September 2021

At a glance: COVID-19 vaccine research insights

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

Background

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

Ten distinct but related online surveys were undertaken for this series:

- 1,451 respondents between 24 – 28 September 2020
- 1,438 respondents between 1 – 4 December 2020
- 1,317 respondents between 16 – 19 February 2021
- 1,350 respondents between 26 March – 1 April 2021
- 1,387 respondents between 23 April – 2 May 2021
- 1,234 respondents between 28 – 30 May 2021
- 1,472 respondents between 25 – 30 June 2021
- 2,509 respondents between 26 July – 1 August 2021
- 2,334 respondents between 24 – 29 August 2021
- 2,479 respondents between 28 September – 1 October 2021

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Key research findings

The following are some of the key insights in the September findings, compared with previous findings:

Overall vaccine uptake

- In September the overall potential uptake of the vaccine, including those already vaccinated and those who are likely to get a vaccine, has plateaued at 87% of respondents. This represents a one percentage point increase since the August estimate of 86% and indicates a slowing of the upward trend evident in previous months (July 79%, June 77%, May 80%, April 77%, March 69%).
- A further 4% of respondents are unsure whether they will get the vaccine, 5% are unlikely and 4% of respondents say they will definitely not get the vaccine.
- The table below illustrates we have been effective at getting those likely to get the vaccine over the line but have not made much ground yet with those who are unsure or unlikely to get the vaccine.

Status- all respondents	September 2021	August 2021
Already vaccinated	81%	53%
Likely to get	6%	33%
Predicted uptake	87%	86%
Unsure	4%	5%
Unlikely to get	5%	5%
Definitely won't	4%	5%

- Overall potential uptake by Māori respondents, including those already vaccinated and those who are likely to get a vaccine, has decreased to 73% from 79% in August, returning to levels reported in July of 73% (the margin of error for the Māori sub-sample at a 95% confidence level is ±5.1%).
- Overall potential uptake by Pasifika respondents, including those already vaccinated and those who are likely to get a vaccine, is at 81%, down from 85% in August, and up from 72% in July. (the margin of error for the Pasifika sub-sample at a 95% confidence level is ±8.6%)
- Overall potential uptake by respondents who identify as disabled has decreased slightly to 82% down from 86% in August.
- Please note that changes in overall potential uptake reported by ethnicity are within the margin of error for the sample sizes achieved and therefore are not statistically significant. They should be treated as indicative only.
- Overall potential uptake of the vaccination is below average in the Waikato and Northland DHBs.
- Reflecting the changing vaccination profile of New Zealand, the breakdown for the unvaccinated group is very different this wave compared to the previous wave, so comparisons between August and September should be made cautiously.

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- The pool of people who are still **likely** to get vaccinated has diminished during September (and likely greater still since the Super Saturday event, which is not yet reflected in these results). In September 33% of the unvaccinated are likely to get the vaccine (6% of the population) compared to 70% of the unvaccinated in August (33% of the population).

Status - unvaccinated	September 2021	August 2021
Likely to get	33%	70%
Unsure	22%	10%
Unlikely to get	26%	10%
Definitely won't	20%	10%

- In September 40% of Māori respondents not already vaccinated said they are likely to get a vaccine (down from 68% in August), again reflecting a changing profile.

Barriers to vaccination

- The main reasons for being unsure or unlikely to get a vaccine relate to concerns about serious side effects/deaths from the vaccine (28%), that long term effects are not known/ it's just a trial (26%), and a view that the government wants to control us/ is bullying us into getting the vaccine/I don't trust the government (13%).
- 19% of respondents not already vaccinated believe they have medical or health problems that mean they are unable to get the vaccine.
  - A previous allergic reaction to a vaccine (32%) is the single most widely mentioned health barrier. Being immunocompromised (16%), taking antibiotics (12%), and having or being tested for Covid-19 (12%) are also widely mentioned as a health barrier.
- 14% of unvaccinated respondents consider there is no chance that they will be infected with the virus, and 41% consider they have little chance of being infected.

Communication and information

- Almost all respondents (94%) said they had seen an official COVID-19 information and vaccine advertisement in the 30 days leading up to taking the survey.
- The top four sources of official information are TV, social media, radio and news websites.
- The reach of YouTube, the press, letterbox/ leaflet and billboards increased notably.
- Around half (48%) of those not vaccinated feel they have enough information to decide whether or not to get vaccinated, representing a sharp drop from 68 percent in August.
- The types of information that would help people to decide whether to get vaccinated includes:
  - information on the long-term effects of the vaccine, based on longer and/or more clinical studies (29%)
  - 'facts' on the success rate for vaccines, their effectiveness, their ingredients and the results from international studies (14%)
  - information on side effects and risks (13%)
  - information to appease suspicion of government information/ 'propaganda' (9%) – an emerging response, only mentioned by 2% in August.

Misinformation

- 56% of respondents had come across what they believed to be misinformation on COVID-19 vaccines, up from 51% in August.
- Unvaccinated respondents were less likely to say they had come across what they believed to be misinformation. They were also less likely to have noticed misinformation in September (42%) than August (48%).
- Social media (71%) and friends or family (38%) remain the top two main sources of misinformation. However, main-stream media is now the third most recognised source of misinformation with 26% of mentions up from 21% in August.

- Those who are likely to get vaccinated are more likely than average to recognise friends and family, acquaintances, neighbours as sources of misinformation.
- Those who are unlikely to get vaccinated are more likely to mention brochures and medical professionals as sources of misinformation.
- In terms of the impact of misinformation, 36% would look for official information if the misinformation was of concern, 27% may not take the vaccine if the information was alarming, and 19% may not take the vaccine if the information looked credible.
- As more people are vaccinated, the group who are not vaccinated is changing and includes more people who are susceptible to not getting vaccinated if misinformation they observe is alarming or looks credible (46% up from 14% in August).
- Those who say they definitely won't get vaccinated are eight times more likely than the general population to believe that the vaccine can affect your reproductive organs, affect your DNA or RNA, and that it has religious or spiritual implications.

Persuasive messages

- 27% of unvaccinated respondents are more likely to get vaccinated having been presented with scientific evidence about vaccine protection for the NZ population (i.e., 88% of vaccinated will be protected from infection and 96% will be protected from hospitalisation).
- 34% of unvaccinated respondents are more likely to get vaccinated having read information about delayed and "long haul COVID" symptoms.

Protecting others by getting vaccinated

- Protecting others is a concern for two thirds of the unvaccinated. 67% of respondents would get vaccinated to protect someone and 17% of respondents (predominantly those who are unlikely to get a vaccine) say they would not get vaccinated to protect others.
- When prompted, unvaccinated people said they would most like to protect their parents (38%) from COVID-19 and the Delta strain by getting vaccinated.
- Around a third of those who are yet to be vaccinated (32%) indicated they could be motivated to get vaccinated to protect children under 12 and those who can't take the vaccine for medical reasons.

Incentives

- 25% of unvaccinated people say the health benefits of getting vaccinated are enough of an incentive to get vaccinated.
- Immediate $100 cash incentives (24%) and $100 gift card vouchers (21%) are the preferred incentive options.
- Paid time off work to recover from side effects of the vaccine had a Net increase in five percent likelihood to get vaccinated.
- Of all the incentives and messages presented, restrictions on travel and family events (weddings/funerals/tangihanga) are likely to have the greatest impact among those who are already intending to get vaccinated.
- Of all the incentives and messages presented, restrictions on travel are likely to have the greatest impact on those who say they are unlikely to get vaccinated.

Support for youth vaccine

- 78% of caregivers of children aged 12-15 years would support the vaccine for those in their care.
- 63% of caregivers of children aged 5 to 11 years old would support the vaccine for those in their care if it were to get approved.

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