 A report into
public opinion
surrounding the
Covid-19 vaccine
in Rotherham.

February 2021

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Background:

Covid-19 has undoubtedly had an impact on all aspects of life, with a particular impact on healthcare services. With the development of Covid-19 vaccines, many questions and doubts have followed, potentially preventing people from accessing the vaccine.

To get a more in-depth and detailed picture of the opinions surrounding the Covid-19 vaccine in Rotherham, an online survey was conducted to establish:

- **Opinions on the vaccine programme**
- **Whether participants would be willing to have the vaccine if they have not already, and if they have already had the vaccine, why.**
- **What participants thought about the information they have seen surrounding the vaccination programme.**

The aim of the survey was to highlight any issues surrounding the delivery of the vaccine, attitudes towards the vaccine and what can be done to improve upon this.

The survey was solely online, and aimed to target a wide range of demographics to ensure large amounts of contrasting data could be collected. There was a large uptake from the Pakistani community (**16.6%**), the second highest demographic. Furthermore, **18.8%** of respondents stated their religion as Muslim, with **0.9%** of respondents practising Buddhism. It was important to ensure people from BAME communities completed the survey as it has been reported that Covid-19 vaccine uptake is significantly lower in minority ethnic groups.¹ The Healthwatch Rotherham Covid-19 vaccine survey was kept anonymous, to ensure people felt safe to answer honestly without the fear of backlash from others.

Other studies have been conducted which have highlighted some factors that prevent some BAME communities from accessing the Covid-19 vaccine. These include¹:

- Perception of risk
- Low confidence in the vaccine
- Lack of communication from trusted providers and community leaders.

It is important that these factors are analysed and interventions developed to ensure vaccine uptake in BAME communities is increased.

The Healthwatch Rotherham survey ran for 19 days and 334 responses were collected, allowing for strong analysis of the findings.

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/952716/s0979-factors-influencing-vaccine-uptake-minority-ethnic-groups.pdf

Attitudes towards the vaccine:

General vaccine opinion:

- **72.8%** of respondents had a **very positive view** of vaccinations in general.
- **21.5%** had a **fairly positive view**.
- Only **0.9%** of respondents had a **negative view** of vaccines.

This suggests that the majority of participants (**94.3%**) had a pre-existing positive view of vaccines, which should influence their views on the Covid-19 vaccines in a positive way.

Uptake of Covid-19 vaccine:

- **51.2%** of respondents would **definitely have** the Covid-19 vaccine.
- **30.4%** of respondents had **already had the first dose** of the Covid-19 vaccine.
- **11.1%** **probably would** have the vaccine
- **3%** were **unsure**
- **2.7%** of respondents would **definitely not** have the vaccine
- **1.5%** of respondents **probably would not** have the vaccine

This is a large positive majority, and is in line with the data collected on general vaccine opinions, suggesting that those with an already positive view of vaccines have little to no issue in having the Covid-19 vaccine also. Despite only **0.9%** of participants having a negative view of vaccines in general, **2.7%** of respondents stated that they would “**definitely not**” have the Covid-19 vaccine, with **1.5%** stating they “**probably would not**” have the vaccine. These figures suggest that more people are doubtful of the Covid-19 vaccine, compared to previous vaccines.

Out of the **2.7%** of respondents who said they would definitely not have the vaccine:

- 4 were White British females with no religion, none of them had any long-term health conditions or were carers and they all disagreed that the information on the vaccine rollout from the NHS/Government was communicated clearly. These respondents stated that they do not believe the vaccine is safe and do not trust the intentions of the vaccine. There were also some concerns on whether the vaccine would affect the ability to conceive.
- 2 respondents were Asian/Pakistani Muslims who both considered themselves to have a long-term condition or disability. Both believed the vaccine is not safe and has not been tested enough yet.
- 3 were males aged between 18-24 of other ethnic backgrounds, who held Christian beliefs and had no long-term conditions. Interestingly, they all agreed that communication of the vaccine rollout had been communicated clearly by the NHS and Government. They do not trust the intentions of the vaccine or the ingredients within it.

It is clear from this analysis that for those who do not want the vaccine, there is a large amount of uncertainty surrounding the vaccine itself, the intentions of the vaccine and the ingredients used within it. This highlights the importance of myth-busting sessions to inform those who are unsure of the scientific facts surrounding the vaccine, including the safety of it and the ingredients used to make it.

The Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) conducted a large scale, independent survey investigating the public's attitudes towards the vaccine. The report polled a representative sample of 2,076 UK adults between 4 and 6 December 2020. The polling found that over **75%** of the UK public would take a COVID-19 vaccine if advised to do so by their GP or health professional, with just **8%** stating they would be very unlikely to do so. The Healthwatch Rotherham survey showed that in total, **81.6%** of respondents would definitely have the vaccine, or have already had it. This is in line with the percentages from the study conducted by RSPH. The rate of people who stated they would be unlikely to have the Covid vaccine was **4.2%** in total, significantly lower than the RSPH survey. However, it is important to note that the participant numbers were significantly higher in the RSPH survey than the Healthwatch Rotherham survey, which may be reflected in these percentages. Additionally, the Healthwatch Rotherham survey was localised compared to the RSPH survey, which was nationwide.

Reasoning:

Wanting the vaccine:

- **78.2%** of those who want the vaccine say nothing would stop them getting the vaccine.

Other issues that may prevent those who want the vaccine from getting it include:

- Distance to vaccine centre (location) – **9.7%**
- Times available to have the vaccine – **8.8%**
- Having to get public transport or a taxi – **6%**
- Having to book online – **3.7%**

The survey also asked participants for any comments they have from the vaccine. Some direct quotations taken from the survey results support these accessibility worries.

“I also found it difficult to book an appointment with the national centre. When I tried it wouldn’t let me book my first and second appointment and kept throwing me off the website. I ended up waiting for a text message from my GP to book an appointment for the vaccine. I struggle to do it this way. It would have been helpful to have given a telephone number in the text message to be used if struggling to use the Weblink. I am normally good with technology but the link was quite difficult and nowhere to ask questions or ask for help”.

“Older people like my mother who is 80 are being asked to Sheffield Arena for vaccination when she lives in Rotherham town centre”.

“Definitely needs targeted work in communities who are known to be less likely to take up the vaccine for whatever reason, or where language is known to be a barrier in understanding about the vaccine and how to access the vaccine”.

It is clear from these results that accessibility is a key issue which may prevent people from accessing the vaccine. The main two issues include the distance to the vaccine centre and how to get there if residents do not drive. It is important that residents are offered the vaccine as close to their homes as possible, particularly if they are elderly or vulnerable, with consideration to those who do not drive. Additionally, it is essential that work is done to ensure those with English as an additional language, or who do not speak English at all, are still able to access information on the vaccine and the vaccine itself.

To highlight one excellent initiative, South Yorkshire Community Transport providers have stepped in to offer a free return journey to a Covid-19 vaccination site to people who cannot access public transport and have no other means to get there. ²

² <https://sypte.co.uk/News/news?id=419>

For respondents who want the vaccine, there were a number of factors which influenced these decisions. These were:

Protect family and friends from Covid-19 – **86.7%**

Help society to get back to normal – **80.7%**

To protect themselves against Covid-19 – **77.5%**

To protect people who are at risk – **75.2%**

Help protect the NHS – **67.9%**

Similarly, those who have already had the first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine stated they had had the vaccine to protect loved ones, themselves and vulnerable members of society.

Protect them against Covid-19 – **92%**

Protect family and friends against Covid-19 – **88%**

It is the responsible thing to do – **85%**

To protect people who are vulnerable/at risk – **84%**

It is apparent from both sets of results that those who have already had the vaccine, and those who want to have it in the future, are mainly motivated to have it for the health reasons behind it, including protecting themselves and others around them.

Not wanting the vaccine:

Out of the 334 responses received, only 14 people stated that they would not want to be vaccinated. Whilst this is a small number, it is important the reasons behind it are identified and addressed. Some of the reasons included:

57.1% who do not want the vaccine say they **do not trust the intentions** of the vaccine

50% believe the vaccine is **not safe**

35.7% are concerned about the **ingredients used** in the vaccine

28.6% think the vaccine is **ineffective** in preventing Covid

21.4% do not think Covid-19 **poses enough of a risk** to need the vaccine

These results indicate there is a lack of trust surrounding the vaccine, with people worried about the effects of a vaccine and what the vaccine contains. Reasoning such as this highlights the importance of information and 'myth busting' sessions around Covid-19 vaccines. This will allow people to listen to scientific, unbiased information on Covid vaccines, and they can then make an informed decision from these sessions.

Information on Covid-19 vaccines:

There has been a wealth of information on the Covid-19 vaccine from a large number of sources. Participants were asked where they had seen or heard information about the Covid-19 vaccines recently, to establish what information sources have the largest audiences and if this impacts their opinion on the vaccine.

66.9% of respondents had seen/heard information on the Covid-19 vaccine on television and/or radio

61.4% on the NHS or Government website

53.9% on social media

45.8% from newspapers or online news

40.7% from the televised Government press conferences

35.8% from friends/family

12.7% from the Rotherham clinical commissioning group

12% from Healthwatch Rotherham

66.9% of participants had seen positive information towards the Covid-19 vaccine

26.1% had seen a mixture of both positive and negative

3.3% had seen neither positive nor negative news

1.5% had seen negative information

Participants were also asked whether they felt the Government and/or the NHS had communicated information about the vaccine and its rollout clearly and effectively.

29.8% strongly agreed

44.6% agreed

12.7% neither agreed or disagreed

8.7% disagreed

2.4% strongly disagreed

1.8% unsure

It is encouraging that over half of respondents were accessing information from credible sources, such as the NHS and Government websites. This limits the chances of being exposed to 'fake news' and myths surrounding the Covid-19 vaccine. Additionally, it is positive that almost three quarters of respondents felt that the vaccine rollout has been communicated clearly and effectively.

Despite this, one respondent stated that **"Our GP telephone lines have been inundated with people contacting us for guidance, due to confusing government messages"**. Comments like these suggest that more needs to be done to ensure all information issued is clear, simple and accessible to everyone, including those who have English as an additional language, who do not speak English at all and vulnerable people.

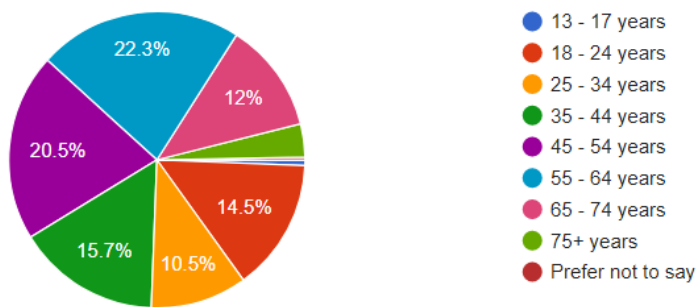
Summary of findings and further recommendations:

- The majority of respondents had a positive view of vaccinations, with over 80% prepared to have the Covid-19 vaccine, or have already had it at the time of writing.
- For most people, nothing would stop them getting the vaccine. Common issues that appeared were accessibility issues, including the distance to the vaccine location and travelling there. It is recommended that those with limited access to public transport or a vehicle, and vulnerable members of society, should be reassured they are provided with a location close to them that they can access appropriately.
- For those who do not want to be vaccinated, a lack of trust around the vaccine and its intentions is the predominant issue in preventing them from having the Covid-19 vaccine. To resolve this, it is recommended that members of the local community, such as religious leaders and GP surgeries ensure that people know the facts around the Covid-19 vaccine. One efficient way of ensuring this is to hold 'Covid myth busting sessions', delivering unbiased scientific facts to members of the Community unsure about having the vaccine. This also gives them the opportunity to voice any worries and have their questions answered. This will then allow them to make an informed decision based on what they have heard. This is particularly important in BAME communities, where uptake is significantly lower across England.

Appendix, demographic data on survey respondents

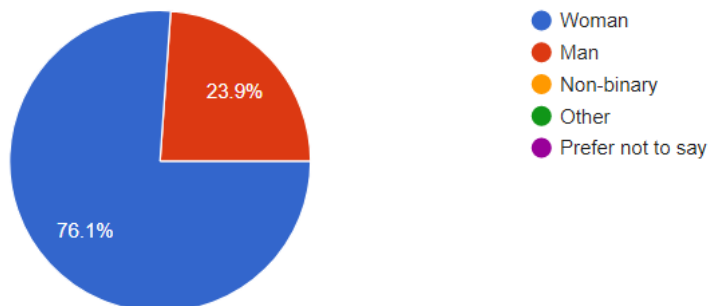
Q11. Please tell us which age category you fall into

332 responses



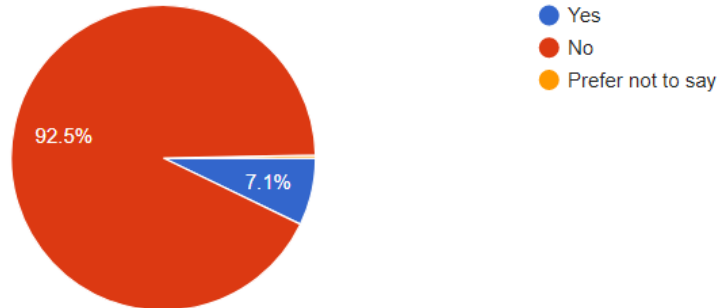
Q12. Please tell us which gender you identify with:

331 responses



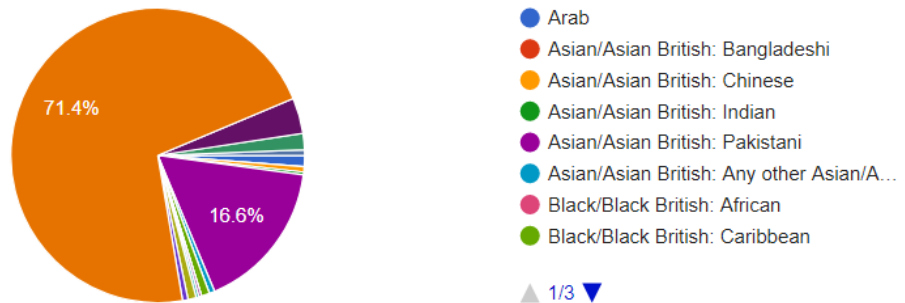
Q.13 Is your gender different to the sex that was assigned to you at birth?

322 responses



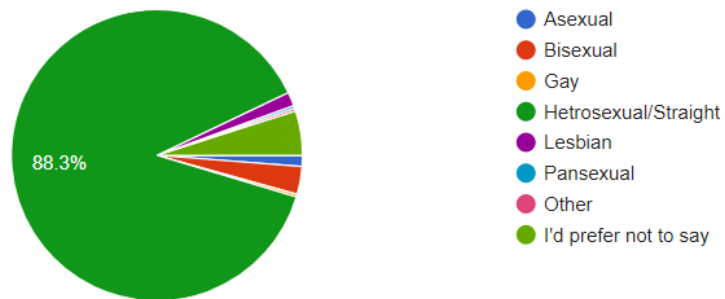
Q14. Please select your ethnic background

332 responses



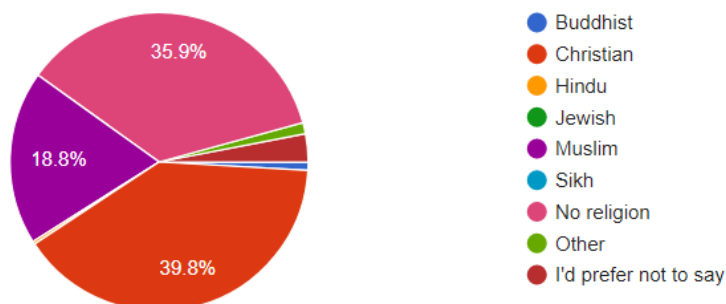
Q15. Please tell us which sexual orientation you identify with:

324 responses



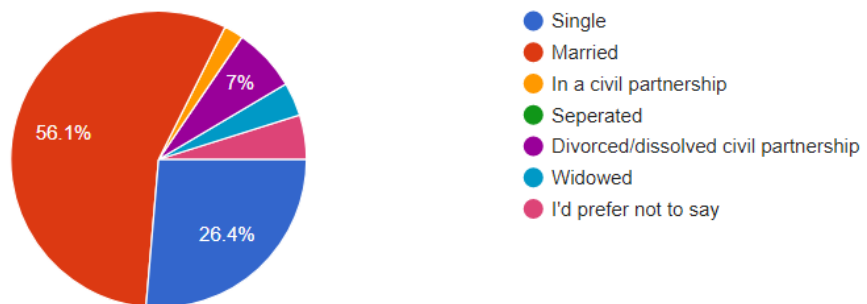
Q16. Please tell us about your religion or beliefs:

329 responses



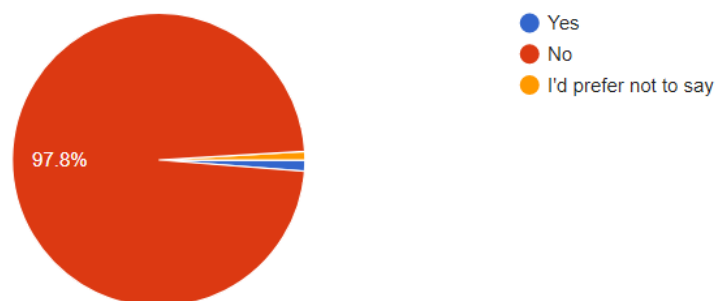
Q17. Please tell us about your marital or civil partnership status:

330 responses



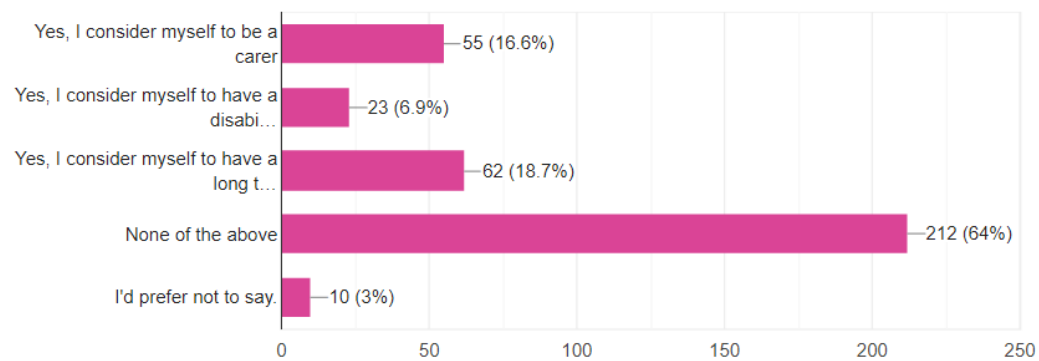
Q18. Are you currently pregnant or have you been pregnant in the last year?

323 responses



Q19. Do you consider yourself to be a carer, have a disability or a long-term health condition?
(Please select all that apply)

331 responses





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