

Study: COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy and ways to reduce it

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A new study co-authored by a researcher at the Johns Hopkins Carey Business School identified behavioral patterns associated with reluctance among some adults for receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.

The study, conducted among adults in China, suggests that the vaccination behaviors of people whom one personally knows is more influential than information about [vaccine](#) use among the general public in reversing [vaccine hesitancy](#).

Results of the study are published in *JAMA Health Forum*, the health policy journal of the American Medical Association.

China is the world's most populous country. Approximately 16% of the nation is fully vaccinated, according to the current data compiled by the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center.

"Our results suggest that sharing information about the vaccination behavior with a person's social networks may be more effective in reducing the

person's vaccine hesitancy than nationwide or regional vaccination statistics," said Haiyang Yang, co-author of the study, an associate professor at Johns Hopkins Carey Business School, and a core faculty member of the Johns Hopkins Business of Health Initiative. "These findings have implications for how vaccine promotion campaigns can be better developed and implemented."

For the study, Yang and co-author Jingjing Ma, an assistant professor at Peking University, investigated the vaccination behavior of a nationally representative sample of more than 12,000 Chinese adults in January 2021, when only 2% of participants were vaccinated for COVID-19.

Overall, the research found that women and individuals with lower incomes or education levels were less willing to be vaccinated. Having more knowledge about the COVID-19 vaccines (for example, how a COVID-19 vaccine works) was associated with lower vaccine hesitancy.

Analyses also showed that differences in vaccine knowledge could account for disparities in vaccine hesitancy across income and education levels. This suggests that vaccine knowledge dissemination may help reduce COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy in certain disadvantaged communities.

Participants not yet willing to receive the vaccine were also randomly assigned to respond to one of two additional questions. Half were asked at what percentage the general public had to be vaccinated for COVID-19 before they themselves would get vaccinated, and the other half were asked to indicate the percentage for "people you personally know." On average, vaccine-hesitant individuals indicated that that they would get the vaccine when 64% of the [general public](#) had been vaccinated. This number was much lower—54%—when the reference group was "people you personally know."

This pattern suggests that, rather than leveraging

aggregate vaccination statistics, vaccine promotion campaigns should also be designed to amplify the positive influence of each person's vaccination across that individual's social networks.

More information: Haiyang Yang et al, Factors Associated With Chinese Adults' Vaccine Acceptance, *JAMA Health Forum* (2021). DOI: [10.1001/jamahealthforum.2021.1466](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamahealthforum.2021.1466)

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