

Cape Town, South Africa
28 July 2021

News release

South Africans unsure of safety of COVID-19 vaccines; many unlikely to get vaccinated

Seven in 10 South Africans have little or no trust in the government's ability to ensure that COVID-19 vaccines are safe, a new Afrobarometer survey shows.

A majority of South Africans say they are unlikely to try to get vaccinated. Close to half believe prayer is more effective than a vaccine in preventing COVID-19 infection.

As a third wave of COVID-19 infections spreads across South Africa, the government is promoting vaccination as the way to end the pandemic. As of July 2021, Department of Health data indicate that more than 2.3 million South Africans have tested positive for COVID-19 since March 2020 and at least 68,000 have lost their lives to the disease.

If South Africans distrust the COVID-19 vaccine, this will pose a significant challenge for the government's mass vaccination program.

Key findings

- Fewer than three in 10 South Africans (28%) say they trust the government "somewhat" or "a lot" to ensure the safety of COVID-19 vaccines. Seven in 10 express "just a little" (27%) or no trust at all (43%) (Figure 1).
- A majority (54%) of citizens say they are "somewhat unlikely" (12%) or "very unlikely" (42%) to try to get vaccinated against COVID-19 (Figure 2).
- Older South Africans, those with no formal education, men, and rural residents express a greater inclination to receive a COVID-19 shot than younger, more educated, female, and urban citizens (Figure 3).
- Almost half (47%) of citizens believe that prayer is more effective than a vaccine in preventing COVID-19 infection. Only a quarter (25%) believe vaccines are more effective (Figure 4).

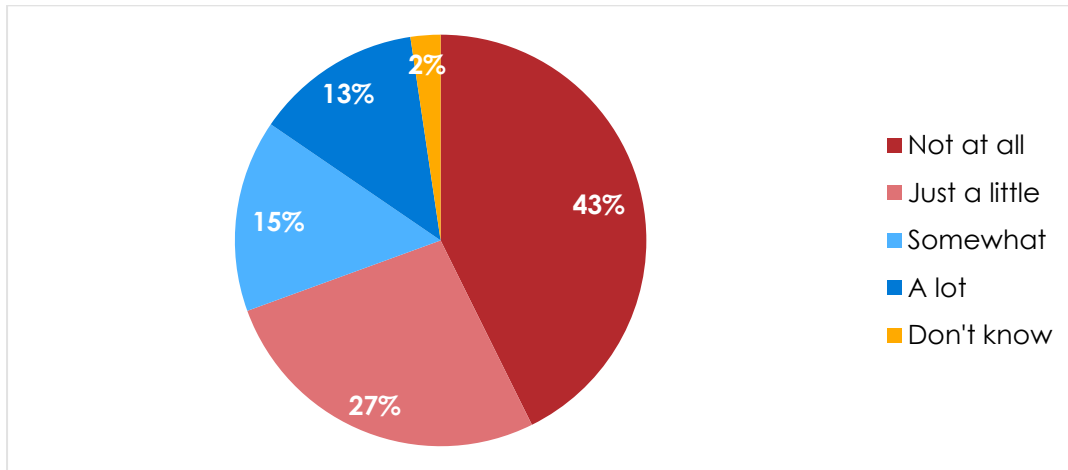
Afrobarometer surveys

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Seven rounds of surveys were conducted in up to 38 countries between 1999 and 2018. Round 8 surveys (2019/2021) cover 34 countries. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples of 1,200-2,400, which yield country-level results with margins of error of +/-2 to +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level.

The Afrobarometer team in South Africa, led by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation and Plus 94 Research, interviewed 1,600 adult South Africans in May-June 2021. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-2.5 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in South Africa in 2000, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2015, and 2018.

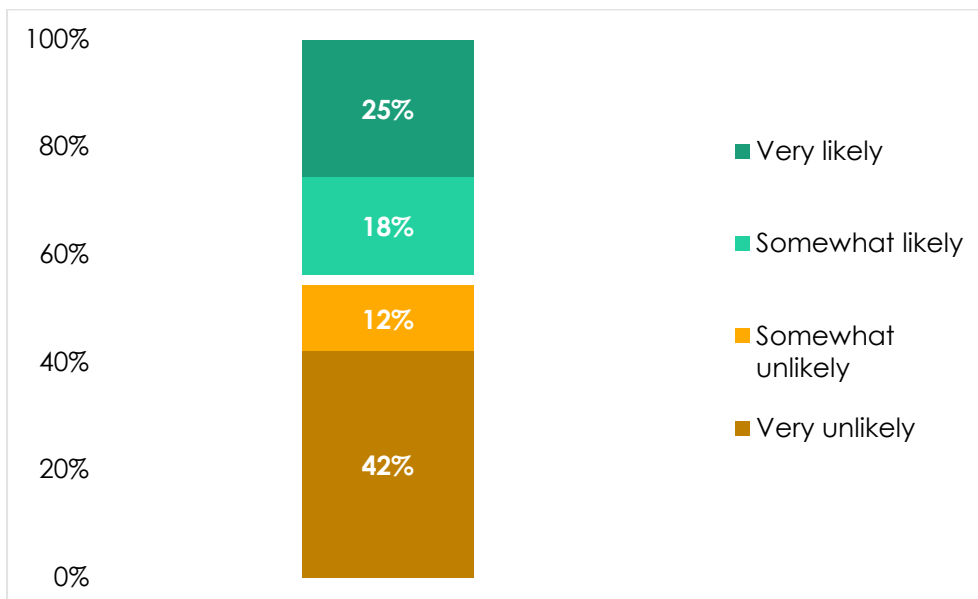
Charts

Figure 1: Trust government to ensure safety of COVID-19 vaccine | South Africa | 2021



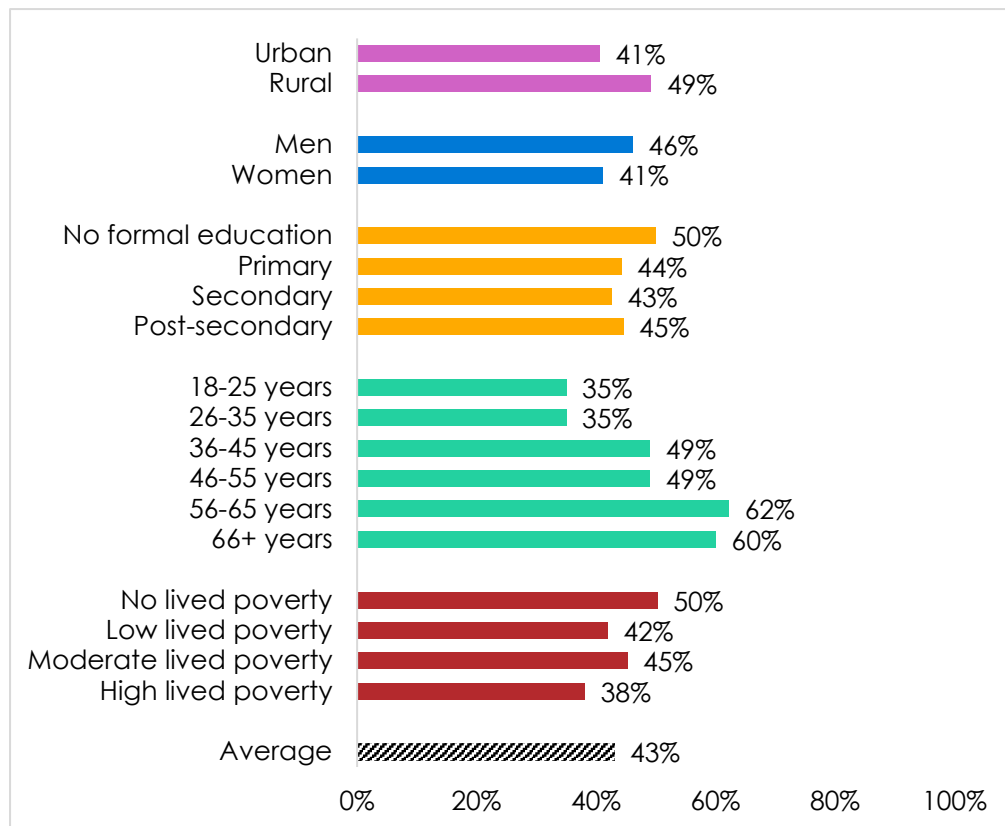
Respondents were asked: How much do you trust the government to ensure that any vaccine for COVID-19 that is developed or offered to South African citizens is safe before it is used in this country?

Figure 2: Likelihood of trying to get COVID-19 vaccination | South Africa | 2021



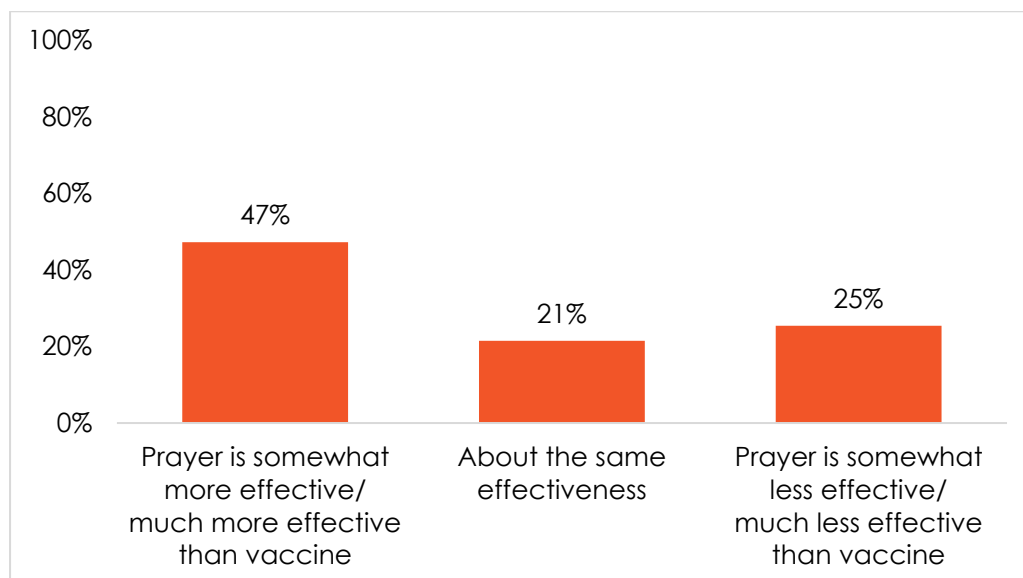
Respondents were asked: If a vaccine for COVID-19 becomes available and the government says it is safe, how likely are you to try to get vaccinated?

Figure 3: Likely to try to get COVID-19 vaccination | by socio-demographic group
 | South Africa | 2021



Respondents were asked: *If a vaccine for COVID-19 becomes available and the government says it is safe, how likely are you to try to get vaccinated? (% who say "somewhat likely" or "very likely")*

Figure 4: Is prayer more effective than COVID-19 vaccine? | South Africa | 2021



Respondents were asked: *Some people think that prayer is an effective way to alter events in the world. Others put more faith in science to solve problems. Some people believe in both. What about you? Do you think that prayer is more effective or less effective than a vaccine would be in preventing COVID-19 infection?*

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