

# The Vaccination Programme: user journeys and experiences of Covid- 19 and flu vaccination

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**Scottish Government**  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
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# Research Background

- The Covid-19 vaccination programme has been the largest programme of its kind in the history of NHS Scotland: important to keep taking stock, learn lessons for future planning, and consider how to make vaccination in Scotland as inclusive as possible.
- Scottish Government commissioned interview research into the Covid-19 and flu vaccination programmes in Scotland – Ipsos Mori carried out the research on our behalf.
- This research sits alongside the wider evaluation of both Covid and flu vaccination programmes that Public Health Scotland (PHS) lead on.

# Research Background

- **User Journeys:** gather evidence on the **practical aspects** of vaccination experience (e.g. receiving information about vaccination; booking appointments/receiving the blue letter; getting to vaccination; experience while at the vaccination centre, and so on).
- **Wider Experiences:** to understand wider experience of vaccination and why people decided to engage with or disengage from the programme. This will include **beliefs, attitudes, behaviours, and wider concerns.**

# The final sample: who took part?

- **81 in-depth interviews** across a range of key groups who may have faced additional barriers to uptake.
- We took an intersectional approach: wanted to look at experiences holistically.
- Key groups:
  - those from certain ethnic minorities, as defined in the PHS data (African, Black and Caribbean, Gypsy/Traveller, Pakistani, and Polish communities);
  - those living in deprived areas;
  - those with disabilities and long-term health conditions.
- Within these groups we also explored the impact of age; parental status; unpaid carer status; pregnancy; rurality; and lack of digital skills/confidence.
- Insights from across a range of perspectives, from engaged to hesitant.



Quota group	Number of participants
<b>Total:</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>Disability or long-term health condition</b>	
Yes	35
<b>Ethnicity</b>	
Polish	11
Pakistani	9
African	9
Black or Caribbean	6
Gypsy/Traveller	7
White Scottish / White British	34
Other	2
<b>SIMD Quintile</b>	
SIMD1 (most deprived)	29
SIMD2	21
SIMD3+	31
<b>Age</b>	
Under 40	34
40+	46
<b>Number of Covid-19 vaccinations</b>	
None	15
One	9
Two	21
Three +	36
<b>Experience of flu vaccination</b>	
Received a flu vaccine in 2021/2022	29
Eligible for a flu vaccine in 2021/2022 but did not receive one	25
<b>Rurality</b>	
Rural	10

Urban	71
<b>Parental responsibilities</b>	
Parent of child(ren) under the age of 16	43
<b>Caring responsibilities</b>	
Has an unpaid care role	21
<b>Pregnancy</b>	
Has been pregnant during the vaccination programme	8
<b>Digital skills</b>	
Has limited digital skills/access to the internet	7
<b>Gender</b>	
Female	53
Male	28

1. All those who had received a flu vaccination in 2021/22 had also received at least one Covid-19 vaccination.
2. Rurality was based on the Scottish Government 2-fold Urban Rural Classification, for more information see: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-government-urban-rural-classification-2016/pages/2/>

# The Research Advisory Group

- The groups to recruit were decided in discussions with policy colleagues, Public Health Scotland, and our Research Advisory Group.
- The Research Advisory Group were key to the development, progress, and quality of the research and we would like to acknowledge and thank them:
  - Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Sector Organisations (CEMVO) Scotland;**
  - Glasgow Disability Alliance;**
  - Minority Ethnic Carers of People Project (MECOPP);**
  - National Parent Forum of Scotland;**
  - NHS Dumfries and Galloway;**
  - NHS Grampian;**
  - Poverty Alliance;**
  - Public Health Scotland;**
  - Scottish Youth Parliament.**

# Some key overarching findings

- **Vaccine experience is complex:** what may be a facilitator of vaccination for one person, may be a barrier for another, e.g. pandemic restrictions or social influences:

**“Before I didn't have a problem with vaccines, not that I do, but [...] with this Covid vaccination they actually made the word vaccine a total put off for me because like I said it was too controlling.”**

***(Participant, Disability or health condition, Black African, woman, under 40, rural, No Covid-19 vaccinations)***

- Although most participants felt well-informed enough to make an initial decision about whether to take up the Covid-19 vaccination, there were those who felt the **information** was either not enough, lacking transparency, or too complex.
- There were concerns about government, the NHS, and pharmaceutical companies providing full information about things like side effects.
- Black African communities talked specifically about hearing social media reports (and from some family/friends) that the vaccine was not safe for Black people. These didn't necessarily sway their own decision, but participants were aware of these ongoing discussions.



# Some key overarching findings

- **Trust** is central: some participants from ethnic minorities described higher levels of distrust in the Covid-19 vaccine within their communities (although they were not necessarily influenced by this themselves).
- Distrust in government was particularly discussed by those aged over 40, Pakistani and Polish participants.
- Distrust was seeded from: general scepticism, stories from family or friends, historical racism and systematic discrimination, histories of colonialism, and concerns that ethnic minorities were not accounted for appropriately in research:

**“[I would consider getting vaccinated if] they had done research on a wider range of people with different health issues, different skins, different backgrounds.”**

*(Participant, Disability or health condition, Black African, woman, under 40, rural, No Covid-19 vaccinations)*

**“I come from an ethnic minority background and with that there’s a lot of stigma around vaccinations.”**

*(Participant, Pakistani, man, under 40, unpaid carer, 3+ Covid-19 vaccinations)*

**“The people there [in Poland], it is very obvious the people that don't believe in Covid and don't believe in vaccination.”**

*(Participant, Disability or health condition, White Polish, woman, under 40, parent, SIMD2, 3+ Covid-19 vaccinations)*





# Some key overarching findings

- **Key considerations involved in decision making around receiving a first Covid-19 vaccination included:**

- perceived personal health risk from Covid-19;
  - the protection of others;
  - the safety of the Covid-19 vaccine;
  - pandemic restrictions;
  - Covid Status Certification;
  - wider attitudes (to vaccines in general and towards government and pharmaceutical companies);
  - and social influences from friends and family.
- Over time, these remained largely the same, but greater understanding that the Covid-19 vaccine would not prevent transmission did impact decisions about later vaccines.

- Confusion around the term 'booster' also had an impact.
- The wider context of changing restrictions, perceived lower risk from more recent strains of Covid, and Downing Street parties all came up in interviews too.

**"We didn't even know there would be so many, or maybe we were told but certainly it wasn't huge, that there would be all these boosters and stuff, certainly I didn't think that. So when I got my 2nd dose I was like 'okay, this should do me good', and then 2 or 3 months later there was chat about a booster, and then a lot of my friends and even I was like 'do I need to get this booster?' Because it's getting a bit annoying now [...] how many boosters are you going to need?"**

*(Participant, Pakistani, man, under 40, unpaid carer, 3+ Covid-19 vaccinations)*

# Practical experiences

The majority of participants were positive about their practical experiences of getting vaccinated, describing the vaccination programme as well organised.

## Practical Enablers

- having local appointments;
- being able to drive;
- a flexible/understanding work situation;
- having support with childcare;
- well-signed and stewarded venues;
- invitation and reminder letters arriving on time to the correct address.

## Practical Barriers

- venues far from home;
- accessibility issues for those with autism and/or sensory disabilities;
- inefficient queuing systems and long wait times;
- not receiving invitation or reminder letters;
- insensitive staff;
- employers not being flexible.

# Looking to the future

- **Views towards future Covid-19 vaccinations varied.** Among those who would not hesitate to take up further vaccinations, personal health risk was a key factor.
- Among other participants, views ranged from being likely to take up a future vaccine, albeit with careful consideration, to being certain not to. Barriers to future take up included:
  - perceived (low) health risk
  - vaccine fatigue
  - views on vaccine efficacy
  - concern about side effects
  - original reason for vaccination no longer valid (e.g., Covid Status Certification travel requirements removed for certain countries).
- There were **notable subgroup differences** in views towards future Covid-19 vaccination with Pakistani and Black African participants less receptive to future vaccinations. The exception to this is those with a health condition they felt affected their personal health risk.
- Changes to (or new evidence on) the above factors may change participants' minds about receiving future vaccinations.

# Looking to the future

- Overall, participants who had engaged with the Covid-19 and flu vaccination programmes felt they had been well organised. Participants suggested minor improvements to future Covid-19 and flu vaccinations programmes. Several themes cut across these suggestions for improvements; participants felt it was important for the vaccination programme to be:
  - **inclusive;**
  - **transparent;**
  - **flexible to users' needs;**
  - **friendly and welcoming.**

# Links to the research

- **The Vaccination Programme: user journeys and experiences of Covid-19 and flu vaccination: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) and flu vaccination programme: user journeys and experiences - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/vaccination-programme-user-journeys-and-experiences-2021-01-20/summary/summary.page)**

**(an Easy Read version of the report is available)**

Other recent research into vaccination from the Scottish Government, Healthcare Improvement Scotland, and Public Health Scotland:

- Covid-19 vaccine barriers and incentives to uptake: a literature review: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) vaccine barriers and incentives to uptake: literature review - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/covid-19-vaccine-barriers-and-incentives-to-uptake-literature-review-2021-01-20/summary/summary.page)
- [Ninth Citizens' Panel report | HIS Engage](#)
- Public Health Scotland: [Interim evaluation reports on Scotland's flu and COVID-19 vaccination programme published - News - Public Health Scotland](#)

# Thanks

- With thanks to our Research Advisory Group:  
CEMVO Scotland; Glasgow Disability Alliance; MECOPP; the National Parent Forum of Scotland; NHS Dumfries and Galloway; NHS Grampian; Poverty Alliance; Public Health Scotland; and the Scottish Youth Parliament.