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United will require its U.S. employees to be vaccinated, a first for country's major airlines

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Leslie Josephs
@LESLIEJOSEPHS

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KEY POINTS

United is the first large airline to mandate vaccines for its workforce, putting pressure on rivals.





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United Airlines pilot Steve Lindland receives a COVID-19 vaccine from RN Sandra Manella at United's onsite clinic at O'Hare International Airport on March 09, 2021 in Chicago, Illinois.

Scott Olson | Getty Images

[United Airlines](#) will require its 67,000 U.S. employees to get vaccinated against Covid-19 by no later than Oct. 25 or risk termination, a first for major U.S. carriers that will likely ramp up pressure on rivals.

Hours after United's announcement on Friday, discount carrier [Frontier Airlines](#) said its [employees must be vaccinated by Oct. 1](#) or get frequently tested for Covid.





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been vaccinated to return to the office. Others are requiring them for only for certain workers. [Walmart](#), for example, said last week that it will be [required for corporate staff](#), but not store or warehouse workers. [Uber](#) said U.S. [office staff](#) will need to be vaccinated to return to in-person work but stopped short of requiring them for drivers.

Meatpacker [Tyson Foods](#) said this week its 120,000 U.S. employees [must be fully vaccinated](#) this year, though some 56,000 already are, according to the company.

“We know some of you will disagree with this decision to require the vaccine for all United employees,” United CEO Scott Kirby and President Brett Hart said Friday in an employee note. “But, we have no greater responsibility to you and your colleagues than to ensure your safety when you’re at work, and the facts are crystal clear: everyone is safer when everyone is vaccinated.”

Kirby said in January he wanted to [make Covid vaccines mandatory](#) and that other companies should do the same.

Ending the Covid-19 pandemic is especially crucial for airlines, among the hardest-hit industries from the pandemic. While summer vacation bookings surpassed what most executives were expecting, the fast-spreading delta variant is starting to [weigh on demand](#), Frontier Airlines said earlier this week.

“Over the last 16 months, Scott has sent dozens of condolences letters to the family members of United employees who have died from COVID-19,” the executives said. “We’re determined to do everything we can to try to keep another United family from





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In comparison, about 60% of [American Airlines](#)' pilots are vaccinated, according to an Aug. 5 letter to members from their union, the Allied Pilots Association, which encouraged aviators to get vaccinated.

United didn't say what the company's overall vaccination rate is.

The decision was partly driven by concerns about rises in Covid-19 cases last year during the fall and winter, company officials said.

The Air Line Pilots Association, which represents United's more than 12,000 aviators, believes the mandate is legal. It said the "small number of pilots" who don't agree with the policy or plan to remain unvaccinated should contact their chief pilot's office.

Flight attendants' labor union, the Association of Flight Attendants, urged cabin crew members to get vaccinated, after United's announcement.

"COVID-19 is a threat," the union told members. "There are proven strategies to mitigate that threat. Vaccination is necessary to end the pandemic and the health and economic harm it has caused."

American Airlines, for its part, said it hasn't changed its policy that encourages but doesn't mandate vaccines for employees. [Delta Air Lines](#) said it is "strongly encouraging" workers to get vaccinated but isn't mandating it for all of its employees, aside from new hires. More than 73% of its roughly 75,000 employees are vaccinated, it said.





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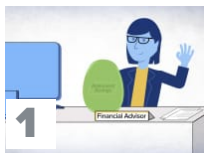
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