

Research indicates 86 percent of high risk individuals in the UK would take up COVID-19 vaccine

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A study has suggested that 86 percent of high risk individuals in the UK would be willing to receive a vaccination for COVID-19 if it were

available.

The study published in the *British Journal of Health Psychology* found that those who indicated they want to receive a [vaccine](#) said the risk of contracting COVID-19 and the severity of it, including the fear of possible death were the key reasons. Protecting loved ones was another common reason cited.

Lockdown survey

Of the 527 respondents who took part in the University of Strathclyde study during the lockdown in early April, 311 were [older adults](#) (aged 65+) with an average age of 70.4 and 216 were participants with a chronic respiratory illness, with a mean age of 43.8 years.

Principal investigator, health psychology expert Dr. Lynn Williams from Strathclyde, said: "What the study has indicated is that the willingness to receive a COVID-19 vaccination is currently high among high-risk individuals. But even in this high-risk sample, there is still a sizable proportion of people who are either undecided or who do not want to receive a vaccination."

Safety concerns

Reluctance was associated with the belief that the media may have over-exaggerated the risks of COVID-19 and that the timeline for the outbreak would be short, with concerns about safety another key reason cited by the study group for not wanting the vaccine.

Dr. Williams added: "This is something which has come up in vaccine research in previous pandemics. As the vaccine has to be developed more rapidly, people can get concerned as to how quickly it might have

been brought into circulation and have concerns over potential side effects and safety. It is therefore really important for the public to understand the rigorous and robust processes that are followed during the vaccine evaluation and approval process in order to ensure public confidence in the vaccine."

There has been a pledge from the major pharmaceutical companies to make sure that safety and efficacy are at the forefront of the development of a vaccine.

Dr. Williams added: "The temporary halting of the Oxford vaccine trial earlier this month also shows the careful safety protocols that are followed. But clearly we had a survey of people who really wanted the vaccine. People were very concerned about protecting their own health and that of others such as family members by not passing the illness on. Participants were also feeling a real sense of the severity of COVID-19, given the high-risk group that they're in, and wanted to protect themselves from serious illness. Achieving herd immunity was also a driving factor, with some considering it a 'civic duty' to vaccinate and people also described how they would vaccinate if it helped end the pandemic."

Vaccination behavior

Uptake of the vaccine will be vital for controlling the pandemic, but the success of it relies on public acceptance of the vaccine.

Uptake of vaccinations and public confidence in vaccines has been falling in the UK in recent years. Data shows that [local authorities](#) in Scotland saw an average of 42.4 percent of adults with serious health conditions under 65 take up the offer of a free flu vaccine last winter, with the figure 45 percent in England

Dr. Williams added: "What looks promising is that in terms of the impact of COVID-19 on future vaccination behavior in general, 38 percent said it will make them more likely to receive the annual flu vaccination in the future and 51 percent said they will now be more likely to receive the pneumococcal vaccination. These figures suggest positive unintended consequences of COVID-19 on vaccination acceptance in general as individuals seek more protection for their health. That's really important as there will be a big drive this year to get as many eligible people as possible vaccinated against flu."

Further research

Dr. Williams said the group intend to carry out further, in-depth research and added: "We carried out the survey at the start of April and of course it's difficult to know whether people's thoughts might change over time. At that point, people may have been most scared due to the newness of the virus but then if you ask people now, maybe the long term nature of the virus is more apparent."

The new study comes in the wake of an [Ipsos](#) survey of 20,000 people across 27 countries carried out for the World Economic Forum, which revealed that 74 percent of people would want a vaccine for COVID-19.

More information: Lynn Williams et al. Towards intervention development to increase the uptake of COVID-19 vaccination among those at high risk: Outlining evidence-based and theoretically informed future intervention content, *British Journal of Health Psychology* (2020). [DOI: 10.1111/bjhp.12468](https://doi.org/10.1111/bjhp.12468)

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