

Coronavirus Vaccines Stir Doubts Among Many People Worldwide, New Study Shows

Nature Medicine publishes findings of a 13,400-person survey in 19 countries hit hard by COVID-19

Barcelona and New York, October 20, 2020- A research team from The Barcelona Institute for Global Health (ISGlobal), an institution supported by "la Caixa" Foundation, the City University of New York Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy (CUNY SPH), the Vaccine Confidence Project at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), and Georgetown University Law School announced today that *Nature Medicine* has published their [research revealing potential global hesitancy to accept a COVID-19 vaccine](#). Based on data collected with the previously validated [COVID-SCORE](#) survey of a sample of over 13,400 individuals from 19 countries that have been hard-hit by the virus, the investigators found that 72 % of participants would likely take the vaccine. Of the remaining 28 %, 14% would refuse, while 14% would hesitate, which translates into tens of millions of potential vaccine avoiders. These results were released today at the [51st Union World Conference on Lung Health](#), that is being held virtually this week.

To date, more than 90 COVID-19 vaccines are in development, half of which are in human trials. In addition to addressing the formidable challenges of developing a safe and effective vaccine, producing it on a large scale, and distributing it equitably, health authorities worldwide must now consider the added obstacle of vaccine hesitancy.

"We found that the **problem of vaccine hesitancy** is strongly related with a lack of trust in government. Vaccine confidence was invariably higher in countries where trust was higher", said **Jeffrey V. Lazarus**, ISGlobal researcher and study coordinator.

"We need to increase vaccine confidence, and we need to improve the public's understanding of how they can help control the spread of COVID-19 in their families and their communities," adds **Ayman El-Mohandes**, Dean of CUNY SPH, and co-coordinator of the study.

The country with the highest score of positive responses to "**taking a proven, safe and effective vaccine**" was **China** (87%), which also had the lowest percentage of negative responses (0.7%). On the other end, **Poland** had the highest number of negative responses (27 %), while the **Russian** respondents gave the lowest number of positive responses (55%). In **Spain**, 74% of respondents answered positively, 13 % would be reluctant, and 12% had no opinion.

When asked if "**you would accept a vaccine if it were recommended by your employer and was approved safe and effective by the government,**" 32% of respondents completely agreed, while 18% somewhat or completely disagreed. Again, a great variation between countries was observed – **China** again had the highest percentage of positive responses (84%) and the lowest percentage of negative responses (4%). **Russia** had the highest percentage of negative responses (41%) and the lowest

percentage of respondents (27%) who were likely to accept their employer's recommendation. In **Spain**, 41% had confidence in an employer's recommendation, and 35% did not.

Vaccine acceptance also varied with age (with higher acceptance among older people as compared to those aged under 22), **income** (higher among people earning more than 32 dollars per day, as compared to those earning under two dollars per day), or **education level**. Curiously, people who had fallen sick with COVID-19, or whose relatives had fallen sick, were not more likely to respond positively.

"It will be tragic if we develop safe and effective vaccines and people refuse to take them. We need to develop a robust and sustained effort to address vaccine hesitancy and rebuild public confidence in the personal, family and community benefits of immunizations," warns **Scott C. Ratzan**, study co-author and Distinguished Lecturer at CUNY SPH. "Our findings are consistent with recent surveys in the US, which show diminished public trust in a COVID-19 vaccine," he concludes.

Heidi J. Larson, study co-author and Professor and Director of the Vaccine Confidence Project at LSHTM says, "These findings should be a call to action for the international health community. If we do not start building vaccine literacy and restoring public trust in science today, we cannot hope to contain this pandemic."

The authors also point out that people's decisions about vaccination depend on many factors and can change with time. In fact, since this survey was conducted in late June 2020, vaccine-related issues have become increasingly politicized and the antivaccine movement has become more aggressive, which suggests that vaccine hesitancy may be a greater threat today.

Reference

Lazarus, J.V. et al. A global survey of potential acceptance of a COVID-19 vaccine. *Nature Medicine*. 10.1038/s41591-020-1124-9.

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