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 10 low- and middle-income countries in Asia, Africa, and South America.

1. Willingness to vaccinate is considerably higher in these low- and middle-income countries (59% of respondents) than in the United States (48%) and France (59%).
2. The most significant barriers to vaccine acceptance in low- and middle-income countries is the fear of side effects (39% of respondents). Concerns about vaccine effectiveness (25%) is the second most common concern among these countries.
3. Residual pockets of unvaccinated individuals are mostly located in rural areas, and in countries with a high prevalence of anti-vaccine sentiments.
4. Trust in health experts and government officials is the most trusted source of information about COVID-19 vaccines (45% of respondents).
5. This brief recommends using health workers to deliver vaccine information, targeting “hot spots” (eg, leveraging pro-vaccine messaging, and focusing on vaccine effectiveness to increase vaccine uptake 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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