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COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy Survey Report 2021

St. Lucia



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.

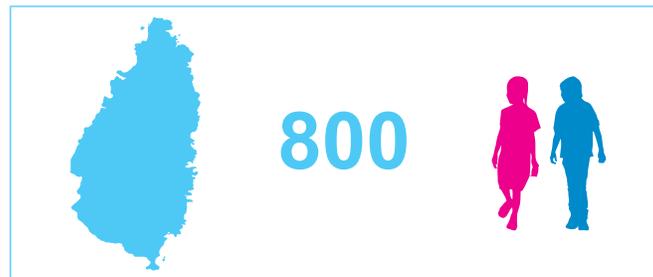
UNICEF and USAID commissioned Caribbean Development Research Services Inc (CADRES) to conduct a survey on vaccine hesitancy across six countries: Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago.

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.

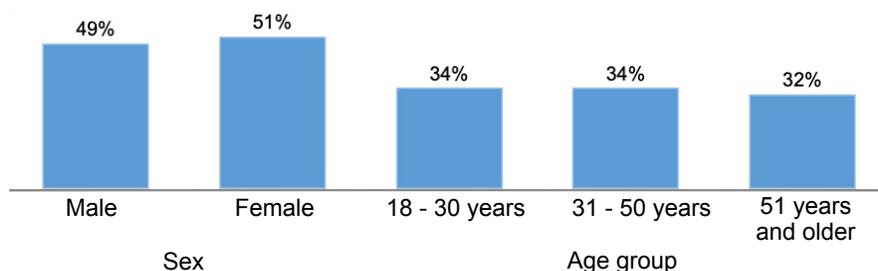
These are the findings for St. Lucia.

Demographics

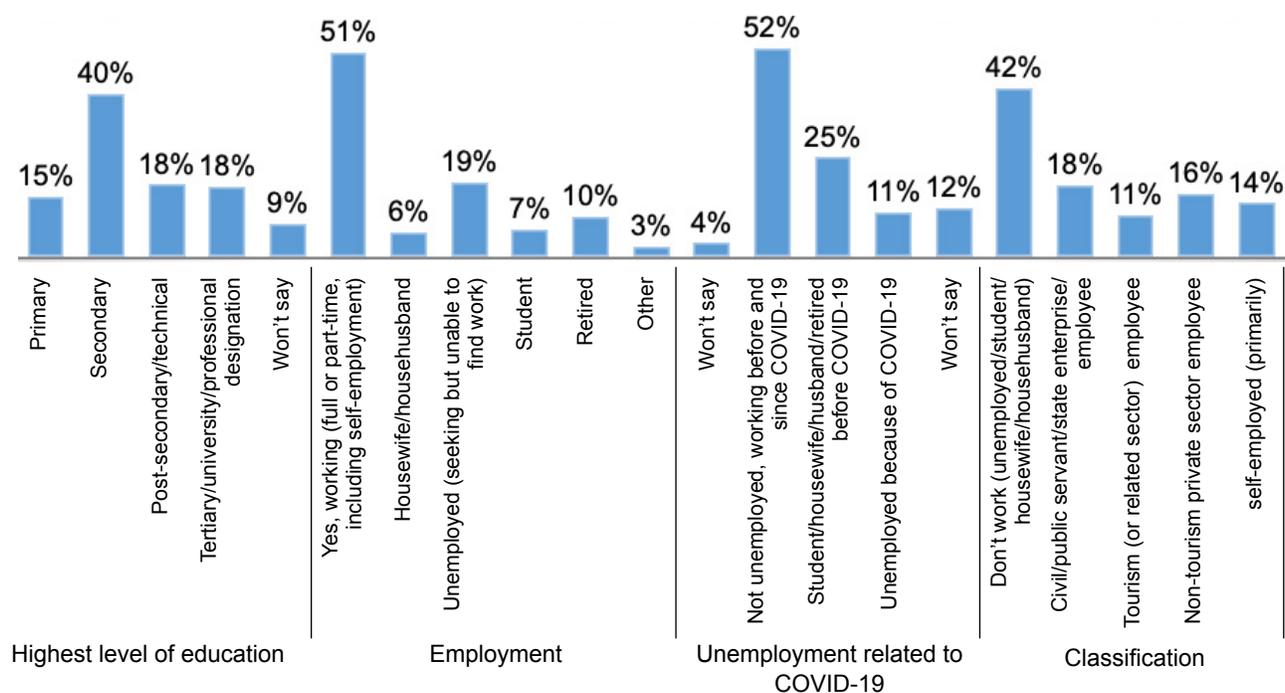
The St. Lucia survey was conducted face-to-face with 800 participants, evenly spread across males and females and three age ranges. 54% said they were parents. The majority were employed, had a secondary-level education and 11% reported being unemployed because of COVID-19.



Sex and age profile



Education and employment profiles



General findings

1. **55% of respondents in St. Lucia said they had been vaccinated.**

Of the six countries surveyed St. Lucia is one of the most vaccine hesitant (second only to St. Vincent and the Grenadines) according to the Vaccine Hesitancy Index tool used in this study. The country scored 5.1 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 a quarter said yes at primary level and less than half for those at secondary school.



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
19%	70%	25%	63%	43%	45%	53%	31%

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

Main reasons for vaccine hesitancy relating to children		
Too young	22%	
Against my religion	1%	
Don't like the options available	3%	
My children have a medical condition that bars them	1%	
Don't trust the government/medical authorities	4%	
My research tells me it is not a good idea	6%	
It is a choice and I choose not to	7%	
I just won't let them take it	5%	

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

Views and opinions of VACCINATED persons

Vaccine uptake

5. As noted, 55% of respondents in St. Lucia report having been vaccinated, with **Oxford/AstraZeneca** the most used at 55%. The next most popular was BioNTech/ Pfizer (41%).

53% of people took what was available while 47% chose their preferred vaccine.

Initial vaccine hesitancy

6. The reasons for *early* 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	0%	
Didn't like vaccine options available	3%	
Religious grounds	2%	
Medical condition	3%	
Didn't trust government	3%	
Didn't trust medical authorities	4%	
Didn't trust the vaccines (unsafe/developed too quickly/unsure what's in it)	17%	
Unsure about long-term side effects	18%	

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

Factor that changed respondents' mind		
Offered the vaccine with which I was more comfortable	3%	
Spoke to my doctor	10%	
Did more research	11%	
Consulted family and friends	2%	
My spiritual/religious leader advised me	2%	
Persuaded by government/public health authorities	4%	
Noticed that a personality (public or otherwise) took it	0%	
Was forced by my employer/family members/didn't have a choice	4%	
Felt more comfortable because several people took it	7%	
Frightened by the increased infections/deaths	4%	
My circumstances changed (such as being pregnant or other medical or personal factor)	4%	

Information and communication for vaccinated persons

8. The **primary** sources of information on COVID-19 vaccines were government/official sources by a wide margin, followed by social media.

Primary source of information on COVID-19 situation		
Government/official sources	38%	
Private/personal medical sources	12%	
Social media	19%	
Personal internet research	13%	
Local radio/television/newspapers	16%	
Information from family and friends	2%	

9. The **preferred** medium of communication was overwhelmingly television, with 40% of respondents choosing this option. (The all-country average for this medium was 26%).

Best way to communicate/preferred source of information		
Via newspapers (paper/electronic)	3%	
Via radio	6%	
Via television (local or cable)	40%	
Via Facebook	15%	
Via Instagram	3%	
Via WhatsApp	16%	
Via Twitter	0%	
Via TikTok	0%	
Via YouTube	2%	
Social networks (family and friends)	15%	



10. In terms of whether the use of local and international personalities has any effect, 59% said it was either very or somewhat useful.

Information conveyed by local and international personalities helpful			
Yes, very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not helpful/distracting/misleading	Unsure/won't say
19%	40%	25%	16%

Vaccine mandates

11. Most vaccinated respondents believe in a vaccine mandate for a wide range of people, except primary school students. Only 31% thought vaccines should be mandated for this group. (The all-country average for primary school students in this category was 39%).

Support imposition of COVID-19 vaccine mandates		
Arriving visitors	85%	
Frontline medical/elder care workers	82%	
Public servants	68%	
Workers in the hotel/tourism sector	79%	
Taxi/minibus drivers and conductors	77%	
Secondary/tertiary students	55%	
Primary school students	31%	

Views and opinions of UNVACCINATED persons

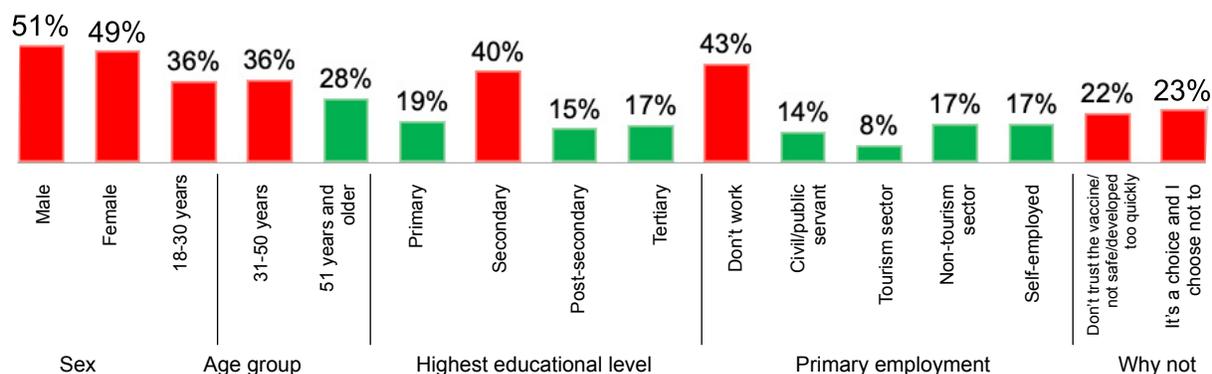
12. The chief reason given by respondents for avoiding vaccination is the contention that they have a choice and they choose not to. Lack of trust is also an issue.

Main reason for being unvaccinated		
Didn't qualify to receive it	1%	
Can't find the time to go/lines are too long	2%	
Don't like any of the vaccine options available	5%	
Won't take it on religious grounds	4%	
Have a medical condition that bars me	10%	
Don't trust the government/medical authorities here	5%	
Don't trust the vaccine (not safe, developed too quickly, do not know what is in it)	22%	
It's a choice and I choose not to	23%	
No reason, just won't take it	15%	
Unsure about long-term side effects	10%	
Not mandatory for work	3%	

Profile

13. The unvaccinated person in St. Lucia is under 50, could be either male or female, does not work in an institutional environment and has secondary-level education.

St. Lucia unvaccinated profile



14. When asked if their views on taking a vaccine changed over time, 62% of the unvaccinated said no, though 21% said they were now more inclined to get vaccinated. (17% said they were less inclined to do so).

Information and communication for the unvaccinated

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

Preferred mode of communication/receipt of information		
Via newspapers (paper/electronic)	2%	
Via radio	7%	
Via television (local or cable)	29%	
Via Facebook	17%	
Via Instagram	4%	
Via WhatsApp	20%	
Via Twitter	0%	
Via TikTok	0%	
Via YouTube	8%	
Social networks (family and friends)	14%	

16. The sources that respondents relied on to inform their decision to remain unvaccinated were mainly social media and personal internet searches.

Source most helpful in deciding NOT to take vaccine		
Government/official sources	12%	
Frontline medical/elder care workers	18%	
Social media	25%	
Personal internet research	21%	
Local radio/television/newspapers	15%	
Information from family and friends	9%	

17. Was there any evidence that would make reluctant respondents take the 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	40%	
Efficacy	42%	
Numbers of people who got sick/died and their vaccination status	34%	
Different types of vaccines available	38%	
Location of vaccination sites	20%	
Position of your church or religious leaders	12%	
Impact of the vaccine on your sexual health	26%	
Impact of the vaccine on your ability to have children	26%	

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	19%	
More scientific or medical information	54%	
Saw people they care about getting sick/dying	32%	
Saw influential people switch their position	13%	
Required to travel overseas	40%	

19. Despite remaining unpersuaded, around 60% of the unvaccinated in St. Lucia found information conveyed by popular personalities to be helpful. (Interestingly, this is slightly higher than among the vaccinated).

Information conveyed by popular personalities helpful			
Yes, very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not helpful/ distracting/ misleading	Unsure/ won't say
19%	40%	25%	16%

Vaccine mandates

20. In relation to vaccine mandates: unsurprisingly, unvaccinated respondents were much less likely than their vaccinated counterparts to support them.

Would support vaccine mandates in respect of...		
Arriving passengers	49%	
Frontline medical/elder care workers	29%	
Public servants	15%	
Workers in the hotel/tourism sector	27%	
Taxi/minibus drivers and conductors	26%	
Secondary/tertiary students	11%	
Primary school children	7%	

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 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.