

## Harvard Study Finds COVID-19 Surged Most Among Vaxxed Communities

Countries with a higher percentage of fully vaccinated people have higher rates of Covid-19 cases, a study by Harvard researchers claims.

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*The study, titled, “Increases in COVID-19 are unrelated to levels of vaccination across 68 countries and 2,947 counties in the United States,” was published late last month at the [National Institutes of Health](#) website and the peer-reviewed [European Journal of Epidemiology](#).*

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**Nature Public Health Emergency Collection**

Public Health Emergency COVID-19 Initiative

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**Increases in COVID-19 are unrelated to levels of vaccination across 68 countries and 2947 counties in the United States**

S. V. Subramanian<sup>1,2</sup> and Akhil Kumar<sup>3</sup>

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**Associated Data**

Supplementary Materials

Vaccines currently are the primary mitigation strategy to combat COVID-19 around the world. For instance, the narrative related to the ongoing surge of new cases in the United States (US) is argued to be driven by areas with low vaccination rates [1]. A similar narrative also has been observed in countries, such as Germany and the United Kingdom [2]. At the same time, Israel that was hailed for its swift and high rates of vaccination has also seen a substantial resurgence in COVID-19 cases [3]. We investigate the relationship between the percentage of population fully vaccinated and new COVID-19 cases across 68 countries and across 2947 counties in the US.

**Methods**

We used COVID-19 data provided by the Our World in Data for cross-country analysis, available as of September 3, 2021 (Supplementary Table 1) [4]. We included 68 countries that met the following criteria: had second dose vaccine data available; had COVID-19 case data available; had population data available; and the last update of data was within 3 days prior to or on September 3, 2021. For the 7 days preceding September 3, 2021 we computed the COVID-19 cases per 1 million people for each country as well as the percentage of population that is fully vaccinated.

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On its face, the study purports rises in Covid cases are unrelated to vaccination rates, however, data presented in the study gives the exact opposite impression.

For example, the study claims, “At the country-level, there appears to be no discernable relationship between percentage of population fully vaccinated and new COVID-19 cases in the last 7 days.”

However, it goes on to say, “In fact, the trend line suggests a marginally positive association such that countries with higher percentage of population fully vaccinated have higher COVID-19 cases per 1 million people.”

“Notably, Israel with over 60% of their population fully vaccinated had the highest COVID-19 cases per 1 million people in the last 7 days,” the study authors state.

“The lack of a meaningful association between percentage population fully vaccinated and new COVID-19 cases is further exemplified, for instance, by comparison of Iceland and Portugal,” the study notes, going on to demonstrate a meaningful association.

“Both countries have over 75% of their population fully vaccinated and have more COVID-19 cases per 1 million people than countries such as Vietnam and South Africa that have around 10% of their population fully vaccinated.”

The study goes on to illustrate the correlational relationship between vaccines and Covid rates in US counties.

“Across the US counties too, the median new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 people in the

last 7 days is largely similar across the categories of percent population fully vaccinated.”

[...]

“Of the top 5 counties that have the highest percentage of population fully vaccinated (99.9–84.3%), the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identifies 4 of them as ‘High’ Transmission counties. Chattahoochee (Georgia), McKinley (New Mexico), and Arecibo (Puerto Rico) counties have above 90% of their population fully vaccinated with all three being classified as ‘High’ transmission.”

“Conversely, of the 57 counties that have been classified as ‘low’ transmission counties by the CDC, 26.3% (15) have percentage of population fully vaccinated below 20%.”

The study authors caution that mass vaccination should not be the sole Covid-19 preventative strategy.

“The sole reliance on vaccination as a primary strategy to mitigate COVID-19 and its adverse consequences needs to be re-examined, especially considering the Delta (B.1.617.2) variant and the likelihood of future variants...

“Other pharmacological and non-pharmacological interventions may need to be put in place alongside increasing vaccination rates.

“Such course correction, especially with regards to the policy narrative, becomes paramount with emerging scientific evidence on real world effectiveness of the vaccines.”

Despite data in the study showing vaccinated people are spreading Covid, the study’s lead author, Harvard University Professor of Population Health and Geography [S.V. Subramanian](#), [claimed](#) to *PolitiFact* the point of the study was not to highlight the high rate of “breakthrough infections” among the vaccinated, but to draw attention to the need to implement additional safety measures to combat the virus.

“Concluding from this analysis that vaccines are useless is misleading and inaccurate. Rather, the analysis supports vaccination as an important strategy for reducing infection and transmission, along with handwashing, mask-wearing, proper ventilation and physical distancing.”

*The Blaze*’s Daniel Horowitz [noted](#) researchers used a one-month lag when compiling the data.

It’s also important to keep in mind that when calculating the data, the authors used a sensitivity analysis by applying a one-month lag on the percentage population fully vaccinated so that people wouldn’t be considered fully vaccinated until 14 days after the second dose. However, [studies have shown](#) that this is the most vulnerable time for getting the virus. Why should that be blamed on the lack of vaccination rather than on the vaccine? So if anything, the numbers are likely even more unfavorable to the vaccine than this analysis suggests.

Interestingly, despite the researcher’s explanation, *PolitiFact* rated a claim that the study showed “COVID-19 ‘surges among most vaxxed communities” half-true.

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