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Covid-19: UK has highest vaccine confidence and Japan and South Korea the lowest, survey finds

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The UK population has the highest confidence in covid-19 vaccines and its health authorities, while Japan and South Korea have the lowest, a survey of 15 countries shows.¹

Carried out by Imperial College London and YouGov between March and May 2021, the survey included more than 68 000 people from Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Japan, Norway, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, the UK, and the US. It found that in 13 of the 15 countries more than 50% of people were confident in covid-19 vaccines and in 10 countries more than 50% were confident that their health authorities would provide them with an effective vaccine.

Almost nine in 10 people in the UK (87%) said they trusted the vaccines, while 83% said the same in Israel. But in South Korea and Japan just 47% said they trusted the vaccines.

Trust in different vaccine brands also varied, with the Pfizer and BioNTech vaccine being the most trusted across all age groups in nine of the 15 countries and also in the under 65s in three additional countries: Canada, Singapore, and Sweden.

The US showed the least trust in specific brands and had the highest proportion of people across all ages who said they didn't trust any of them (AstraZeneca-Oxford, Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, Sinopharm, Sputnik V). In the UK the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine was the most trusted by people aged under 65 in March, although confidence has fallen over time across all age groups. In most other countries trust in the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine was low, as was the case with the Sputnik V and Sinopharm vaccines.

The most reported concerns were about side effects and that vaccines had not been sufficiently tested.

The project co-lead at Imperial College London, Sarah Jones, said, "Our programme has been tracking people's attitudes towards covid-19 vaccines since November, and it's encouraging to see that trust has steadily been climbing.

"However, our findings show that there is still much work to be done to reassure the public of the safety and effectiveness of coronavirus vaccines. We hope that sharing the concerns people have raised will spur timely and targeted responses from governments that will inform and educate the public about the importance of vaccination."

¹ Global attitudes towards a covid-19 vaccine. Imperial College London. May 2021. https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/institute-of-global-health-innovation/GlobalVaccineInsights_ICL-YouGov-Covid-19-Behaviour-Tracker_20210520_v2.pdf.

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