

# VACCINE HESITANCY AMONG BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC BRITONS

Since the initial outbreak of coronavirus, the impact has been disproportionate for Black and ethnic minority Britons. While the vaccine rollout has so far offered a light at the end of the tunnel, research has revealed that black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) people have said they were much less likely than white people to take the vaccine, with take-up especially low for low-income groups. This has implications beyond healthcare, as lower uptake of the vaccine among BAME communities opens up the potential for a racist backlash, as those seeking to divide may exploit this to suggest that BAME Britons are putting others at risk by not getting vaccinated.

Between 10-14th January 2021, HOPE not hate Charitable Trust commissioned FocalData to carry out a poll of 1,014 BAME Britons to better understand vaccine hesitancy among BAME Britons, and what can be done to address it.

**While those who will refuse a vaccine are a small minority, there is a high degree of vaccine hesitancy within BAME communities, but older BAME Britons are more convinced**

- Our poll of BAME Britons found that 65% say they definitely will or probably will take the vaccine and only 24% saying they probably or definitely won't – with higher refusal rates in Black respondents (14% say they definitely will not and 17% say they probably won't (31% total)).
- In comparison our nationally representative polling found that 77% of white respondents said they definitely will or probably will take the vaccine and only 12% saying they definitely or probably won't.
- But many more say they probably won't (15%) than definitely won't (9%) take the vaccine, suggesting there is a high degree of scepticism rather than refusal among BAME communities.
- The majority (72%) of over 65s, those most likely to be vulnerable to the virus, say they will definitely have the vaccine, but this falls to 46% of 45-64s, 36% of 35-44s, 22% of 25-34s and only 21% of 18-24s. This suggests that motivation to get the vaccine is greatest amongst those who feel most at risk from coronavirus while younger people, less likely to be clinically vulnerable, are less concerned.

Our polling reaffirms findings of the Royal Society for Public Health that there is a far greater degree of vaccine hesitancy among BAME Britons. But while much commentary around this has centred on the circulation of WhatsApp rumours and conspiracy videos about the vaccine, we find that the roots of this vaccine hesitancy are longer and more complex.

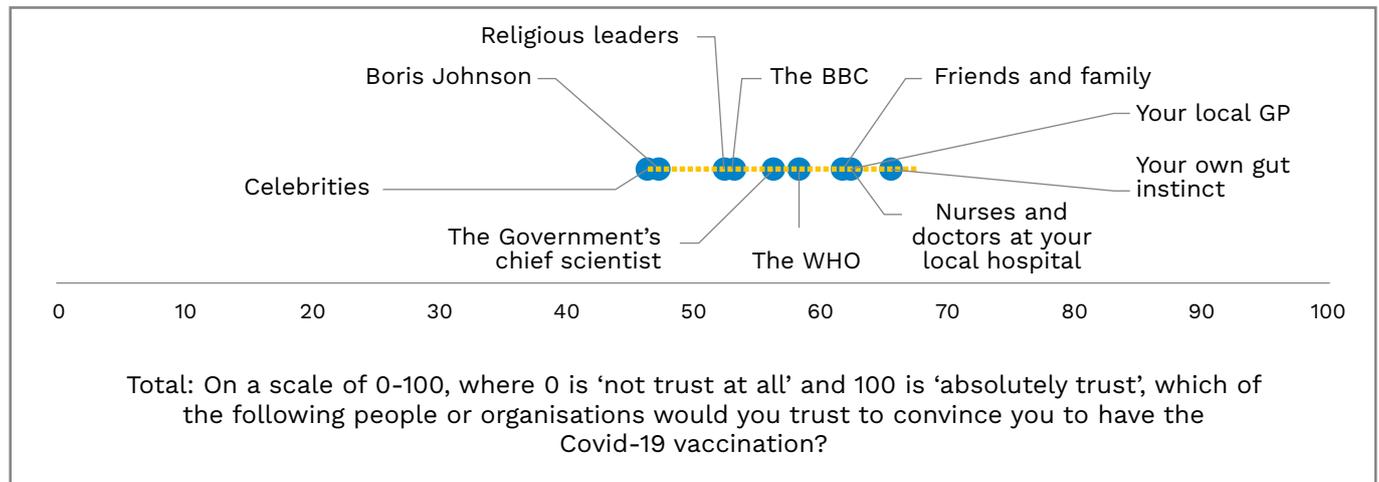
When our poll of BAME Britons asked why those who say they probably or definitely won't have the vaccine feel that way, safety looms as the largest concern as many believe the vaccine has been rushed through, but this is closely followed by a sense of mistrust in those telling people to have the vaccine, and further down the list, a sense that there is malicious intent behind the vaccine, or even that the vaccine will be injecting poison into our bodies.

Significantly, those who say that they don't trust the vaccine's safety, or that they definitely won't have the vaccine, are far more likely to report having had a bad experience for themselves or an immediate family member in the past 5 years. For Black respondents in particular, a bad experience they or a family member has had in the health system is one of the most popular justifications for not wanting the covid vaccine.

Moreover, the circulation of misinformation is taking place in a broader context of uneasy relationships with the Government, officials and the healthcare system more broadly. Misinformation and relationships of trust are intrinsically linked; belief in conspiracy theories and misinformation is often a symptom as much as a cause of cynical outlook on politics and society at large.

Despite all of this, our findings should come as some reassurance, in that those who say they will definitely not have the vaccine remain a minority, and rather than an overt anti-vaccination challenge for black and minority communities, it is one of vaccine hesitancy.

While challenging misinformation is important, the legacy of medical racism also needs to be addressed. Building trust with marginalised communities, challenging structural racism within the healthcare system, and putting the needs of those most impacted by coronavirus first, must be central as part of the government's ongoing response to the crisis, and the vaccination programme.



**Many fear that the vaccine is not safe, but there is clearly space to encourage those sceptical about the vaccine's safety**

- Just 55% of BAME Britons are confident that the vaccine is safe, compared with 65% of white respondents in our nationally representative poll. 45% of BAME people do not feel confident that the vaccine is safe, compared to 35% of white people who do not feel the vaccine is safe.
- Older BAME respondents, presumably having felt less safe throughout the pandemic, were more confident in the safety of the vaccine than younger respondents. 65% of over 65s, 68% of 45-64s, 53% of 35-44s and 49% of 25-34s were confident that the vaccine is safe.
- 41% of respondents agreed that the Covid-19 vaccine will be less effective than scientists claim, with more than a third (34%) of over 65s strongly agreeing with the statement
- 11% of those who aren't confident that the vaccine is safe say that they will definitely have it anyway, and 31% say they'll probably have it. 27% say they probably won't, 17% say they definitely won't, and 15% don't know, so there is clearly space to encourage these people by persuading them that the vaccine is safe.

**Misinformation is playing a role in feeding vaccine hesitancy among BAME communities, but it is not in itself the driving force. Safety and mistrust are greater drivers than conspiracy theories, while past bad experiences of healthcare add to fears**

- In our BAME polling, 46% of all those who were opposed to or hesitant about the vaccine said it was because they felt the speed with which the vaccine was developed had compromised its safety, though this was a smaller proportion than the white respondents of our national polling, where 60% of hesitant people gave this as their main concern.

- The second most common reason hesitant people gave for not having the vaccine was a sense of mistrust in those telling people to have the vaccine (30%).
- The next was a belief the vaccine was poisonous (15%) or that there was malicious intent behind it [17%] – while 15% thought it was best to let nature take its course and 11% just didn't believe that coronavirus was a credible danger.
- Similar numbers (around 8-9%) blamed adverse healthcare experiences in the past, not liking needles or concerns over ingredients in the vaccine.
- However, for black respondent's adverse health experiences was the fourth most given answer (15%).

**Vaccine hesitancy is closely linked to trust in authorities and politicians, and it is familiar figures who are more trusted to be persuasive on the vaccine**

- When asked who they would trust to persuade them to have a vaccine, the most trusted messengers were more likely to be familiar people; friends and family, GPs and local Drs and nurses, and people's own gut instinct. Boris Johnson and celebrities were among those seen as least persuasive.
- 40% of Christians and 45% of Muslims said they would be convinced by religious leaders to have the vaccine.
- Lack of faith in the political system is even more pronounced in those who are adamant they will not take the vaccine. Among those who say they definitely won't have the vaccine, more than half (52%) disagree that politicians listen to people like them compared to just 28% of those who definitely will.

**Initiatives like ‘vaccine passports’ are unlikely to incentivise vaccination among BAME Britons, but there is a strong sense of duty and collective obligation regarding the vaccine**

- Overall, just 7% say that they would definitely be more likely to have a Covid-19 vaccine if it was the only way that you would be allowed to enter closed environments like restaurants, sporting arenas, cinemas, pubs, trains and planes, while 38% said this might persuade them and 36% said it would not. Younger people were more likely to be persuaded by this prospect.
- An outright majority (56%) agree that it is our duty to have the Covid-19 vaccine in order to protect the vulnerable.
- 52% say that people refusing to take a Covid-19 vaccine are putting lives of others at risk

**What can be done to overcome covid-19 vaccine hesitancy?**

- 1. People need to be reassured that the vaccine is safe.** It is understandable that people may be hesitant about a vaccine, especially if they have had a bad medical experience in the past. Rather than telling people they are wrong to have concerns, people need reassurance and clear, user-friendly information.
- 2. Trusted Messengers.** Familiar figures like friends, family, GPs, doctors and nurses from a local hospital or religious leaders are better placed to deliver this reassurance than politicians or national figures.
- 3. Outreach, engagement and accessibility.** To reach marginalised communities, public health messaging must not simply rely on the usual channels.

**Methodology**

This survey has been conducted using an online interview administered by Focldata. Focldata collected data from a representative sample of 1,014 respondents between 10 and 14 January 2020 using its proprietary data collection platform Focldata Core, which plugs into a global network of panels and uses machine learning to automatically detect and screen out inconsistent and disengaged respondents. Users fill out the surveys in real-time across mobile, desktop, and tablet devices on the focldata platform.

The data was weighted to be representative of the GB BAME population. Focldata contacted members of the panel that match the demographic profiles of the country, in particular age, gender, and region. It then weighted the raw data to match the known population of BAME adults in Great Britain.

For further enquires, please checkout focldata’s website or contact [justin@focldata.com](mailto:justin@focldata.com)