COVID-19 vaccine acceptance in low- and middle-income countries and recommendations to increase uptake

In brief

- This study analyzes willingness to vaccinate against COVID-19 from surveys covering low- and middle-income countries in Asia, Africa, and South America.
- Willingness to vaccinate is considerably higher in these low- and middle-income countries (80% of respondents) than in the United States (67%) and Europe (60%).
- The most significant factors influencing vaccine decisions in low- and middle-income countries are: perceived benefits (85% of respondents), concerns about side effects (64%), and the most common misperception for vaccine hesitancy is that vaccines are harmful.
- Personal contact with someone who was vaccinated (85% of respondents) is the main reason given for vaccine acceptance in these low- and middle-income countries.
- This brief recommends using health workers to deliver vaccine information, using a “motivational” wedge, leveraging preventive actions, and focusing on vaccine effectiveness to increase vaccination rates in low- and middle-income countries.
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In a collective effort bringing together 15 studies, researchers from over 30 institutions surveyed over 20,000 individuals between June 2020 and January 2021 on questions regarding respondents’ vaccine acceptance and hesitancy and their most trusted sources for vaccination advice. During some surveys, results from COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials had yet to be announced, and during later surveys, governments had started approving vaccines for use. The fast-moving nature of COVID-19 information may change people’s perceptions about vaccines by the time they are widely available in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Over the past six months, the body of evidence demonstrating the safety and efficacy of available COVID-19 vaccines, which have been given to millions of people, has become clearer. At the same time, severe, but rare, side effects may have undermined public confidence.

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