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COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy Survey Report 2021

Trinidad and Tobago



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

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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 Trinidad and Tobago.

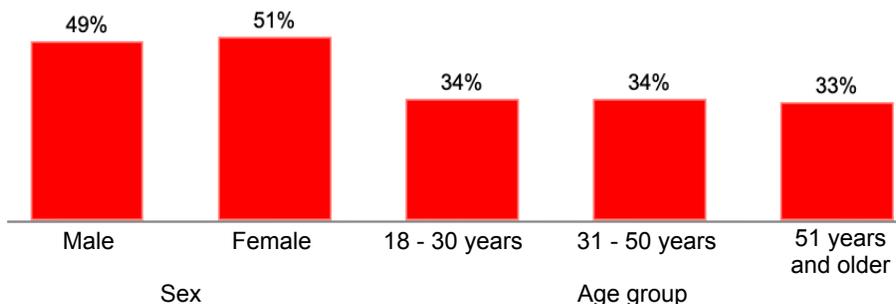
Demographics

The survey was carried out face-to-face.

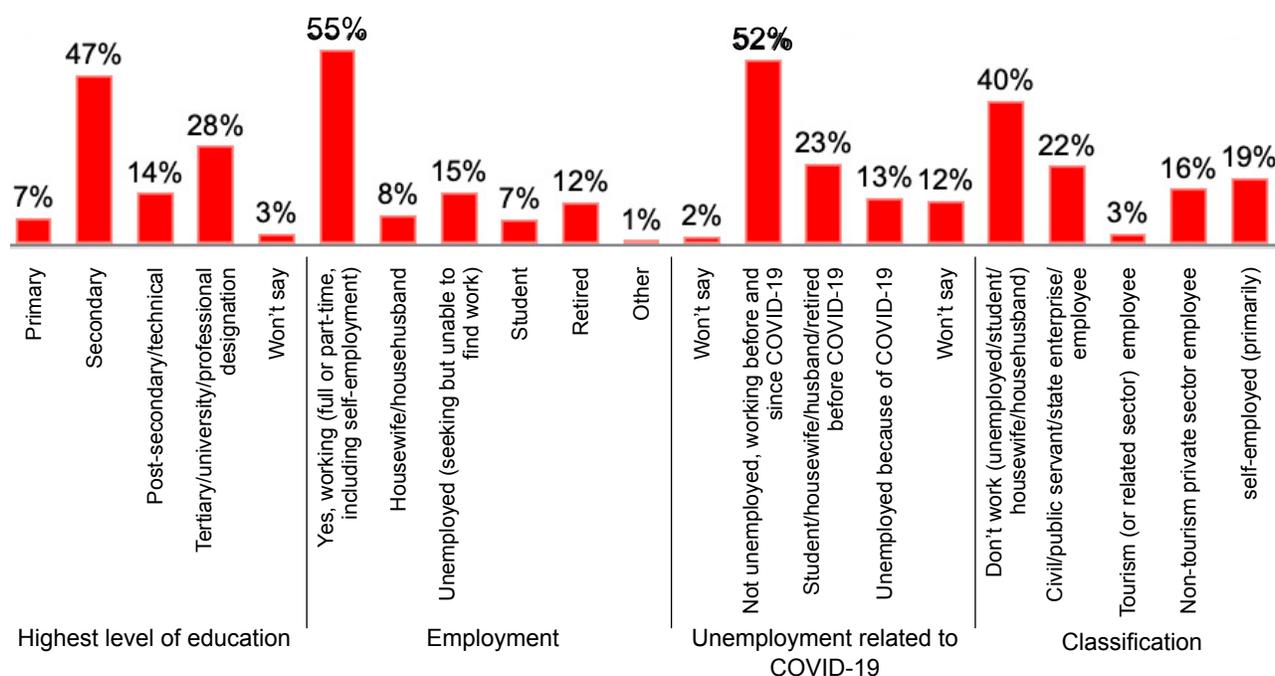
1,480 participants were surveyed, evenly spread across males and females and three age ranges. 46% said they were parents. Most were employed, had a secondary-level education and 13% reported being unemployed because of COVID-19.



Figure 16: Sex and age profile



Education and employment profiles



General findings

1. **65% of respondents said they had been vaccinated.** This is the highest level after Barbados.

Of all six countries surveyed Trinidad and Tobago was the second least vaccine hesitant, according to the Vaccine Hesitancy Index tool used in the study. The country scored 4.4 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

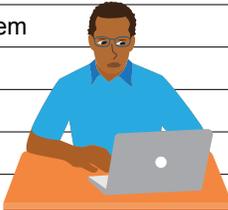
2. Respondents were asked if they would agree to have their children vaccinated against COVID-19. Only 34% said yes at primary level and 50% at secondary level.



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
24%	65%	34%	55%	50%	40%	58%	31%

3. The chief justification respondents (vaccinated and unvaccinated) gave for hesitating to vaccinate their children related to their age. 12% said their children were too young.

Main reasons for vaccine hesitancy relating to children		
Too young	12%	
Against my religion	2%	
Don't like the options available	2%	
My children have a medical condition that bars them	1%	
Don't trust the government/medical authorities	5%	
My research tells me it is not a good idea	3%	
It is a choice and I choose not to	6%	
I just won't let them take it	2%	



4. For those who were persuaded to allow their children to take vaccines, they said this was because they did more research or spoke to their doctor.

Views and opinions of VACCINATED persons

Vaccine uptake

5. As noted, 65% of respondents in Trinidad and Tobago said they were vaccinated. Unlike other countries, **Sinopharm** was most widely used (by 47%). The second most popular was Oxford/AstraZeneca at 23%.
6. 56% of respondents got to choose their vaccine type.

Initial vaccine hesitancy

7. The reasons for initial hesitancy were 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	2%	
Didn't like vaccine options available	8%	
Religious grounds	1%	
Medical condition	4%	
Didn't trust government	4%	
Didn't trust medical authorities	2%	
Didn't trust the vaccines (unsafe/developed too quickly/unsure what's in it)	20%	
Unsure about long-term side effects	17%	

8. 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	7%	
Spoke to my doctor	12%	
Did more research	11%	
Consulted family and friends	4%	
My spiritual/religious leader advised me	1%	
Persuaded by government/public health authorities	3%	
Noticed that a personality (public or otherwise) took it	1%	
Was forced by my employer/family members/didn't have a choice	6%	
Felt more comfortable because several people took it	6%	
Frightened by the increased infections/deaths	5%	
My circumstances changed (such as being pregnant or other medical or personal factor)	1%	

Information and communication for vaccinated persons

9. 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	33%	
Private/personal medical sources	17%	
Social media	15%	
Personal internet research	19%	
Local radio/television/newspapers	13%	
Information from family and friends	4%	

10. The **preferred** medium of communication was television followed by newspapers and WhatsApp. Note that radio is not seen as a priority.

Best way to communicate/preferred source of information		
Via newspapers (paper/electronic)	18%	
Via radio	5%	
Via television (local or cable)	29%	
Via Facebook	12%	
Via Instagram	6%	
Via WhatsApp	18%	
Via Twitter	2%	
Via TikTok	1%	
Via YouTube	1%	
Social networks (family and friends)	9%	



11. In terms of whether the use of local and international personalities had any effect, 54% found this helpful. This is lower than the all-country average of 62%.

Was information conveyed by local and international personalities helpful?			
Yes, very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not helpful/ distracting/misleading	Unsure/ won't say
22%	32%	37%	9%

Vaccine mandates

12. Most vaccinated respondents believed in wide-ranging vaccine mandates.

Support for imposition of COVID-19 vaccine mandates		
Arriving visitors	85%	
Frontline medical/elder care workers	83%	
Public servants	71%	
Workers in the hotel/tourism sector	77%	
Taxi/minibus drivers and conductors	73%	
Secondary/tertiary students	60%	
Primary school students	43%	

Views and opinions of UNVACCINATED persons

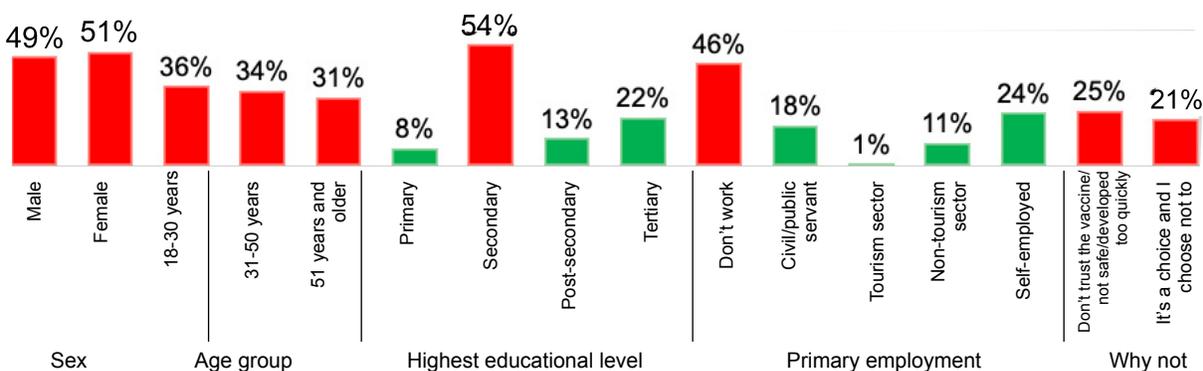
13. The chief reasons given by respondents for avoiding vaccination is the contention that they don't trust the vaccines and that they are exercising their right not to take them.

Main reason for being unvaccinated		
Didn't qualify to receive it	3%	
Can't find the time to go/lines are too long	2%	
Don't like any of the vaccine options available	4%	
Won't take it on religious grounds	2%	
Have a medical condition that bars me	11%	
Don't trust the government/medical authorities here	16%	
Don't trust the vaccine (not safe, developed too quickly, do not know what is in it)	25%	
It's a choice and I choose not to	21%	
No reason, just won't take it	6%	
Unsure about long-term side effects	9%	
Not mandatory for work	2%	

Profile

The unvaccinated person in Trinidad and Tobago is not of any particular age or sex, has a secondary-level education and does not work in the formal sector.

Trinidad and Tobago unvaccinated profile



14. When asked if their views on taking a vaccine changed over time, 68% said no.

Information and communication for the unvaccinated

15. The preferred medium from which to receive information was television, followed by WhatsApp.

Preferred mode of communication/receipt of information		
Via newspapers (paper/electronic)	13%	
Via radio	4%	
Via television (local or cable)	26%	
Via Facebook	13%	
Via Instagram	5%	
Via WhatsApp	22%	
Via Twitter	1%	
Via TikTok	2%	
Via YouTube	2%	
Social networks (family and friends)	14%	

16. The sources that respondents relied on to inform their decision to remain unvaccinated were personal internet searches and, interestingly, government/official sources.

Source most helpful in deciding NOT to take vaccine		
Government/official sources	22%	
Frontline medical/elder care workers	16%	
Social media	16%	
Personal internet research	28%	
Local radio/television/newspapers	12%	
Information from family and friends	7%	

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

Information that could help convince you to take a COVID-19 vaccine		
Side effects	36%	
Efficacy	35%	
Numbers of people who got sick/died and their vaccination status	31%	
Different types of vaccines available	32%	
Location of vaccination sites	17%	
Position of your church or religious leaders	14%	
Impact of the vaccine on your ability to have children	29%	

18. When asked if there were any other factors that could 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.

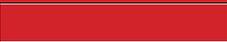
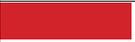
Factors that could possibly change your mind regarding COVID-19 vaccine		
Necessary to secure/maintain job	35%	
Allow free access to social activities	24%	
More scientific or medical information	45%	
Saw people care about getting sick/dying	26%	
Saw influential people switch their position	10%	
Required to travel overseas	35%	

19. Unvaccinated respondents did not seem keen on the use of popular personalities to get the vaccination message across. More than half found this unhelpful. (The all-country average in the survey was 36%).

Information conveyed by popular personalities helpful			
Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not helpful/ distracting/misleading	Unsure/ won't say
10%	26%	51%	13%

Vaccine mandates

20. Unsurprisingly, unvaccinated respondents were much less likely than their vaccinated counterparts to support vaccine mandates. Note the very low percentage concerning students.

Would support vaccine mandates in respect of...		
Arriving passengers	52%	
Frontline medical/elder care workers	39%	
Public servants	24%	
Workers in the hotel/tourism sector	30%	
Taxi/minibus drivers and conductors	35%	
Secondary/tertiary students	14%	
Primary school children	8%	

Recommendations

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

Supplemental strategies need to 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.