

# Belief in false measles claims correlated with lower vaccination rates

BY JENNIFER SHUTT  
KENTUCKY LANTERN

Americans are increasingly unsure what to believe about measles as an outbreak spreads throughout the country, according to a survey released Wednesday by the nonpartisan health research organization KFF.

The poll shows that nearly a quarter of those asked believe a commonly repeated false claim that getting a child vaccinated against measles could lead to autism. About the same percentage of those surveyed believe it's either definitely or probably true that vitamin A can prevent someone from contracting measles, even though it cannot.

And 19% of those surveyed believed untrue statements that the vaccine for measles is more dangerous than contracting the virus.

Parents who believed at least one of the three incorrect claims were more likely to have delayed or skipped some vaccinations for their children. Nearly a quarter, 24%, of those surveyed said they haven't protected their children via vaccination, more than double the 11% of parents who responded that all three of the false statements about measles were definitely or probably untrue.

**Ongoing outbreak**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that as of late last week, there are more than 800 measles diagnoses throughout at least 25 states.

The infections are spread throughout different age groups with 31% of cases in children under 5 years old, 38% of diagnoses in those between 5 and 19 years old, 29% in people above the age of 20 and 2% in those with an unknown age, according to the CDC.

Eighty-five patients have been hospitalized and three have died. Nearly all of the confirmed cases, 96%, are in people who have not received the MMR vaccine or who are unsure about their vaccination status, according to the CDC.

States with confirmed cases include Alaska, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont and Washington.

Virginia reported its first case this year over the weekend, though that's not yet included on the CDC's website about the ongoing outbreak.

**linked with concern**

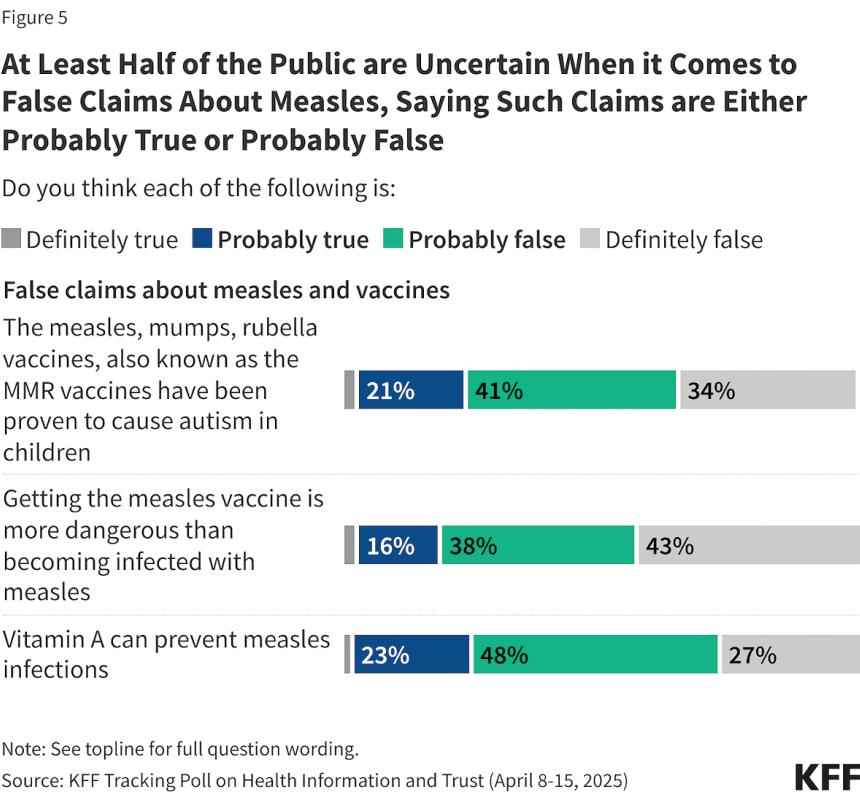
KFF's survey shows that even though there are many people who believe untrue claims about measles or the MMR vaccine — which protects against measles, mumps and rubella — there are higher percentages of people who understand basic facts about the virus and who are concerned about the ongoing outbreak.

Seventy-five percent of those polled said it was incorrect that the MMR vaccine leads to autism, 81% responded it was wrong to say the vaccine is more dangerous than contracting the virus and 75% said it was false that vitamin A can prevent someone from getting measles.

About half, or 51%, of those surveyed said they are at least somewhat concerned about the spread of measles. That worry was highest among Hispanic adults, 62%, and Black adults, 61%.

Most of the people surveyed, 56%, knew that the spread of measles was higher this year than during prior years, though that number varied among people of different political leanings.

Seventy-one percent of Democrats knew that diagnoses of measles have spiked in recent months, compared



**KFF graphic from a poll titled: The Public's Views on Measles Outbreaks and Misinformation**

with 54% of independents and 49% of Republicans.

KFF conducted the survey of 1,380 adults between April 8 and April 15 via telephone and online questions.

Kentucky Lantern (kentuckylantern.com) is part of States Newsroom, a non-profit news network supported by grants and a coalition of donors as a 501c(3) public charity. Kentucky Lantern maintains editorial independence. Contact Editor Jamie Lucke for questions: [info@kentuckylantern.com](mailto:info@kentuckylantern.com).

## MEASLES

Understanding

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the Journal of the American Medical Association, found that “at current state-level vaccination rates, measles may become endemic again” in two decades, meaning it would become a common disease again.

Further, the study estimated there would be 11.1 million cases of measles over the next 25 years if vaccination rates for the disease drop 10% and 51.2 million cases over the next 25 years if childhood vaccination rates were cut in half.

The estimates are based on a simulation of what would happen in the U.S. under various vaccination rates for children.

The researchers add that small declines in measles vaccination would cause this to happen more quickly, whereas small increases in vaccine coverage would prevent this.

Senior author Dr. Nathan Lo, assistant professor of infectious diseases at Stanford Medicine, encouraged parents who aren't sure about vaccination to discuss this with their health care provider.

“With measles, we're

right on the cusp. Increasing vaccination levels by just 5% brings the number of measles cases down, safely away from returning to endemic levels,” Lo said in a news release. “These are the kinds of small percentages that can really be a tipping point. It's empowering that a small segment of the population can make a difference here.”

### Kindergarten vaccine rates drop

The most recent assessment of Kentucky kindergarten vaccines for the 2024-2025 school year, released Thursday, April 24, shows immunization coverage for all vaccines has dropped to the lowest rates in more than seven years for Kentucky kindergartners, including the measles vaccine.

“Coverage among kindergartners for the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine, which is effective at preventing diseases, including measles, and is legally required for school attendance in Kentucky, has dropped to 86.9%, which is lower than the national average of 93%. By comparison, MMR rates for Kentucky

kindergartners were at 90% for the 2023-2024 school year,” according to the release.

This decline in MMR vaccine coverage is occurring during the largest outbreak of measles in the U.S. since measles was declared eliminated in the country in 2000, according to the release.

As of April 24, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has reported 884 measles cases in 30 states in 2025, with 97% of the cases in unvaccinated people — and the numbers continue to grow. For comparison, there were only 285 measles cases reported in the U.S. in 2024.

“These are concerning trends that we are seeing,” said Dr. Steven Stack, the state's public health commissioner. “It is really important that folks are properly informed about vaccines so they can take safe steps to protect their children. Vaccines are safe and effective. We urge all parents to have their children vaccinated to ensure they are protected from preventable diseases like measles.”

Measles is a highly contagious respiratory virus that can cause serious health

complications, especially in young children. It spreads through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes and can survive for up to two hours after an infected person leaves an area.

Early symptoms of measles include high fever, cough, runny nose and red/watery eyes. A measles rash typically appears three to five days after the symptoms begin, usually on the face before spreading down the rest of the body.

Measles is so contagious that if one person has measles, up to nine out of 10 people nearby will become infected if they are not vaccinated, according to the CDC.

The two-dose MMR vaccine is recommended for children at 12 to 15 months old and then at 4 to 6 years old. The CDC says two doses of MMR vaccine is 97% effective against measles.

Kentucky Health News is an independent news service of the Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues, based in the School of Journalism and Media at the University of Kentucky, with support from the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky.

# Flash Back

## WIN A LARGE 18" PIZZA

Name the **Mountain Citizen** in the photo and **WIN A LARGE 18" PIZZA** with pepperoni from **PIZZA STOP**. Send your answer to: The Mountain Citizen, PO Box 1029, Inez, Ky 41224 or call **(606) 298-7570**. In case more than one person gets the correct answer, we will have a drawing to decide the winner.

All winners will need to pick up a prize verification form from the **Citizen** office to claim prize.



**Ronnie Patrick is the winner of this week's Flashback. He identified Ann Parsley**

**606-298-7570**

# MOM's DAY GIVEAWAY

*Mother's Day is May 11th & you don't want to miss out on our amazing*

## GIVEAWAY

**Deadline to enter our Mother's Day Giveaway is Saturday, May 3rd. Drawing will be held Monday, May 5th**

**The beautiful basket will be filled with gifts from the following businesses:**

- \*Blue Light Bargains (Bogg Bag)
- \*Paula's Hair Images
- \*Blooms on Main (fresh cut flower arrangement)
- \*Dairy Drive In (\$25 gift certificate)
- \*Main Emporium
- \*Cloud 9 Cafe (\$25 gift certificate)
- \*Smokin' Hott Novelties & More
- \*Madison Blue Boutique
- \*Sun Sisters Tanning and Tiki Bar (\$30 spray tan & large drink)
- \*Movies on Main (2 free movie passes)
- \*Sugar Momma's Sweet Shop (dozen macaroons)
- \*The Mountain Citizen (\$100)

**Simply fill out the form below & mail to: The Mountain Citizen • PO Box 1029, Inez, KY 41224**  
*The more you mail in, the more chances to win! (No duplicates or copies accepted)*

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE# \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF CHILDREN & NAMES \_\_\_\_\_

**\*MUST BE A MOTHER TO WIN. NO EMPLOYEES OF THE MOUNTAIN CITIZEN OR THEIR FAMILIES ARE ELIGIBLE TO ENTER. FORM MUST BE CLIPPED FROM THE MOUNTAIN CITIZEN NEWSPAPER.**

## SLEIGH

FROM PAGE 5B

and loving like Jesus—every day. They carry out “Santa Causes” throughout the year, not as a traditional charity but as a “multiplier.” The two use their roles as Santa and Mrs. Claus to bake, sell, walk, bike and help organizations raise more funds and expand their reach.

The Sleigh Cancer Awareness Festival will support Pelotonia. This nonprofit organization hosts an annual bicycle ride in Columbus, Ohio, to fund cancer research at The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center – Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Richard J. Solove Research Institute.

Pelotonia, despite its name, operates independently of the exercise bike brand. Since its founding, Pelotonia's riders and supporters have raised more than \$309 million, channeling 100% of every dollar directly to cancer research that reaches medical institutions around the world.

As June 6 approaches, the Isings are seeking vendors, volunteers and sponsors to join their efforts. They encourage businesses to contribute raffle items, make donations or offer sponsorships to support the festival.

Matthew Ising's commitment to funding cancer research began when doctors diagnosed his first wife, Sue, with bile duct cancer in 2009. She died Dec. 26, 2010. During her treatment at The James, Matthew discovered Pelotonia and began riding to raise money for cancer research. Today he continues to ride, motivated by the hope of protecting his two daughters who may face similar risks.

Angela Ising also understands personally the life-saving power of cancer research. Thanks to early testing, doctors diagnosed her daughter-in-law in Georgia with Lynch Syndrome—the same inherited genetic disorder that claimed her mother's life.

Angela later learned that researchers at OSU discovered Lynch Syndrome, which greatly increases the risk of colon, ovarian and uterine cancers. Because Pelotonia helped fund that research, she feels a deep obligation to continue supporting cancer research fundraising. More importantly, she hopes her grandchildren, who face a 50/50 chance of inheriting Lynch Syndrome, will grow up in a world without cancer.

Stay tuned for updates. For more information contact “Santa & Mrs. C” through the [Give Like Santa Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/GiveLikeSanta) page. Learn more about Pelotonia at [pelotonia.org](https://pelotonia.org).

## PREPARE

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By drafting a will that clearly specifies the distribution of land, property owners can help prevent complications associated with heirs' property.

Participants need only to bring a form of identification, such as a driver's license or state ID. Bringing a deed or any other property records may make the will-writing process easier.

In addition to the will-writing clinic, LiKEN will present a seminar on estate planning and property in heirship at the Roy F. Collier Community Center, 387 East Main Street, from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m.

For more information, contact Madison Mooney at [mmooney@likenknowledge.org](mailto:mmooney@likenknowledge.org).