

At a glance COVID-19 vaccine research insights

Key research findings

This research is part of an ongoing series that looks into New Zealanders' attitudes and public sentiment towards the COVID-19 vaccine.

Background

In 2020, Horizon Research, in association with the School of Population Health, University of Auckland, was commissioned to survey New Zealanders' attitudes and sentiment towards COVID-19 vaccines.

Two distinct but related online surveys were undertaken:

- 1,451 respondents between 24 and 28 September 2020
- 1,438 respondents between 1 and 4 December 2020.

Key insights

The following are some of the key insights in the findings:

Accepting a vaccine

- 69 percent (an estimated 2,487,900 adults) of respondents are prepared to receive a "well-tested and approved" COVID-19 vaccine.
- Uptake is likely to be highest among the among those aged 65+.

Barriers to uptake

- 24 percent of respondents indicated that they would be unlikely to have a COVID-19 vaccine if offered.

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- 16 percent of New Zealand adults will not accept an offered vaccine.
- Between the first and the second Horizon Research reports, there is a slight increase in overall vaccine hesitancy (if not a reduction in overall ‘acceptance’ numbers).
- Pasifika and Māori have less confidence in the safety and quality of the vaccine and of its protection.

People who are unlikely to take an offered COVID-19 vaccine are more likely to:

- be female
- have a lower household income than those who are likely to take a vaccine if offered
- have lower educational qualifications than those who are likely to take a vaccine if offered
- be a parent with children in their household

Māori, Pasifika and Other European, and people who are 35-44 years, are less willing to take a follow-up vaccine.

In December, 72 percent (2,574,200) of respondents are prepared to have a follow-up dose if required, up three percent from September.

18 percent (an estimated 652,600 adults) are unlikely to have a follow-up dose if required.

Respondents of Māori, Pasifika and “Other European” ethnicities had lower than average willingness to take a follow-up vaccine.

Safety

The major reasons for hesitancy towards a vaccine are concerns regarding the vaccine’s safety. This is particularly the case for females.

When considering whether to take a COVID-19 vaccine, the top four thoughts that New Zealanders have are about potential side effects.

A third of people believe vaccines can be approved without knowing all the potential side effects.

Key insights that will influence uptake and understanding of the rollout approach

Māori are marginally more likely to take the vaccine if they could ‘talk to someone about it’ first.

People are more receptive to recommendations from the Ministry of Health, the Director General of Health, medical specialists, GPs and the World Health Organisation than to recommendations from Ministers, the Prime Minister, friends, family, iwi or hapū leaders, and church leaders.

21 percent of participants said they would not take a COVID-19 vaccine if a social media post or video alarmed them or was opposed to COVID-19 vaccines and looked credible.

There is broad understanding and support for prioritising the roll-out to groups and individuals who are at highest risk (border workers/health workers) and/or more vulnerable.