

## **Experiences of vaccinating children during the first phase of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in England and parents and guardians' perceptions towards COVID-19 vaccination**

In April and May 2020, before a COVID-19 vaccine became available, the HPRU in Vaccines and Immunisation conducted research to find out how the COVID-19 pandemic affected parents' and guardians' access and attitudes towards routine childhood vaccinations and how it impacted overall vaccine uptake. For example, during the early phase of the pandemic in England, MMR vaccination counts were 20% lower than the same period in 2019, before recovering in mid-April (McDonald et al., 2020).

We also wanted to find out more about parent's perceptions and likelihood of accepting a COVID-19 vaccine – would they get vaccinated themselves? Would they get their child vaccinated? Would they have different views on getting vaccinated themselves compared to getting their children vaccinated?

To learn more, we ran a survey aimed at parents and guardians with young children (aged 18 months or under). 1252 people took part. We then conducted 19 follow-up interviews with survey respondents to delve deeper into people's responses.

Below are a few infographics which summarise some of the key findings and recommendations put forward by participants. We would like to thank everyone who took part, gave us their time, and shared their experiences.

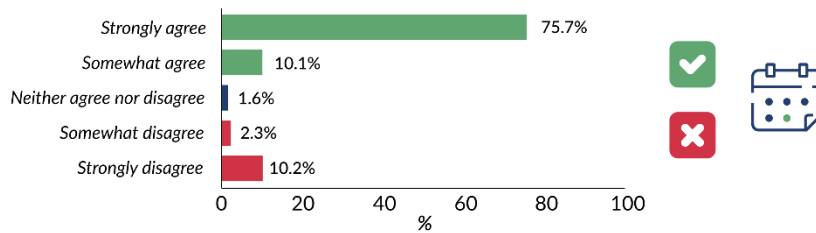
We have also written more fully on the subject in the following publications:

- Bell S, Clarke R, Paterson P, Mounier-Jack S. (2020). Parents' and guardians' views and experiences of accessing routine childhood vaccinations during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic: A mixed methods study in England. PLoS ONE 15(12): e0244049. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0244049>.
- Bell S, Clarke R, Mounier-Jack S, Walker J, Paterson P. (2020). Parents' and guardians' views on the acceptability of a future COVID-19 vaccine: A multi-methods study in England. Vaccine. 38 (49) 7789-7798. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.vaccine.2020.10.027>.

Please do get in touch if you have any questions about the research.

1. Respondents were asked to rate their level of the agreement with the statement 'During the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, I feel it is important to vaccinate my child/children on time for their routine vaccinations'. 86% somewhat or strongly agreed with this statement. 12% disagreed to some extent with this statement.

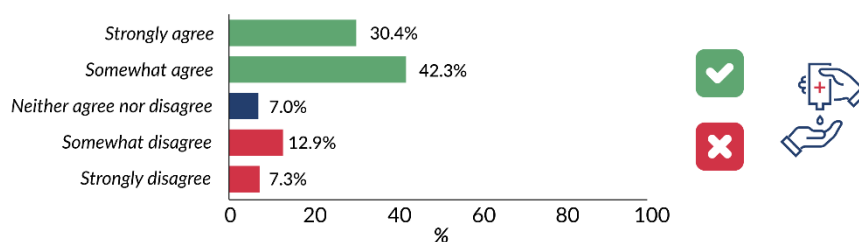
**During the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, I feel it is important to vaccinate my child/children on time for their routine vaccinations**



**86%** considered it important to **give childhood vaccines** on schedule during the pandemic

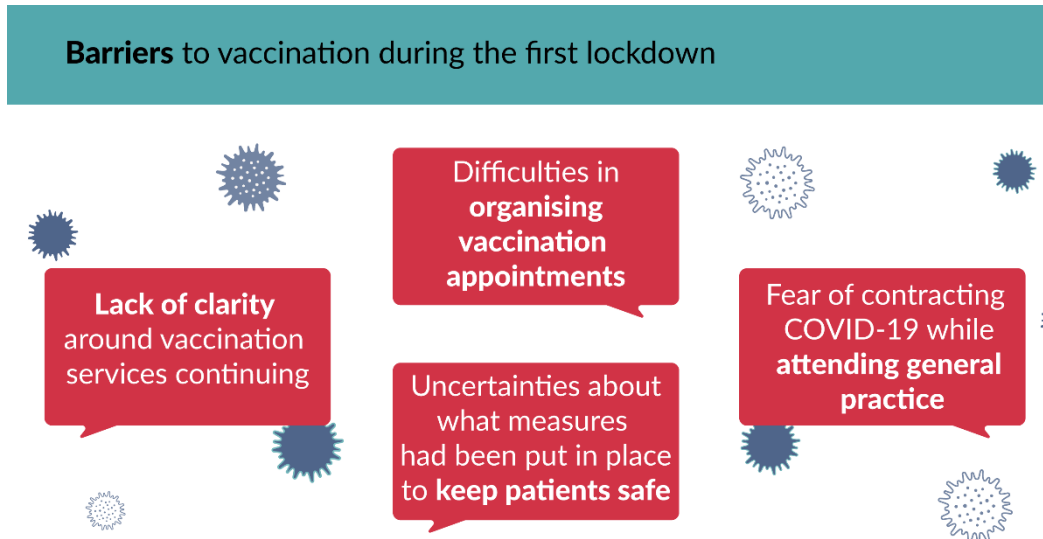
2. When it came to visiting the GP for routine childhood vaccinations, the majority of participants felt it was safe. Participants felt reassured by the safety measures taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19. These included patients being screened for COVID-19 symptoms before attending, waiting outside the practice, screens between patients and receptionists, the provision of hand sanitiser and masks, waiting rooms being kept quiet by leaving longer time periods between appointments, doors being opened by healthcare professionals (to avoid patients needing to touch door handles), staff wearing protective equipment, and social distancing being maintained.

**During the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, I feel it is safe to go to the general practice to vaccinate my child/children on time for their routine vaccinations**

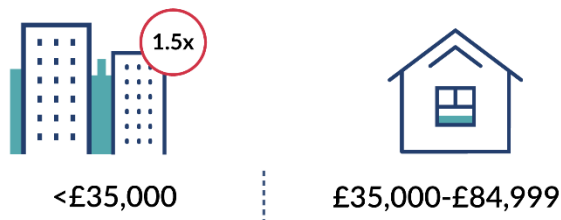
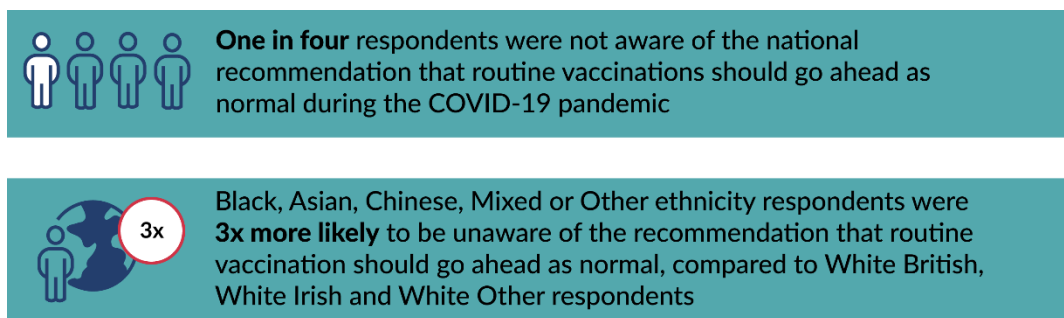


**73%** felt it was safe to **visit the general practice** for childhood vaccinations during the pandemic

3. Most participants felt it was important to maintain their children’s routine immunisation schedule –the majority of whom felt safe in doing so – however, there were still several barriers to accessing vaccination. So what barriers did people experience?

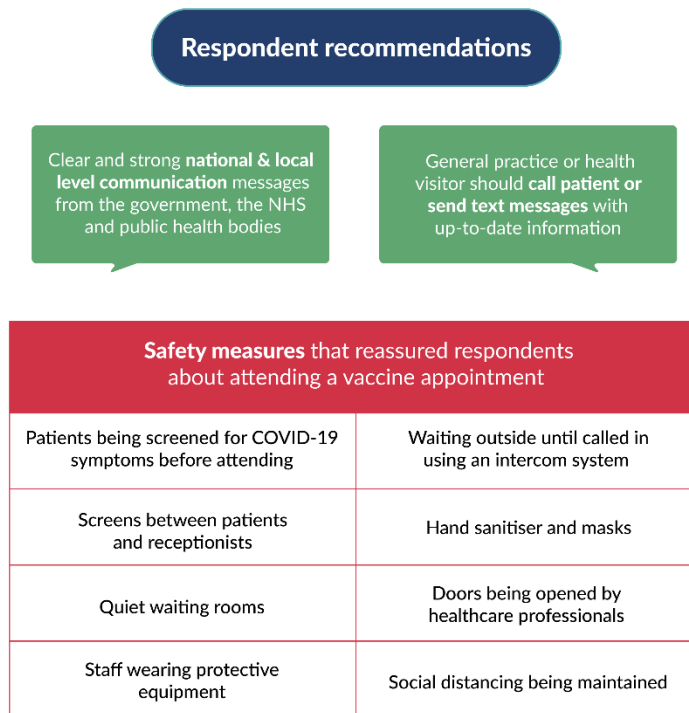


4. When it came to people being aware of the national recommendation that routine vaccinations should go ahead as normal during the COVID-19 pandemic, we found differences among socio-economic and ethnic groups.



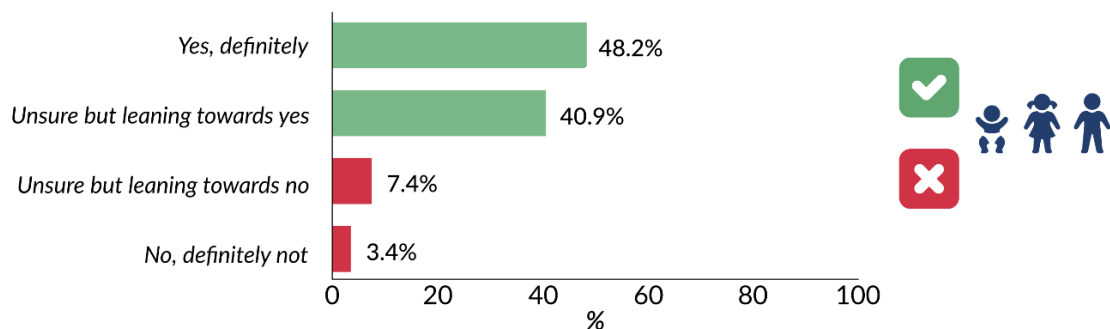
Respondents with a household income of **<£35,000** per annum were **1.5 times** more likely to be unaware of the recommendation compared to respondents with an annual household income of **£35,000-£84,999**

5. What could help reassure people when visiting the GP for a vaccine appointment? How could we better ensure more people know about the national recommendations?



6. And what about uptake of a COVID-19 vaccine? Again, we saw differences in responses between different ethnicities. (Please note these responses were from April and May 2020 and therefore were collected before a COVID-19 vaccine was available)

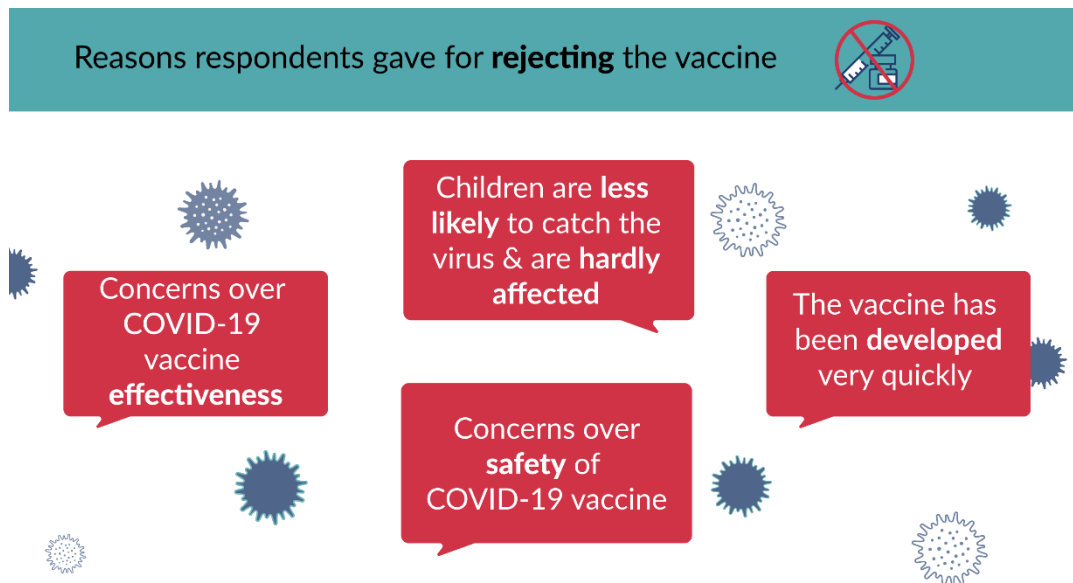
**If a new coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine became publicly available would you accept the vaccine for your child/children?**



Respondents were **more likely** to state that they would accept a COVID-19 vaccine for themselves than for their child/children

Black, Asian, Chinese, Mixed or Other ethnicity respondents were almost **3x more likely** to state that they would reject a vaccine for themselves and their children than White British, White Irish and White Other respondents

7. Why might some people consider rejecting a COVID-19 vaccine (for themselves or their children)?



8. In light of all of this, how could people be reassured about a COVID-19 vaccine?

## Recommendations



Clearly **communicate** information on how COVID-19 vaccines are developed and tested, including their safety and effectiveness



**Listen** and engage with the public and explore underlying reasons for non-acceptance of a COVID-19 vaccine



**Address** concerns and make it easier for people to vaccinate, focusing on **ethnic minorities** and **lower-income groups** who are most impacted by COVID-19

