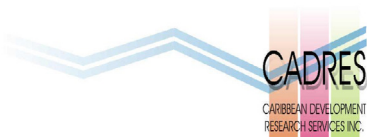




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# COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy Survey Report 2021

## St. Vincent and the Grenadines



## Background

Limited take up of COVID-19 vaccines has been an ongoing issue hampering the response to the pandemic across the Eastern Caribbean subregion as elsewhere. Vaccination has emerged as the best possible tool to stem the tide of a pandemic which is having a profoundly negative impact on children and their families.

UNICEF and USAID commissioned Caribbean Development Research Services Inc (CADRES) to conduct a survey on vaccine hesitancy across six countries: Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago.

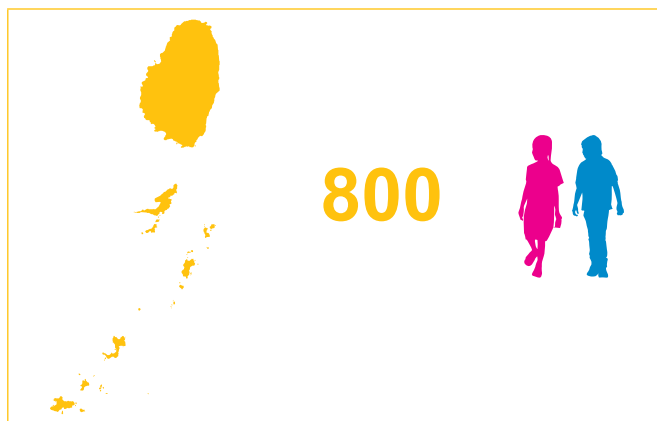
The study was carried out in October and November 2021 and explores the extent of, and reasons for, COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy and if anything can be done to change the minds of those reluctant to take the vaccines.

These are the findings for St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

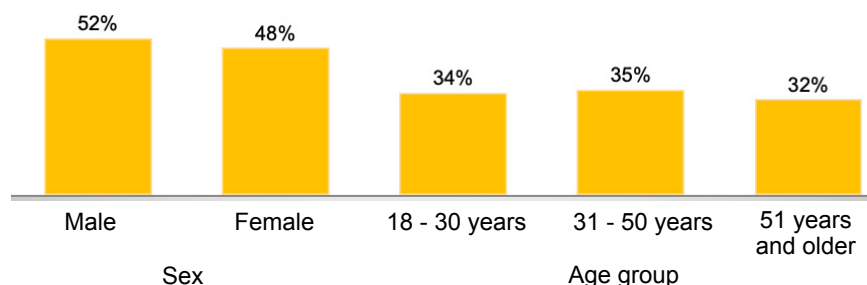
## Demographics

This country survey was the only one not conducted face-to-face across the six countries due to extreme challenges with COVID-19 which made in-person interaction very difficult.

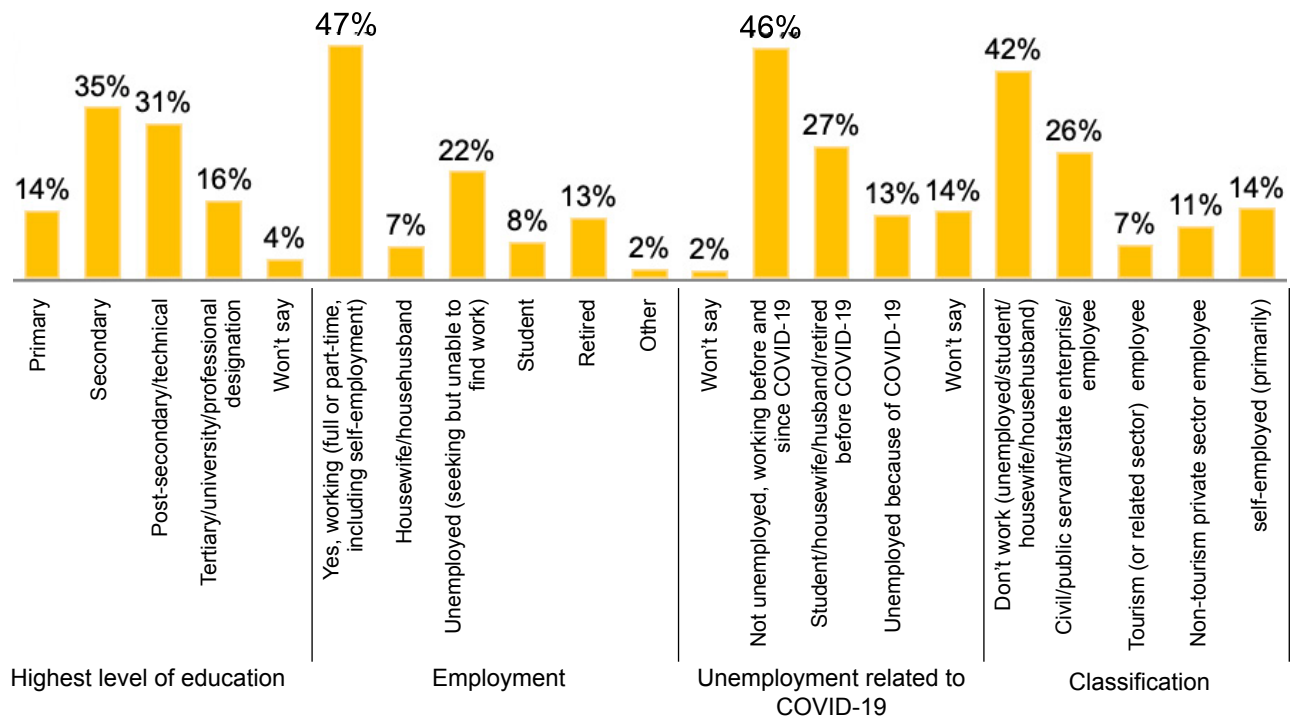
800 participants were surveyed, evenly spread across males and females and three age ranges. 61% said they were parents. Most were employed, had a secondary-level education and 13% reported being unemployed because of COVID-19.



**Sex and age profile**



### Education and employment profiles



## General findings

1. **58% of respondents said they had been vaccinated.**

Of the six countries surveyed St. Vincent and the Grenadines is the most vaccine hesitant according to the Vaccine Hesitancy Index tool used in this study. The country scored 5.4 on this index where 1 is a perfect score, 3 is the objective score and 10 an imperfect one.

## General views and opinions on the vaccination of children

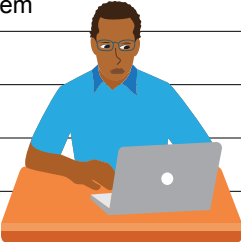
2. Only 20% of respondents with children at the primary level and 36% at secondary school would agree to have their children vaccinated against COVID-19. This is significantly lower than the all-country averages, where 48% said they would agree to the vaccine for secondary school students.



Would you agree to have children vaccinated against COVID-19?							
Pre-primary		Primary school		Secondary school		Post-secondary/tertiary level	
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
14%	71%	20%	63%	36%	48%	44%	33%

3. The chief justification respondents (vaccinated and unvaccinated) gave for hesitating to vaccinate their children related to their age. 17% said their children were too young.

Main reasons for vaccine hesitancy relating to children		
Too young	17%	
Against my religion	1%	
Don't like the options available	3%	
My children have a medical condition that bars them	2%	
Don't trust the government/medical authorities	6%	
My research tells me it is not a good idea	6%	
It is a choice and I choose not to	9%	
I just won't let them take it	3%	



4. Those who were persuaded to allow their children to take vaccines said they did so after completing more research and speaking to their doctor.

## Views and opinions of VACCINATED persons

### Vaccine uptake

5. As noted, 58% of respondents in St. Vincent and the Grenadines reported having been vaccinated, with **Oxford/AstraZeneca** the most used at 50%. The next most popular was BioNTech/ Pfizer (28%).

It is the only country in the survey where the majority of respondents got to choose their preferred vaccine (54%). 46% took what was available.

### Initial vaccine hesitancy

6. The reasons for any early hesitancy involved a lack of trust in the vaccines on account of the speed of their development and uncertainty over long-term side effects.

Reasons for initial hesitancy		
Didn't qualify before	1%	
Didn't like vaccine options available	8%	
Religious grounds	3%	
Medical condition	5%	
Didn't trust government	2%	
Didn't trust medical authorities	2%	
Didn't trust the vaccines (unsafe/developed too quickly/unsure what's in it)	16%	
Unsure about long-term side effects	14%	

7. The major factors that convinced respondents to get the vaccine themselves were doing more research and speaking to their doctor.

Factor that changed respondents' mind		
Offered the vaccine with which I was more comfortable	9%	
Spoke to my doctor	14%	
Did more research	14%	
Consulted family and friends	5%	
My spiritual/religious leader advised me	1%	
Persuaded by government/public health authorities	5%	
Noticed that a personality (public or otherwise) took it	0%	
Was forced by my employer/family members/didn't have a choice	5%	
Felt more comfortable because several people took it	2%	
Frightened by the increased infections/deaths	4%	
My circumstances changed (such as being pregnant or other medical or personal factor)	2%	

## Information and communication for vaccinated persons

8. The **primary** sources of information on the COVID-19 vaccine situation were government/official sources by a wide margin.

Primary source of information on COVID-19 situation		
Government/official sources	39%	
Private/personal medical sources	17%	
Social media	20%	
Personal internet research	11%	
Local radio/television/newspapers	11%	
Information from family and friends	3%	

9. St. Vincent and the Grenadines was the only country where social networks were the priority medium of communication.

Best way to communicate/preferred source of information		
Via newspapers (paper/electronic)	16%	
Via radio	14%	
Via television (local or cable)	18%	
Via Facebook	18%	
Via Instagram	2%	
Via WhatsApp	10%	
Via Twitter	0%	
Via TikTok	0%	
Via YouTube	1%	
Social networks (family and friends)	22%	










10. In terms of whether the use of local and international personalities has any effect, vaccinated respondents in St. Vincent and the Grenadines (75%) were the most likely to find this useful. The all-country average was 62% in this category.

Was information conveyed by local and international personalities helpful?			
Yes, very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not helpful/ distracting/misleading	Unsure/ won't say
34%	41%	21%	5%











## Vaccine mandates

11. Most vaccinated respondents believe in a vaccine mandate for a wide range of people, except primary school students. Only 33% thought vaccines should be mandated for this group. (The all-country average for primary school students was 39%).

Support for imposition of COVID-19 vaccine mandates		
Arriving visitors	85%	
Frontline medical/elder care workers	83%	
Public servants	75%	
Workers in the hotel/tourism sector	82%	
Taxi/minibus drivers and conductors	77%	
Secondary/tertiary students	60%	
Primary school students	33%	

## Views and opinions of UNVACCINATED persons

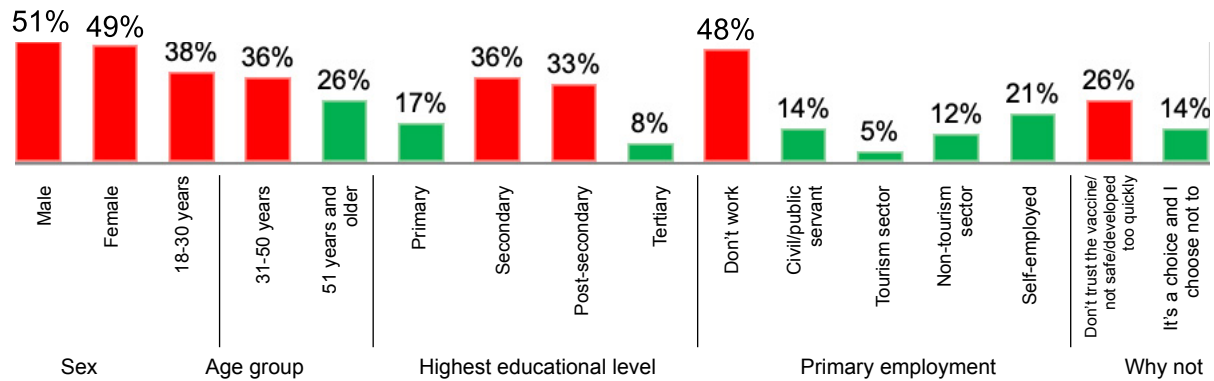
12. The chief reasons given by respondents for avoiding vaccination is the contention that they don't trust it and they are unsure about long-term side effects.

Main reason for being unvaccinated		
Can't find the time to go/lines are too long	1%	
Don't like any of the vaccine options available	4%	
Won't take it on religious grounds	6%	
Have a medical condition that bars me	8%	
Don't trust the government/medical authorities here	14%	
Don't trust the vaccine (not safe, developed too quickly, do not know what is in it)	26%	
It's a choice and I choose not to	15%	
No reason, just won't take it	4%	
Unsure about long-term side effects	16%	
Not mandatory for work	4%	

## Profile

13. The unvaccinated person in St. Vincent and the Grenadines is under 50, could be either male or female, does not work in an institutional environment and is educated to secondary- or post-secondary level.

**St. Vincent and the Grenadines unvaccinated profile**









14. When asked if their views on taking a vaccine changed over time, 65% of the unvaccinated said no and 24% said they were actually now *less* inclined to get vaccinated. (Only 11% said they were *more* inclined to do so).

## Information and communication for the unvaccinated









15. The preferred mode of communication for unvaccinated persons was Facebook, followed by WhatsApp.

Preferred mode of communication/receipt of information		
Via newspapers (paper/electronic)	7%	
Via radio	18%	
Via television (local or cable)	12%	
Via Facebook	22%	
Via Instagram	3%	
Via WhatsApp	19%	
Via Twitter	0%	
Via TikTok	2%	
Via YouTube	4%	
Social networks (family and friends)	15%	






16. The sources that respondents relied on to inform their decision to remain unvaccinated were social media and government/official sources.

Source most helpful in deciding NOT to take vaccine		
Government/official sources	21%	
Frontline medical/elder care workers	13%	
Social media	31%	
Personal internet research	18%	
Local radio/television/newspapers	9%	
Information from family and friends	8%	

17. Was there any evidence that would make reluctant respondents take a COVID-19 vaccine? Most said more information on side effects and efficacy could sway them.

Information that could help convince you to take a COVID-19 vaccine		
Side effects	36%	
Efficacy	34%	
Numbers of people who got sick/died and their vaccination status	25%	
Different types of vaccines available	21%	
Location of vaccination sites	11%	
Position of your church or religious leaders	11%	
Impact of the vaccine on your sexual health	19%	
Impact of the vaccine on your ability to have children	21%	

18. When asked if there were any other factors that might help change their minds, apart from more medical information, respondents suggested they might get vaccinated if it is required for overseas travel or to get/keep a job.

Factors that could possibly change your mind regarding COVID-19 vaccine		
Allow free access to social activities	9%	
More scientific or medical information	39%	
Saw people care about getting sick/dying	21%	
Saw influential people switch their position	5%	
Required to travel overseas	31%	










19. Despite remaining unpersuaded, around 70% of the unvaccinated in St. Vincent and the Grenadines found information conveyed by personalities to be helpful.

Information conveyed by popular personalities helpful			
Yes, very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not helpful/ distracting/misleading	Unsure/ won't say
20%	48%	21%	11%

## Vaccine mandates

20. In relation to vaccine mandates: unsurprisingly, unvaccinated respondents were much less likely than their vaccinated counterparts to support them. Agreement with mandates for students was particularly low.

Would support vaccine mandates in respect of...		
Arriving passengers	44%	
Frontline medical/elder care workers	34%	
Public servants	15%	
Workers in the hotel/tourism sector	25%	
Taxi/minibus drivers and conductors	20%	
Secondary/tertiary students	8%	
Primary school children	2%	

## Recommendations

Communication strategies need to speak to key concerns, target the demographic profile of the unvaccinated and hone the use of non-governmental personalities and influencers.

Supplemental strategies should consider the risk to vulnerable groups and, in respect of younger and unemployed persons, consider promoting infotainment products that might reach this audience.

Vaccination tracking is necessary to determine if strategies are working and it is therefore suggested that this exercise be repeated in another year if the issue continues to be relevant.