

Survey shows rise in vaccine hesitancy in Ghana

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Research led by the University of Southampton into the uptake of the COVID-19 vaccine in Ghana, West Africa has concluded that vaccine hesitancy has seen a small, but significant increase over the last three months. This research is in collaboration with youth-led not-for-profit organization PACKS Africa.

In the latest survey of 1,295 unvaccinated people, in May/June 2021, willingness to be vaccinated remained relatively high at just over 71.4 percent. However, this figure is down 11 percent on results from March 2021 when an earlier version of the same survey was conducted.

The latest findings show 28.6 percent of respondents are still either undecided or unwilling to get the jab. Among this 28.6 percent group, a little over half said they didn't have enough information, with some believing the [vaccine](#) to be dangerous and others mistrusting the government. The odds of accepting the vaccine was 1.43 times higher for respondents who got their vaccine-related information from the Ghana Health Service.

Report author and Research Fellow at the University of Southampton, Dr. Ken Brackstone said: "Proactive health promotion and public health messaging is vital to reassure the Ghanaian general public about vaccine safety. Vaccine supply to Ghana and the rest of sub-Saharan Africa is too slow and when supplies do arrive, they will undoubtedly be limited, so it's imperative that they end up in people's arms."

Just under a third of all those who took part in the survey reported that they had seen or heard stories about the indecision surrounding the rollout of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine in Europe and North America, with many admitting this made them concerned about accepting a COVID-19 vaccine in the future.

Dr. Michael Head, senior research fellow in Global Health at Southampton who also worked on the report, commented: "The COVID-19 vaccines will be the key tools that underpin the global route out of the pandemic. Therefore, an observed increase in hesitancy gives some cause for concern. The actions of how we in Europe and North America handle these vaccines is seen all over the world, and we don't want the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine to be widely viewed as ineffective

or dangerous, when the evidence shows it is safe and effective."

The survey also found that education, religion and political alignment play a part in influencing vaccination acceptance. Interestingly, it revealed that people educated to University level are more likely to show [vaccine hesitancy](#) than those who aren't.

Kirchuffs Atengble, executive director of PACKS Africa said: "In recent times, the political terrain in Ghana has become very fluid and volatile, influencing policy response by a good number of citizens. Following positive vaccine response from the leadership of the two major political parties, the Ghana Health Service may want to pursue multidimensional strategies to increase COVID-19 vaccination uptake, including vaccine communication through political agents across the divides, community opinion leaders and repentant anti-vaccine campaigners."

The findings are presented in a report (not yet a peer-reviewed paper—journal papers are being prepared) Examining Drivers of COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy in Ghana. The team hopes the findings will be useful for stakeholders in Ghana, and that lessons can be learned, adapted and adopted by other African nations.

More information: Examining drivers of COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy in Ghana. figshare.com/articles/journal_article_in_Ghana/14494851

Provided by University of Southampton

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