Most Americans do not believe childhood vaccines cause autism, poll finds

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Around 68 percent of respondents to a poll by the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Public Policy Center say it is false to claim that 'vaccines given to children for diseases like measles, mumps, and rubella cause autism'

As Trump administration officials express skepticism about some childhood vaccines, nearly seven of ten Americans do not believe that childhood vaccines cause autism, according to a poll released on September 29 by the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Public Policy Center.

Around 68 percent of respondents said it is false that "vaccines given to children for diseases like measles, mumps, and rubella cause autism," while 13 percent said the statement is true and 19 percent are not sure.

Those percentages have stayed similar since 2022, according to Annenberg, which conducted the poll of 1,904 American adults in August. The margin of error was 3.2 percentage points. The results suggest most Americans still align with guidance from groups like the American Academy of Pediatrics, which has emphasized the MMR vaccine is safe and effective.

President Donald Trump last month directed that the MMR vaccine be split up. He said without evidence that the current, combined vaccine could be "lethal," a claim his nominee to lead the Food and Drug Administration did not echo in a congressional hearing.

Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. this month claimed vaccines can cause a range of health conditions at a conference of the anti-vaccine group Children's Health Defense, where other speakers advocated against vaccine mandates and celebrated the momentum of the anti-vaccine movement. Vaccine experts said his claims were misleading. (The group has previously told *The Washington Post* that it is "is not anti-vaccine. We are pro-vaccine safety and anti-vaccine mandates.")

The poll also found around 23 percent of Americans view Kennedy favorably. Asked about Kennedy's messaging on the measles vaccine amid an ongoing outbreak of the disease, 31 percent of Americans said they believed Kennedy recommends children be vaccinated against measles, and 40 percent were not sure of Kennedy's position. Kennedy has said that vaccination is "the most effective way to prevent the spread of measles", but Democrats have accused him of undermining confidence in the vaccine and downplaying measles cases.