

# Vital role of communities in vaccine uptake highlighted in new study

May 27 2021

---



Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

People who feel a sense of community belonging or identification are more willing to have a COVID-19 vaccine, according to research by psychologists at Nottingham Trent University (NTU).

In the first UK study to apply Social Identity Approach principles to the study of COVID-19 vaccination willingness, researchers found that there are significant pandemic-related benefits associated with increasing community [identification](#).

The survey questioned people on their levels of community identification, [sense](#) of duty to their community to get vaccinated, and willingness to receive a vaccination.

Dr. Juliet Wakefield, lead researcher and senior lecturer in Psychology at NTU's School of Social Sciences, said: "There was a positive relationship between people's strength of identification with their community and their sense of duty to their community to get vaccinated. In turn, this sense of duty was associated with an increased willingness to take up a vaccination when offered one.

"Seeing other [community members](#) get vaccinated and support the vaccine roll-out is also especially beneficial, tapping into the observation that the opinions of members within a close community group are particularly likely to be heeded and lead to attitude change. Likewise, the role of GPs, community nurses, and social care workers is particularly important in promoting vaccination, as they are likely to be simultaneously perceived as trustworthy members of the local community with relevant medical knowledge."

Based on the findings of this and [other studies](#) into the health and wellbeing benefits of social connectedness by NTU's Groups, Identities and Health Research Group, the study also recommends the use of formal and informal volunteering in increasing people's strength of identification and connection with their community.

Dr. Wakefield added: "We know that there is a [positive relationship](#) between the number of hours that people spend volunteering and their

sense of community belonging. In the case of the pandemic, this can not only encourage vaccine uptake, as seen in our latest study, but it also has many other benefits.

"For example, the efficacy of the vaccine may also be improved by community identification, because social connectedness is known to produce psychological benefits that boost immunity response, including increased [social support](#), stress and loneliness reduction, and increased incidence of healthy behaviors such as not smoking, drinking less alcohol, eating a better diet, and exercising more."

"Social membership also has the potential to curb people's endorsement of anti-vaccine conspiracy theories, as people who endorse conspiracy theories tend to possess low levels of trust in their communities, feelings of powerlessness, and have a general sense of disconnection from wider society, as well as experiencing high levels of loneliness and psychological distress: issues that have the potential to be remedied by increased community identification.

"There are numerous benefits in making sure people are connected to those around them, so governments must recognize the rich and powerful resource of the community in their policies and funding provision."

The full paper has been published in the *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*.

**More information:** Juliet Ruth Helen Wakefield et al, Doing it for us: Community identification predicts willingness to receive a COVID -19 vaccination via perceived sense of duty to the community, *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* (2021). [DOI: 10.1002/casp.2542](https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.2542)

Provided by Nottingham Trent University

Citation: Vital role of communities in vaccine uptake highlighted in new study (2021, May 27)  
retrieved 6 May 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-05-vital-role-vaccine-uptake-highlighted.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.