

How does it feel for me during COVID-19?

Week Commencing 12th April 2021

Public Voices: Getting Your COVID-19 Vaccination in Leeds

As the COVID vaccination programme continues, more and more younger people will be invited to get their jab, so it's important we know as a city how they feel about this; their hopes, worries and motivations; and what information they need. On 18th March 2021, we launched a survey to learn more about how people aged 25-55 in Leeds felt about getting their COVID-19 vaccine.

What key learning can we draw from our responses?

1. Who doesn't want the vaccine?

To decrease the number of people who say they won't get the vaccine, it could be helpful to do some targeted work with younger men; care workers; people with a child aged under 5 or expecting a child; people who are clinically extremely vulnerable; and people with mental health conditions.

2. Who is unsure about the vaccine?

To decrease the number of people who say they are unsure about getting vaccinated, it could be helpful to do some targeted work with women aged 46 to 55.

3. What information do people need?

Feeling informed is important. Messages to both those who will refuse and those who are unsure about the vaccine need to include information about safety and reliability. However, some messages should differ depending on whether the audience is hesitant or has already decided against vaccination. The latter need to hear about why it's important they get the vaccine even if COVID poses a low risk to them and that the vaccine isn't a "trial" or "experimental". The former need to hear about how the jab is safe for people with existing health conditions and what side effects they could expect.

4. How could access be improved?

Providing alternative ways to get vaccinated and a choice of vaccine might encourage hesitant people to get their jab.

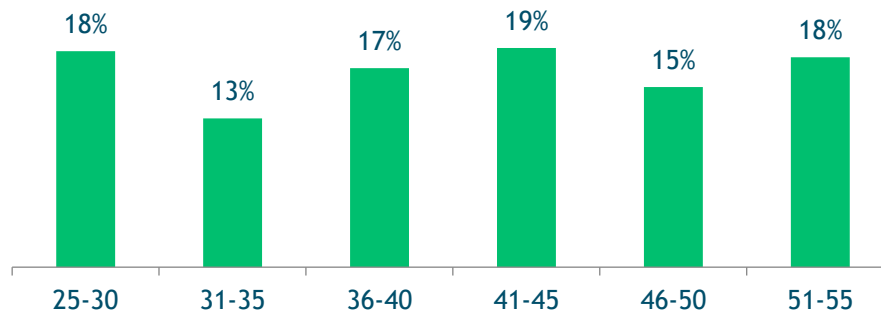
5. How can we counter misinformation?

People who have decided not to get vaccinated aren't any more likely than other groups to say they find information via channels traditionally considered more likely to spread misinformation, such as social media or friends and family. Furthermore, only about half see themselves as uninformed about the vaccine. They are particularly likely to say they have sourced information from the government or pharmaceutical companies. The challenge, therefore, isn't necessarily directing them towards more reliable sources of information, it's supporting them to interpret information accurately. A significant number also "don't know" what sources of information they would trust, suggesting any material they access should explain what makes it reliable and accurate.

Who did we hear from?

We heard from 749 people aged 25-55 in Leeds.

Respondents' ages



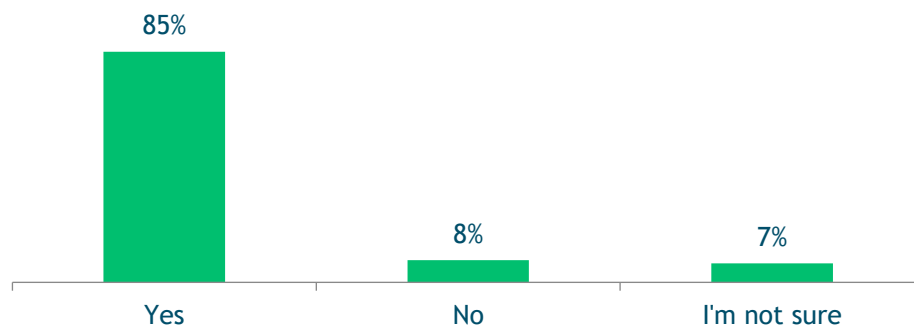
- 81% of respondents were women
- 75% said they had no disabilities or health conditions
- 6% were clinically extremely vulnerable
- 16% had a child aged under 5, were pregnant or had a pregnant partner
- 10% were unpaid carers
- 18% were health workers
- 6% were care workers

An important note about our responses: Because responses from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities were relatively low, we have not analysed results by ethnicity in this instance. However, please be aware that [Black Health Initiative](#) is running a survey in conjunction with York University that will study the views of people from diverse communities around vaccination. The survey is accessible [here](#). Its results will provide an invaluable insight into key demographics.

What did people tell us?

85% say they will get their COVID vaccination.

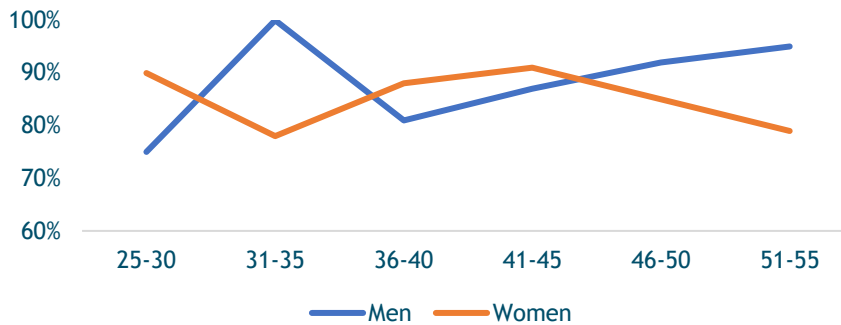
Do you plan to have your COVID vaccine when it is offered to you?



The Overall Picture by Gender and Age

We heard from 122 men and 543 women.

Percentage of men and women who say they will get their COVID jab



While it is worth bearing in mind that the number of male respondents was relatively small, their answers suggested that the younger a man is, the more likely he is to be unwilling to get vaccinated. Note, however, that this trend was bucked by the 31-35 years category, in which all 11 male respondents said they would get their jab.

The picture for women is less consistent, suggesting age may be a less significant factor for women than men when it comes to choosing to get vaccinated.

What makes people want to get vaccinated?

85% of our respondents (636 people) told us they plan to get their vaccine. Some groups of people were more likely than others to say they wanted to get vaccinated.

- 90% of those with **autism or a learning disability** said they would get vaccinated, compared with 86% of those with no or another type of condition.
- 90% of **health workers** also said they would get vaccinated, compared with 85% of people who were not health workers.
- 96% of **unpaid carers** planned to get vaccinated, compared with 85% who were not unpaid carers.

562 people told us why they planned to get vaccinated. Their three most common reasons were as follows.

Getting protected from the virus

29% said they wanted to protect both themselves and others. A further 19% spoke specifically about needing to protect themselves, while 9% said they were motivated by an aim to protect friends, family, colleagues and the wider community.

Getting back to normal

22% of people spoke of wanting to **“get back to normal”** either individually or collectively.

Confidence in science and moral duty

The motivating factors above were also clearly identified when we carried out a survey into Leeds residents' vaccination in December 2020. In this spring survey, however, two novel reasons emerged for wanting to get vaccinated.

15% of people stated they wanted to get their jab because they believed in the safety of this and/or other vaccinations and trusted in scientists to protect us.

- *“Due to close family dying from Covid19 and the efforts the scientists have gone through to help find something against Covid19.”*
- *“I trust the science - it will get the country back to any sort of normality and reduce the stress on the health services (and protect me)”*
- *“I believe vaccines work.”*

Furthermore, 11% of people volunteered that they felt a sense of responsibility to support the efforts being made across society and that getting vaccinated was the *“right thing to do”*.

- *“It would be selfish of me not to have it when the country has suffered so much and the elderly and vulnerable have chosen to have it. It's important to have it for the safety of the country and future.”*
- *“It is important play our part to have the vaccine to fight the Covid pandemic”*

These reasons for wanting to get vaccinated were stable across all age groups. Men were somewhat more likely than women to state that a belief in vaccination or science motivated them.

What makes people not want to get vaccinated?

61 people told us they did not want to get their COVID vaccine (8% of the total). Some groups of people were more likely than others to say they won't get their jab:

- 10% of respondents with a **mental health condition**, compared with 8% for those with no or another type of health condition
- 10% of people who are **clinically extremely vulnerable**, compared with 8% who aren't
- 10% of **people with a child aged under 5**, who are **pregnant** or have a pregnant partner, compared with 8% of those without young children
- 12% of **care workers**, compared with 8% of people who don't work in care

24% of people with impaired mobility and 13% of people with sensory impairments said they would not get the vaccine, but it should be borne in mind that sample sizes were small (17 and 15 people respectively).

52 people told us why they would prefer not to get vaccinated:

Safety and Side Effects

50% said that they believed they couldn't trust the vaccine, while 29% said they were worried about unforeseen side effects, including risks around fertility.

- *“I believe the risk of the vaccine is higher than the risk of me being seriously ill with covid. There also may be long term side effects that we don't know of”*

- *“Because it's an experimental jab and has skipped the full process needed to adequately assess the full potential of side effects.”*

Several expressed the view that the vaccine was a “trial”:

- *“It's in a trial phase.”*
- *“don't know long term effects as it's still in trial , and this is from the government”*
- *“It is in trial and I'm not being experimented on.”*
- *“I do not wish to take part in a mass human trial with unknown long term effects that they also hold no liability for”*
- *“I'm more worried about a reaction to a vaccine that hasn't passed safety trials”*

A lack of understanding about the need for collective effort

37% of people who won't get vaccinated expressed a view that it was unnecessary because COVID posed a low risk to them personally. For others, the death rate was too low for them to feel vaccination was important, or the vaccine was not effective enough to be worthwhile. For example:

- *“It's seems totally unnecessary to vaccinate everyone against an illness that 90% of people survive anyway.”*
- *“Because i have already had covid and so have my children and we were barely affected by it, so i dont think its a big enough risk for me to put something into my body that I dont know what the long term risks are.”*
- *“From what information a have, I don't understand why healthy and fit people need it. [...] I feel anxious about the whole situation and I don't want to be out casted for making a choice [...] If the virus is mutating, does this mean we will need a different vax every year for the rest our lives? Do vaccinated people still carry the virus but with suppressed symptoms so can it still be contracted from a vaccinated individual? What are the true death rates after contraction, that aren't related to any other illness? What are the chances of me contracting the virus now, after remaining healthy all this time?”*
- *“I have a healthy immune system and as the vaccine doesn't stop the spread of the virus, it is pointless for me to have it”*

53 people told us what, if anything, would make them more likely to get their COVID jab.

53% said *“nothing”* would.

However, 21% said that they would potentially get their jab if, over time, it became clear to them that the vaccine was safe. For example:

- *“Leaving it another year or so to make sure there are no side affects in fertility of people that have had it.”*

11% of people said they either wanted more or *“non biased”* information. For instance:

- *“more time to see if there are any long lasting complaints. also dont understand why so many people going on about having it when it doesnt stop you getting or passing it on, seems pointless”*

What makes people unsure about getting vaccinated?

52 people told us they were uncertain about whether to get vaccinated (7% of the total). Women aged 46-50 (9%) or 51-55 (10%) were more likely than other groups to say they were unsure.

Only 2% of people who were clinically extremely vulnerable said they were unsure about getting vaccinated, but 10% said they had decided not to get their jab. This suggests views among the CEV population may have “hardened” faster than among the wider population.

Again, issues around trust and fear of side effects were the most common reasons people cited for being unsure, appearing in 25% and 33% of responses respectively.

Compared with people who said they wouldn’t get the vaccine, people who were unsure were less likely to say they felt the jab was unnecessary. This reason appeared in only 8% of responses. However, hesitant people were more likely to say that their existing health conditions were a factor in their attitude to the vaccine. 10% said this caused them concern. For example:

- *“I have several complex chronic health conditions; we recently found out (through my husband being invited for vaccination) that I am viewed as clinically vulnerable. We have no information as to how any vaccine may interact with the different medications that I already have to take; so I'm unsure as to what will happen. We don't want to pester the doctors, because they already have enough on their plates.”*

A couple of people said they were unsure because they were pregnant or trying to get pregnant. A few people also said that a fear of needles or other anxieties was putting them off.

When asked what, if anything, might make them more likely to get vaccinated, 29% said more information or information they felt they could trust would encourage them:

- *“I need more information and evidence that it will be safe for me to have.”*
- *“More information about the virus. How the vaccine works as a prevention against catching the virus, and to dispel the negative stories coming through on social media.”*
- *“more information about the vaccine with *good stats not just tweaked ones from the news*”*

In addition to this, 20% of hesitant people said that reassurance around side effects would help. This was the case in only 1% of responses from people who won’t get vaccinated. For example:

- *“Knowing more information about the blood clot”*

18% of hesitant people said the vaccine proving to be safe over time would encourage them.

13% of hesitant respondents said that having more choice over which vaccine they got would make them more likely to get it (compared with 2% of people who have decided against vaccination).

Similarly, 13% said that they would be more likely to get vaccinated if they didn't have to go to *“big busy vaccination centres”*:

- *“Mobile vaccine places”*
- *“To have the vaccine at home or through a drive through where I am in my own environment”*

How much information do people have about the vaccine?

There are stark differences in the proportion of people who feel they don't have enough information depending on whether or not they plan to get vaccinated.

Percentage of people who feel they don't have enough information about the vaccine	
People who plan to get vaccinated	9%
People who plan not to get vaccinated	48%
People who are unsure	81%

We asked those who felt they didn't have enough information what they would like to know about the vaccine. More than half (51%) said they wanted to know about side effects and safety, both now and over the long term.

Second most commonly, 15% of respondents said they wanted to know more about how the vaccine works. In several cases, people wanted to know what is in the vaccine:

- *“I want the information to be explained in layman terms. Does it stop people catching the virus, or does it just reduce the risk of people dying from the virus.”*
- *“Has a similar vaccine been used before? How has the vaccine been approved so quickly”*
- *“Does it stop you getting the virus and passing it on”*

It is worth noting that 7% of responses suggested that the information available at present isn't honest, in that the public aren't told about the “real” impact of the vaccine. For example:

- *“How many people have died because of it. How many people have gotten ill because of it. Those figures will never be shared though.”*
- *“I didn't feel that I got any info apart from what was in the mainstream media. I think a myth buster leaflet or fact checking sheet would maybe have helped with some of the misinformation.”*
- *“What's the real death toll. The real ingredient”*
- *“I'd like to see healthy open debate with other scientists & academics who have a different viewpoint. Why is this censored?”*

How would people like to get information about the vaccine?

We asked respondents where and / or how they would like to get their information about the vaccine. The three most popular responses are as follows:

- In person in a healthcare setting
- Via social media
- By email

However, it is important to note that preferences varied significantly depending on people's intentions around vaccination:

	Will get vaccine	Won't get vaccine	Unsure
1	In person in healthcare setting (34%)	Don't know (33%)	By post (38%)
2	Social media (32%)	TV / radio (22%)	By email (35%)
3	Email (26%)	In person in a healthcare setting (22%)	In person in a healthcare setting (33%)
4	TV / radio (23%)	Social media (19%)	Social media (27%)

Where have people been getting their information so far?

We asked people where they had been sourcing their information about the vaccine so far. Overall, the most popular response was “**online**”, but there were notable differences in people's answers depending on whether they plan to get vaccinated or not.

People who plan to get vaccinated were much more likely than people who don't to say they get their information from the “**news**”, “**media**”, **TV or radio** or the **BBC**. They were also more likely to say they got their information from the **NHS or health professionals** (37% of responses compared to 28% of responses among people who won't get their jab).

People who will get vaccinated were significantly more likely to say they got their information from their **workplace or colleagues** (14% of responses vs 0% of responses).

People who will not get vaccinated were more likely than those who will to say they got their information from their “**own research**” or unspecified sources. They were also much more likely to say their information came from **government or public bodies** other than the NHS (34% of responses vs 15% for people who will get the jab), or from **pharmaceutical companies** (10% vs 1%).

The number of people who said they got their information from either **friends and family** or **social media** was consistent regardless of whether they did or didn't plan to get vaccinated. In both cases, the numbers were fairly low (around 10%).

Thank you!

A huge thank you to everyone in Leeds who has completed and shared the survey, and to our partners for their support with this piece of work.

These reports are designed to support decision makers during this time. If you find them useful, we would love to hear from you! Please do drop us a line at info@healthwatchleeds.co.uk to tell us what you have found most useful.