

# Public perceptions toward the Covid 19 vaccine in Kent

The Kent Equality Cohesion Council, a registered charity which works to tackle discrimination and promote community cohesion in Kent and Cohesion Plus, a not-for-profit organisation which uses the arts to bring communities together and celebrate the cohesion of Kent have produced this report. The report was compiled on the finding of over 1,300 responses to a survey we conducted. The intention was to capture an overview which could inform policy makers and community groups of the situation around the vaccination uptake in Kent and to help inform future public messaging and community outreach. The report came about as a result of reports of low uptake of the Covid 19 vaccines amongst some BAME (Black Asian Minority Ethnic) communities in some parts of England. .

## Overview

- Between January 28 and February 19 we made use of community, faith and organisational networks to better understand local community intentions around take up of the vaccine for Covid 19 in Kent. This was conducted through a short online questionnaire which was shared via **email, text** and **WhatsApp**.
- In total 1325 responses were received across the **12 districts of Kent and the Unitary Authority**. 43% of respondents were from Medway, followed by Gravesham with 12%, Maidstone with 8% and Dartford with 7%. The area with the lowest response was Folkestone & Hythe with 2% which equates to 25 responses.
- 76% of respondents were from the British White community, 18% of respondents were from BAME communities, 3% were White Other, whilst the remainder preferred not to say. BAME community response levels included 7% British Asian Indian, 4% Black British African and 2% British Asian Pakistani and 2% British Asian Bangladeshi.
- Although the respondents' make-up may not be in line with the 2011 Census, it is clear that the demographics of Kent have changed significantly since then and we feel this report provides a more accurate picture of the diversity of the County.
- In terms of disability, 88% of respondents said they were not disabled, 10% stated they had a disability which equates to 135 responses, whilst 2% preferred not to say.
- With regards to the age breakdown of respondents, the 2 largest age groups were 45-54 which made up 26% of respondents, followed by the 35-44 age group which made up 22%. The lowest response was in the under 18 category with 5% which equates to 67 respondents. This was to be expected as the survey was not targeted at young people.
- In terms of gender, the most overwhelming response was from females including Trans Women which made up 67% of respondents compared to the 26% Male response including Trans Men. 7% preferred not to say. This again was not seen as too much of a surprise due to the networks and organisations that were contacted.

## Context

Our previous report on the impact of the pandemic in Kent which was published in July 2020 underlined the difference experiences the local communities had during the first lockdown particularly when it came to ethnicity. BAME respondents were more likely to have known someone who suffered from Covid 19; they were disproportionately more impacted when it came to accessing healthcare and support services.

Since the roll out of the vaccination programme earlier this year, reports of low uptake for the vaccine amongst BAME communities have been made public. The purpose of the report was to gauge the public perception toward the Covid 19 vaccine in Kent as the lockdown begins to ease and the economy begins to re-open.

## Our Research Findings

### ***“How likely are you to receive the vaccination when it is made available to you?”***

Overall, from the 1325 responses 86% said they were likely to take the vaccine when it was made available to them. 6% said they were unlikely whilst 8% said they did not know. 80% of respondents who said they were likely to take the vaccine were British White, 16% were from BAME communities, the remainder were White Other.

Looking at just the BAME responses, 43% of the positive responses were British Asian Indian, 16% were British Black African, 8% British Asian Pakistani and 7% were British Bangladeshi.

30% of all respondents who said they were unlikely to take the vaccination were 30% British White, 55% were from a BAME background and 13% were White Other.

Breaking down just the BAME responses, 14% of British Asian Bangladeshi, British Asian Indian, British Black African and Black British Caribbean said they were unlikely to take the vaccination. 17% of British Asian Pakistani respondents, 8% of mixed heritage respondents and 13% Other respondents felt the same.

Of those who indicated that they ‘did not know’ 62% were British White. This was followed by 9% Black British African and 8% British Asian Indian. For White Other the figure was 6% and 5% for Black British Caribbean. No British Asian Pakistanis indicated that they ‘did not know’.

45% of all respondents who said they were likely to take the vaccine were from Medway. Looking at the area covered by Kent County Council, Gravesham at 17%, Maidstone 15%, Swale 12%, Dartford 11% were the four top districts where respondents said they were likely to take the vaccine.

Looking at those who were unlikely to take the vaccine, overall 17% of respondents were from Medway and 20% were from Gravesham. Looking just at the area covered by Kent County Council, Gravesham at 24%, Dartford 16%, Ashford 11% and Tunbridge Wells at 10% were the top four districts where the respondents said they were unlikely to take the vaccine.

With regards to those who answered ‘do not know’ 39% of all respondents were from Medway. In the area covered by Kent County Council 32% were from Gravesham, 10% from Ashford and Dartford, and 8% from Maidstone and Swale.

Looking at responses from a gender perspective, 69% of those who said they were likely to take the vaccine were female including trans female, 26% were male including trans male,

2% were non-binary and the rest preferred not to say. Of those who said they were unlikely, 37% were female including trans female, 36% were male including trans male and 5% were non-binary.

Looking at those who responded, 'do not know', 67% were female including trans female, 19% were male including trans male and 2% were non-binary.

When looking at age groups, 26% of those aged between 45–54 and 22% of those aged 35-44 and 55-64 said they were likely to take the vaccine, whilst 16% of respondents aged between 25-34 also responded in the affirmative. Looking at those that were unlikely, the two most common age groups were 21-34 with 28% and 22% aged between 35-44.

In terms of those that 'did not know', the two most common age groups were the 45-55 with 27% and 35-44 with 24%.

### ***"Are you worried about receiving the vaccination?"***

For this question we gave respondents three options. In total 1325 individuals responded. 75% of respondents said they were not worried whilst 25% said that they were.

81% of British White respondents and 12% of BAME respondents as well as 3% of White Other said they were not worried. Just looking at the BAME responses only, 44% were from a British Asian Indian background and 18% were British Black African. The numbers for the British Asian Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Asian Other and British Black Caribbean were all very similar at 8%.

Of those who said they were not worried about taking the vaccination, 67% were female including trans-female, 27% were male including trans-male, 2% were non-binary and the rest preferred not to say.

Looking at the responses for those who said they were worried, 60% were White British, 25% were from BAME backgrounds and 5% were White Other, with the remainder of respondents preferring not to declare their ethnicity.

Focusing just on the BAME communities, 23% of British Asian Indian, 16% British Black African, 13% White Other and 10% British Asian Bangladeshi and Pakistani expressed that they were worried about receiving the vaccination.

Overall 45% of those who said they were not concerned about taking the vaccine were from Medway. Taking Medway out and just looking at the area covered by Kent County Council 18% of respondents from Gravesham, 15% from Maidstone, 12% from Swale and 11% from Dartford said that they were not concerned about taking the vaccine.

Looking at respondents who had expressed a concern, overall 36% of these were from Medway and 15% from Gravesham. Focusing just on the area covered by Kent County Council, the four top districts where respondents expressed concerns about taking the vaccine were, Gravesham with 23%, Dartford with 13%, Maidstone with 12% and Swale with 9%.

Of those that said they were not concerned about taking the vaccine, 69% were female including trans female, 27% were male including trans male, 2% were non-binary, the remainder preferred not to say. Looking at those who had expressed concern, 67% were female including trans female, 21% were male including trans male, 3% were non-binary and the remainder preferred not to say.

Looking at the age breakdown there was some small variations between those who expressed concern and those that did not. 5% of respondents who were not concerned and 6% who were concerned, were within the 18-24 age group. This compares to the 25-34 age group where 15% of respondents said they weren't concerned and 24% said that they were. In the 35-44 age group, 21% of respondents said they were not concerned compared to 26% who said they were.

When examining the 45-54 age group, 27% of respondents said they were not concerned whilst 23% said they were. This compares to 22% who said they were not concerned to 16% who said they were in the 55-64 age group. Finally, looking at the 65+ age group, 9% of respondents said they were not concerned compared to 3% that said they were.

Below are some comments from some of those who expressed concern in taking the vaccine:

*"It normally takes years for vaccines to be brought out and this one has come about so quickly that I think people including myself are wary that as a result, something might have been missed/ skipped and the after affects will only be seen later on after people have had the vaccine."*

*"No information for immunocompromised and no work with disabled community or the groups that support them to support this community."*

*"Only minimal worries which are probably normal and natural - Its unknown long term what effects will be but I also trust the people who manufacture these things, I'm sure they've been producing flu vaccines for long enough now."*

*"It is still early days, I'm not a conspiracy theorist but there have been evidenced actions taken in the past by our Government that have proven to be horrendously flawed- will these vaccines fall into that area in the future?"*

*"... yes, due to not know the effect on fertility"*

*"It's a human trial - I don't trust that it's safe"*

*"I am in a demographic that statistically has been largely unaffected by Covid. I would like more time for vaccines to be developed further especially as there are variants appearing around the world."*

*"Worried about the effect it could have on my fertility, no data to support it won't affect fertility just complete nonsense statements posted online from fertility clinics and NHS saying not to worry but where is the extended data to back this up?"*

*"They're not being used the way they were tested so I don't know if the risks associated with having it outweigh the risks of not. No info about which one I'll be offered. Development was rushed and I worry corners were cut to offer something which was obviously desperately needed."*

*"I have immune system dysfunction due to various conditions/disabilities and this leaves me both more vulnerable to CV-19, hence I'm in the clinically extremely vulnerable group, but also extra high risk for side effects from the vaccination, much like I am and often suffer from with the flu vaccine and that one hasn't been rushed through, isn't new with less known about how it will affect me etc..."*

*"It takes years to develop vaccines. This has come about very quickly. Has there been enough time invested in clinical trials before rollout?"*

*"I'm concerned that there hasn't been time for enough trials of the vaccine. I also concerned that the length of time the vaccine will work is not definite."*

*"No clarity. How long does it last? What about the variant? Side effects? How can someone have the vaccine but still be at risk of giving the virus to someone else? The Govt have scandalously mishandled the pandemic so how can we have trust in them delivering this?"*

*"Caught Covid whilst waiting for home visit vaccination. Nervous of side effects from vaccine with having been unwell."*

*"Too many vaccines, too many variants of the virus, too confusing, vaccines developed too quickly, not proven over time, what are the long-term effects, feel very sceptical"*

*"The virus has not yet been isolated, how can they make a vaccine against it?"*

*"They're not being used the way they were tested so I don't know if the risks associated with having it outweigh the risks of not. No info about which one I'll be offered. Development was rushed and I worry corners were cut to offer something which was obviously desperately needed."*

*"No information for immunocompromised and no work with disabled community or the groups that support them to support this community."*

*"In case it reacts with my existing conditions"*

*"Suffer with migraines, am worried this may bring one on."*

*"Because we don't know the long-term effects of this vaccine and I am still young so will have to live with the consequences."*

*"Long term and short-term side effects. Also if there is shortage on the second dose, there is no point on getting the first dose."*

*"Not enough research done"*

*"Willing to give it a go but just worried about how quick it was tested/approved when usually they take years to get this far."*

*"It has not been tested with those trying to conceive or pregnant"*

*"Nobody is aware of the long-term effects that this can have on us. i.e. If we are looking to have more children will it have an impact on them?"*

*"I'm worried about unknown side effects and whether I would receive my second dose. If not, then why bother?"*

*"I have a long-term illness which is autoimmune, so is this best for me?"*

*"Any new vaccination must have lethal side effects, high death rates in the early years of vaccination applications."*

*"It takes years to develop proven vaccines, the Covid vaccine has taken less than 1 year to research and test. I don't think there is enough data of any sort that would convince me to have it yet."*

*"I am concerned about the time frame with the 2nd vaccination. If there is no guarantee that the 2nd Pfizer vaccination will take place 3 weeks after the first (like was stated by the medical company) I will not be taking the vaccination at all."*

*"As I have as asthma and have heard rumours that it may make that worse."*

*"It normally takes years for vaccines to be brought out and this one has come a about so quickly that I think people including myself are wary that as a result, something might have been missed/ skipped and the after affects will only be seen later on after people have had the vaccine."*

***“Do you feel there’s been enough information made available around the vaccine?”***

65% of all respondents said there was enough information compared to 35% who said there was not. Breaking this down further 63% of those who felt there was not enough information were British White, compared to 28% from BAME communities and 6% British White Other. Looking at those respondents who said there was enough information made available, 83% were British White, 13% were BAME and 2% were White Other.

Looking in further detail at the BAME responses, 3% of British Asian Bangladeshi and 3% of British Asian Pakistani respondents felt there was not enough information compared to 1% for each who felt there was. 8% of those who felt there was not enough information were British Asian Indian compared to 6% who felt there was. Likewise, 5% of British Black African respondents to this question felt there was not enough information compared to 3% who did.

In the area covered by Kent County Council the top three districts where respondents did not feel there was enough information were Gravesham with 23%, Dartford with 12% and Thanet with 9%. Conversely the top three districts where respondents felt there was enough information were Gravesham with 17%, Maidstone with 15% and Swale with 13%. 40% of all respondents who felt there was not enough information were from Medway whilst 44% of respondents who felt there was enough information were also from Medway.

64% of those who felt there was not enough information were female including trans female, 24% were male including trans male and 3% were non-binary. This compares to 69% of females including trans female, 27% of males including trans male and 1% non-binary who felt that there was enough information provided around the vaccine.

Comparing responses by age, 6% of those who did not feel there was enough information were aged between 18-24 compared to 4% of those who did, whilst in the 25-34 age group, 23% did not feel there was enough information compared to 14% in the same age group that did. In the 35-44 age group, 24% of respondents did not feel there was enough information compared to 21% felt there was.

In the 45-54 age group, there was an even split of 26% when it came to those who felt there was enough information and those who did not. In the 55-64 age group 15% felt there was not enough information made available compared to the 23% who felt there was. Finally, 4% of respondents who did not feel there was enough information made available were aged 65+ compared to 10% who felt there was.

***“Does the location of where the vaccine will be administered matter to you?”***

57% of all respondents said that it did not matter where the location was, 36% said it did matter and 6% said that they did not know. Looking at those that said it did not matter, 79% of these respondents were British White, 16% were BAME and 3% were White Other.

When looking at just the BAME responses 40% of British Asian Indian, 17% British Black African, 15% White Other, 10% British Asian Pakistani, 8% British Asian Bangladeshi and 7% Black British Caribbean said the location did not matter to them.

Examining those respondents who said that the location of the vaccination did matter, 72% of these were British White, 20% were BAME and 4% were White Other. Breaking down the BAME data further, 28% of British Asian Indian, 17% British Black African, 16% White Other, 8% British Asian Bangladeshi and 5% British Asian Pakistani said that the location did matter.

Overall 42% of all respondents what said the location did not matter were from Medway. Looking specifically at the area covered by Kent County Council, Gravesham at 19%, Maidstone 15%, Swale 11% and Ashford 7% were the four districts with the highest number of respondents who answered 'no' to this question.

Looking at those that said the location did matter, overall 42% of all respondents were from Medway. Again looking at the area covered by Kent County Council, Gravesham at 17%, Swale 11%, Thanet 10%, and with Dartford 10% were the four districts with the highest number of respondents who said 'yes' to this question.

Looking at those who said that the location did not matter 66% were female including trans female, 28% were male including trans male and 2% were non-binary. In terms of gender breakdown for those that said location did matter, 69% were female including trans female, 23% were male including trans male and 2% were non-binary. In terms of 'do not know' 64% were female including trans female, 23% were male including trans male and 2% were non-binary.

## Key Findings

- Females including trans-females were more likely to take the vaccine when offered and had less concerns about receiving it than males including trans males and felt there was enough information made publicly available.
- The 21-34 age group was the most unlikely to take up the vaccine when offered whilst the 25-34 age group were most worried about taking it and also felt there was not enough information made publicly available around the vaccine.
- The breakdown of the groups that were unlikely to take the vaccine highlighted more reluctance amongst BAME communities compared to British White respondents. This was consistent across the BAME groups with no one ethnicity less inclined than the other.
- British Asian Indian were the most confident from the BAME responses around taking the vaccine followed by British Black African.
- In the area covered by Kent County Council, Gravesham, Maidstone, Swale and Dartford had the most responses both in terms of having confidence in the vaccine and also having concerns compared to the rest of Kent.
- Two of the main reasons for vaccine hesitancy were concerns around fertility and the unknown long-term impact of taking the vaccine. Vaccine hesitancy for religious reasons did not come up in any significant way.
- A significant minority felt that there was not enough information publicly made available around the vaccine. Twice the number of BAME respondents felt there was not enough information compared to those who felt there was.
- The location of where the vaccine would be administered was less important to British White respondents compared to BAME respondents. This was especially the case for Black British Africans.

## Recommendations

- Look further into the gender data around vaccination uptake to understand if there is any disparities with the view of doing some targeted engagement on the back of it.
- Further engagement and outreach with BAME communities both online and in person as lockdown eases, making use of trusted community champions and health officials to raise awareness of the vaccine creating bespoke messages for different communities, understanding that BAME communities are not one homogenous group.
- More detailed work at a district and ward level to understand gaps in vaccine uptake looking not just on ethnic or faith grounds, but also gender, disability and socio-economic circumstances.
- More information made available around the vaccine with some explicit messaging around the short term and long-term benefits both from an individual perspective but also family, community and wider society as the country eases out of the lockdown. This messaging could be tailored to specific district, ward, faith and communities at a local level around Kent.

## Next Steps

We are at a key stage now of the vaccination programme and it is important that health and local authority partners take stock of where we are as a county and work with charity, community and faith partners to reach out to those who may be still reluctant to take the vaccination. We strongly believe that no one is safe until we are all safe and in this short term this can only be done by taking the vaccination. This report, we hope can contribute to the discussions currently taking place around the vaccination programme and uptake.



For further information on the work of the Kent Equality Cohesion Council please visit [www.kentecc.org.uk](http://www.kentecc.org.uk)  
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