As Much Freedom And Flexibility As We Possibly Can

...or...





Wellness Vaccine Policy Jurisdiction

A large majority of Kansas voters believe the State Health Department *is and should* be in charge of determining wellness vaccine policy.

“From what you know, who do you think is currently in charge of determining the wellness vaccine policy for children in Kansas?”[^]

71%

State Health Department

16%

Elected Officials In Kansas

9%

State Board Of Education

*“Who do you think **should be in charge** of determining the wellness vaccine policy for children in Kansas?”^{^^}*

78%

State Health Department

9%

Elected Officials In Kansas

7%

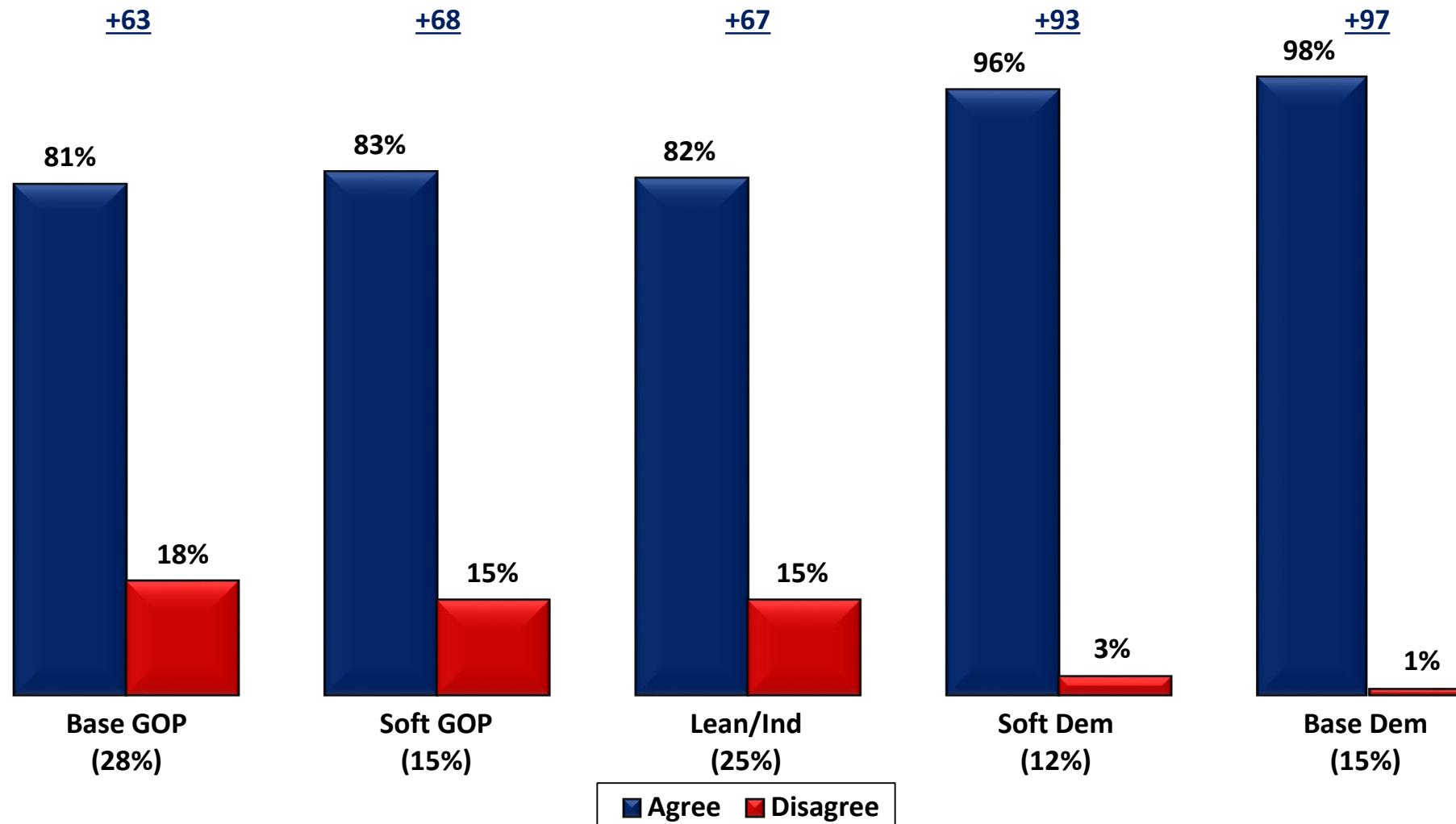
State Board Of Education

[^]Split Sample A, N=296; ^{^^}Split Sample B, N=304.



There is a strong consensus across party lines that KDHE should set wellness vaccine policy.

Kansas Department Of Health Setting Wellness Vaccine Policy by Party



The Authority Of KDHE's Wellness Vaccine Policy

“Now, I would like to read you some statements people have made about moving the authority of setting wellness vaccine policy for children in Kansas from the Kansas Department of Health. These wellness vaccines are vaccines that are most commonly given to children at different points of their childhood and they are used to prevent diseases like measles, mumps, hepatitis, and polio. To be clear, these are different than the COVID-19 vaccine and I am not asking anything about the COVID-19 vaccine. After I read each statement, please tell me if you agree or disagree with that statement.”



Voters strongly agree that moving the authority of vaccine policies to the state legislature would politicize disease prevention.

"After I read each statement, please tell me if you agree or disagree with that statement."

Ranked by % Strongly Agree

We should not move the authority of setting wellness vaccine policy for children in Kansas to the legislature. Doing so would politicize disease prevention and places wellness vaccine authority with legislators who are not experts on disease prevention, immunization or public health.



We should not move the authority of setting wellness vaccine policy for children in Kansas to the legislature. The state health department is the best agency to set wellness vaccine policy because they utilize a rigorous process using evidence-based information examined by doctors, nurses, and other medical professionals.



We should not move the authority of setting wellness vaccine policy for children in Kansas to the legislature. Placing the authority of setting wellness vaccine policy with the legislature would make Kansas the only state in the nation that allows politicians to set wellness vaccine policy.



■ Strongly Agree ■ Total Agree ■ Strongly Disagree ■ Total Disagree

*Denotes Rounding.





The Bottom Line

THE BOTTOM LINE

Make no mistake, Kansas voters are ***strongly*** in support of wellness vaccines. Overwhelming majorities believe they are important for maintaining good health, they are safe and they are effective. More than 90% support wellness vaccine requirements for children to attend schools/childcare in the Sunflower State and a large majority would be more supportive of a political candidate who supported existing policies. And overwhelmingly, they reject the idea to move the authority of setting wellness vaccine policy from KDHE to the state legislature.

It could be easy in this moment to think divisions over COVID-19 vaccine policies may lead to divisions over wellness vaccine policies. But Kansas voters are clear – they support wellness vaccines, requirements around them to attend schools and leaving the authority of setting wellness vaccine policy to the state's health department.

How did we disseminate the information?

- Local media stations
- Immunization partners/networks
- Individual legislator meetings
- Organizational membership
- Web site and social media
- KDHE shared across the nation
- We presented to anyone who would have us!
 - Rural Caucus
 - House Health Committee
 - Other coalitions
 - American Academy of Pediatrics
 - MINK- Public Health Conference
 - The University of Kansas Health Systems' weekly streamed health update

How did we know it was effective?

- Pro-vaccine legislators were thrilled to have information refuting the daily barrage by anti-vax group.
- Our allies were able to hold off internal opposition by showing the anti-faction was out of step with the huge majority of Kansans.
- We got continual requests for presentations.
- Other states were reaching out to us for consultation on how to conduct a similar poll.
- Our immunization partners were grateful for this tool and helped spread the information.
- The poll received attention at the committee level.
- The poll was consistently referred to during floor debate.
- Undecided legislators indicated the information was helpful and provided a response and/cover to be more supportive of the existing vaccine schedule.
- Bottom line: Feedback after session was that the results of the poll were key in protecting vaccination laws this year.



Legislative Session 2023

- We project continued intensity of vaccine rejection and ill-informed public health policy.
- There will be several new lawmakers/decision makers that will need education on immunizations, with some primary races already indicating more anti-vax legislators will take office.
- Polling data was effect in 2022 session and it is still relevant, but we will need additional information for 2023.



Other Legislative Strategies

- There is bipartisan support for vaccination. However, each year, vaccination has become more about politics than public health. Thanking those legislators who opposed these efforts and reinforcing the importance of immunization, and why.
- Establishment of grass roots/volunteer supporters is key to counteracting anti-vaccination influence. This includes identifying those who are willing to make contact with lawmakers and testify before committees, offering a concerned citizen perspective.
- Build upon our disease survivor story bank to convey the real-life impact of vaccines. Personal experience and data must be combined for message impact. We have seen this work on the anti-vax side.

#WhyIVax #VoicesforVaccines

"My daughter is in a high risk category. I choose to vaccinate to protect her from preventable diseases that she might not be able to recover from."

Allison, Kansas City



Share your #WhyIVax story!





Questions?

Ali Hilton
Program Director
Mid America Immunization Coalition
@ Nurture KC