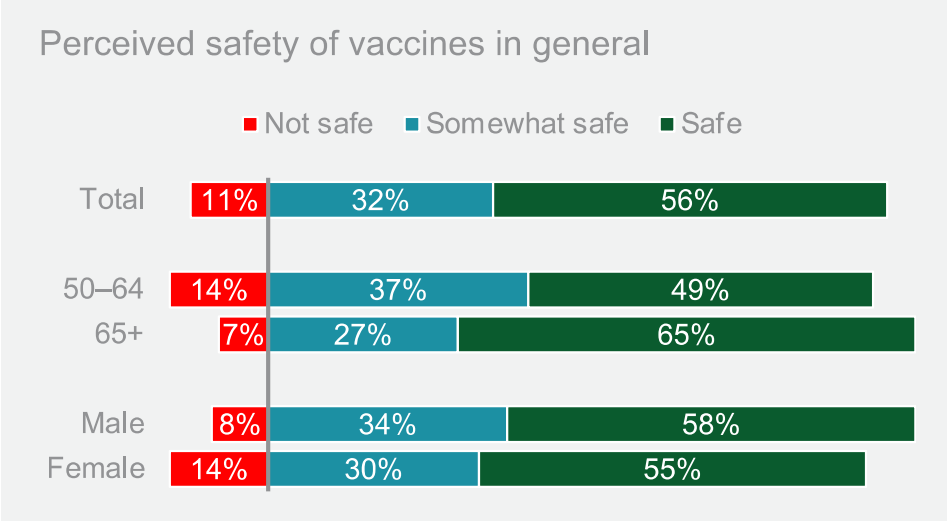
Views on Vaccines and More—Mid-COVID: A Look at Gender Differences

2021 AARP Views on Vaccines Survey of Adults Ages 50 and Older

The majority of older adults say vaccines in general are safe. However, women are more likely than men to believe they are not safe.

More than half (56%) of adults ages 50-plus say, in general, that vaccines are safe, with those ages 65-plus are more likely to say so. While only about one in 10 (11%) of those ages 50-plus say vaccines are not safe, women are significantly more likely than men to take this view (14% vs. 8%). This difference may stem from their different experiences with vaccines. For example, the 2020 AARP Vaccine survey[1] found that women were significantly more likely to say they have had — or have heard of people who have had — bad experiences with vaccines (23% vs. 14%).



Recent survey on vaccinations illustrates **differences** between **men and women** in **beliefs, acceptance and hesitancy** among **older adults**.

[1]Cheryl Lampkin, 2020 AARP Vaccine Survey, Washington, DC: AARP Research, February 2021, https://doi.org/10.26419/res.00432.001.

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Most older adults say they get a flu shot every year. Of those who do not, men are more likely to say they won't because they are healthy and don't need a flu shot.

Looking at specific vaccinations, the 2020 AARP Vaccine Survey found that six in 10 (61%) adults ages 50-plus say they get a flu shot every year or almost every year, while one in five (22%) say they never get a flu shot. Among those likely to get a flu shot, there are no differences between men and women; however, among those who say they are unlikely to get a flu shot, men are significantly more likely to say they won't because they are healthy, and the flu isn't a serious disease.

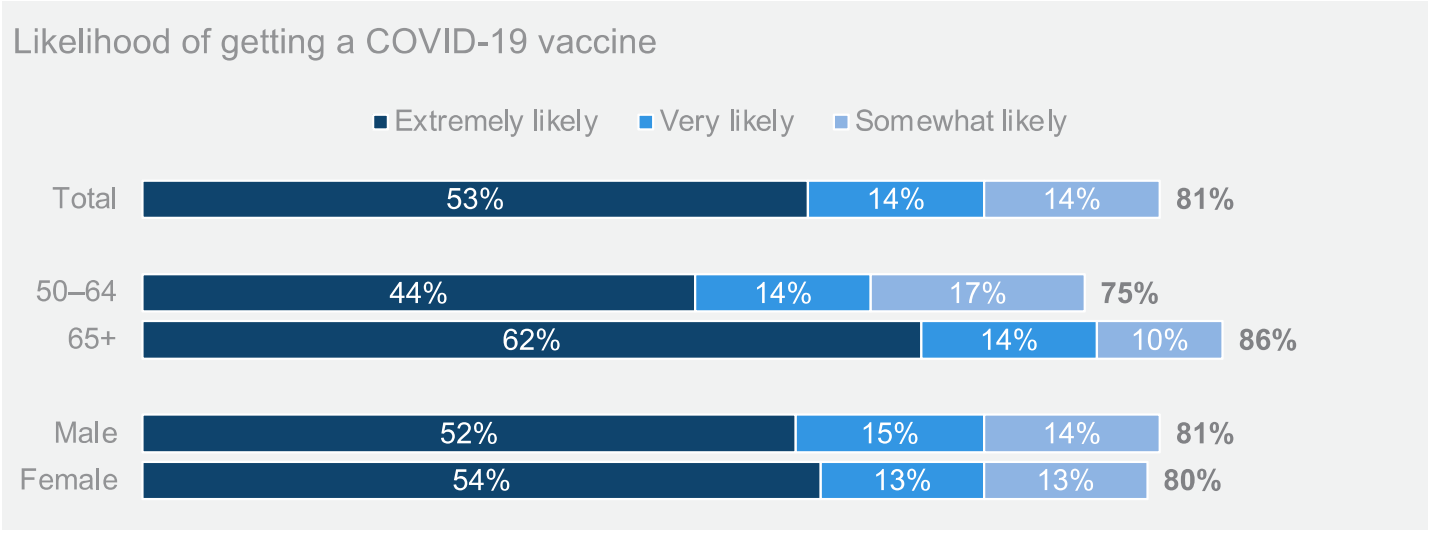
Men and women are equally likely to say they will not get a flu shot; however, men are more likely to say they won't because they are healthy and don't need one.

Among those who are unlikely to get a flu shot:

41%	*"I'm healthy and don't need a flu vaccine"*	24%
11%	*"The flu is not a serious disease"*	4%

The majority of older adults say they will likely get the COVID-19 vaccine.

As of January 2021, when this AmeriSpeak 50+ Consumer Omnibus survey was administered, men were significantly more likely than women to say they did not know of anyone who has had COVID-19 (23% vs. 17%). This difference, however, does not translate into intended actions regarding getting the COVID-19 vaccine. Men and women ages 50-plus are equally likely to say they will get the vaccine. Adults ages 65-plus are significantly more likely than those ages 50–64 to say they are extremely likely to get the COVID-19 vaccine (62% vs. 44%). This trend coincides with findings from the 2020 AARP Vaccine Survey, which was administered prior to vaccine availability (September/October). At that time, three- quarters (75%) of those ages 65-plus said they would likely get the vaccine, compared to only about half (57%) of those ages 50–64. Similar to this most recent survey, the 2020 AARP Vaccine Survey (September /October 2020) also found men and women were equally likely to speculate that they would get the vaccine when it became available.



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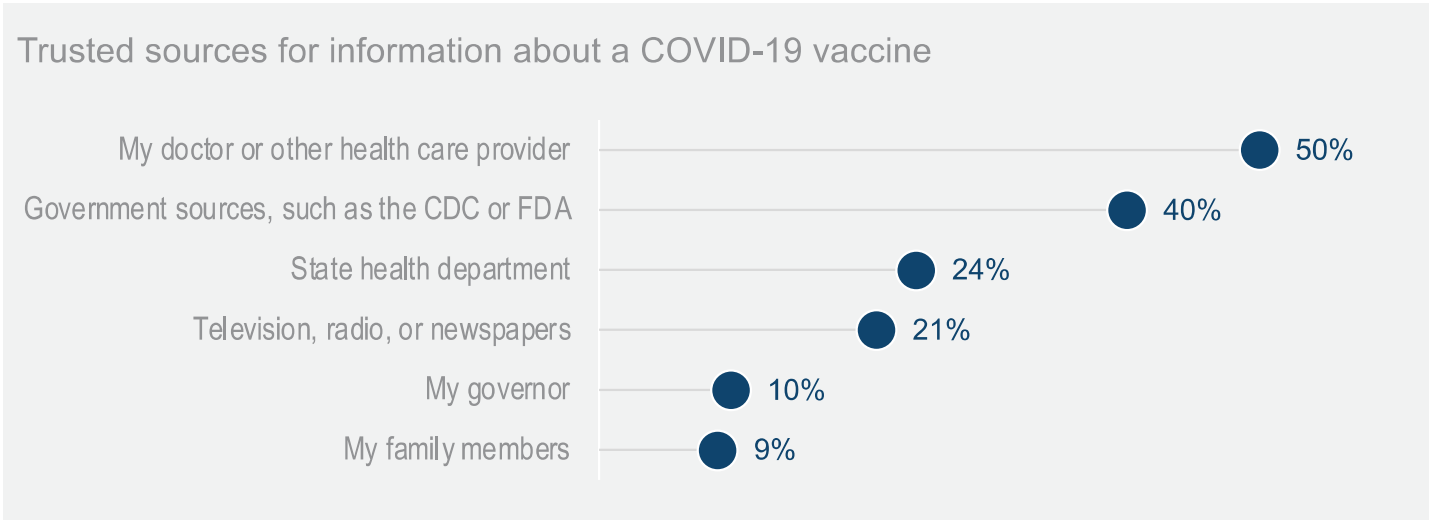
Personal health care providers top the list of trusted sources for information about the COVID-19 vaccine.

For adults ages 50-plus considering whether to get a COVID-19 vaccine, trust is a pivotal issue. Doctors and health care providers (50%) and government sources such as the CDC (40%) rise to the top of the list of trusted sources for COVID-19 vaccine information. Men are more likely than women to list their doctor or health care provider (55% vs. 45%) as one of their top two sources, and women are more likely than men to list state health departments (28% vs. 19%).



	More likely to trust:	
55%	Doctor or health care provider	45%
19%	State health department	28%
6%	Their governor	13%

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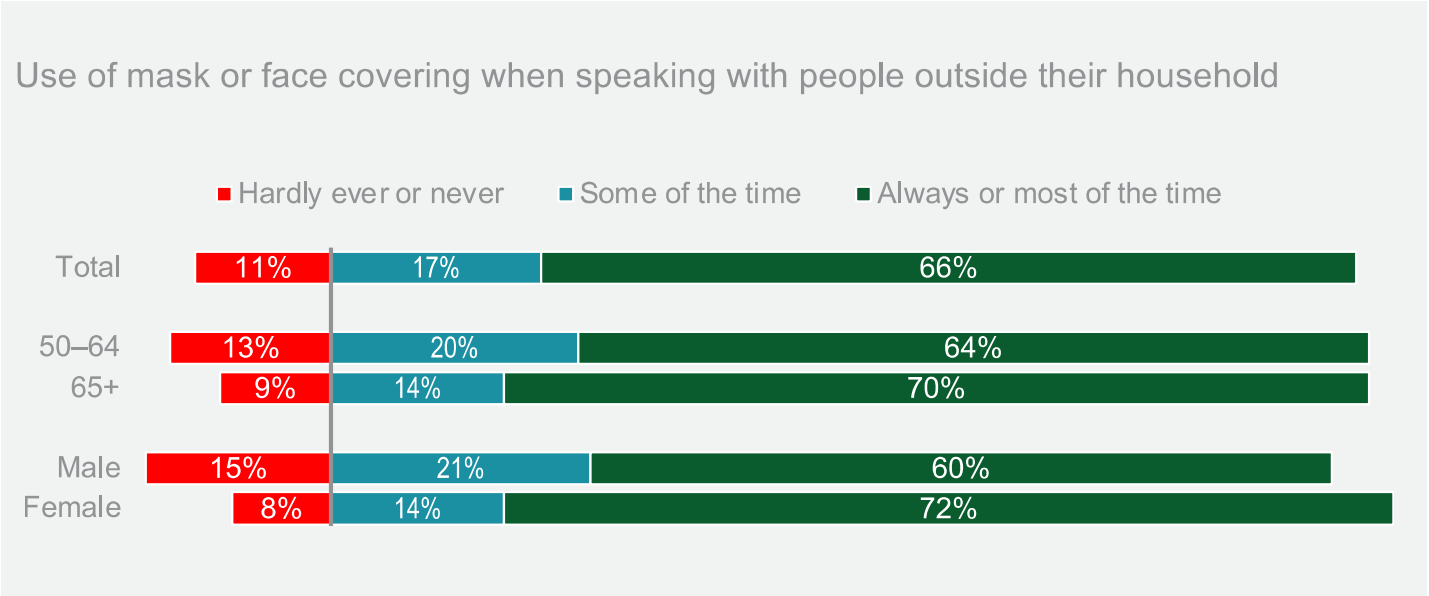
Older adults are most likely mask wearers; however, there are some differences between men and women when in casual settings.

The overwhelming majority (92%) of older adults say they wear their face mask when visiting stores or other businesses. However, only two-thirds (66%) say they wear their face mask when talking with people who are not a member of their household. Women are more likely than men to say they wear their mask when speaking with people outside of their household (72% vs. 60%).

This difference between men and women in mask-wearing compliance seems to hold true for the adult population in general. A recent YouGov study[2] of those ages 18-plus found less than half (48%) of the men report they always wear a mask when outside compared to nearly two-thirds (64%) of the women.

Men are significantly less likely than women to say they always wear their face covering when speaking with people outside of their household.



[2]*The Economist*/YouGov Poll, January 16-19, 2021, 1,500 U.S. Adult Citizens, YouGov, January 18, 2021, https://today.yougov.com/topics/economist/survey-results.

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Implications

Most older adults say in general, vaccines are safe, they get a flu shot every year, and they have gotten or plan to get the COVID-19 vaccine. However, men and women ages 50 and older have differing related attitudes and actions. For example, women are significantly more likely than men to say vaccines are not safe. Of those who do not get flu shots, men are more likely to say they don't because they are healthy and do not need a shot and/or the flu isn't a serious disease. In general, older adults report they wear a mask when going into a store or business; however, men are significantly more likely than women to say they do not wear a mask in social settings. These findings suggest that differing beliefs and actions between men and women may require different approaches and more nuanced pro-health communications (e.g., mask-wearing, getting vaccines) when talking to midlife and older adults about ways to protect their health.

Methodology

The 2021 AARP Views on Vaccines Survey was conducted online January 29–31, 2021 with a total sample of 1,099 adults ages 50-plus. This national survey was conducted using NORC at the University of Chicago's AmeriSpeak 50+ Omnibus probability-based sample. AmeriSpeak is designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. All data are weighted by age, gender, and race according to the most recent Census population statistics. The margin of error for the national survey is ± 4.06 percent.

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