

Reporting Public Opinion Polls—Part 4

Initiated by Hong Kong Baptist University’s “Overcoming Vaccine Hesitancy in Hong Kong” (OVH) research project, a rolling telephone survey of Hong Kong people’s attitudes and opinions towards vaccination and other relevant topics is being conducted in six consecutive weeks from July 2021 to August 2021, on a random sampling basis. With the survey data at different time intervals, we hope to provide insights for the Government and other stakeholders’ strategic decision-making.

Methods

This report covers the results obtained through a telephone survey conducted from 6th August 2021 to 17th August 2021. The survey used a random sampling method and employed a dual sampling frame design with an approximate 1:1 ratio of mobile phone numbers to landline telephone numbers. A total of 1,011 Hong Kong residents aged 18 or above, including 510 landline telephone samples and 501 mobile phone samples, were successfully interviewed. The effective response rate was 70.6%. Based on the total sample size, the standard error was less than 1.6% (the sampling error was at +/- 3.1% at the 95% confidence level).

In addition, the survey data has been weighted by the Random Iterative Method (RIM) according to the latest statistics provided by the Census and Statistics Department of the Government. The gender–age distribution was obtained from “Mid-year Population for 2020”, while the educational attainment (the highest level attended) distribution and status in economic activity were obtained from “Women and Men in Hong Kong—Key Statistics (2020 Edition)”.

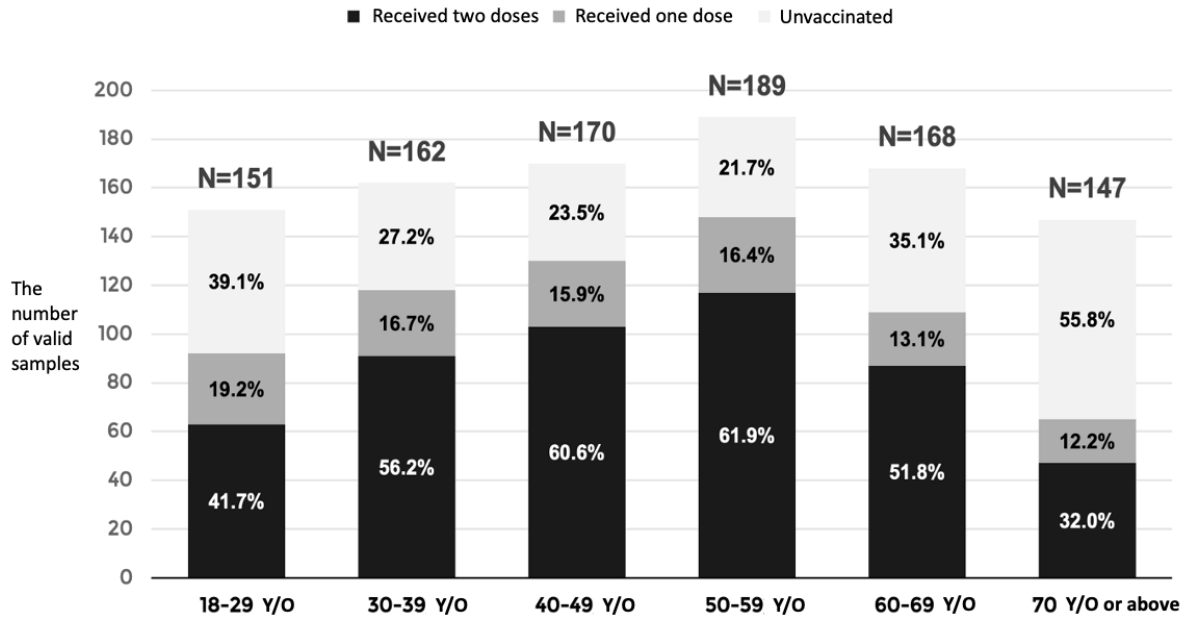
Results (weighted)

1) Vaccination status

67.1% of the respondents indicated that they had received a COVID-19 vaccination, including 15.6% who had received the first dose and 51.5% who had been fully vaccinated. 32.9% of the respondents indicated that they had not yet received any COVID-19 shot. Among this group, 20.4% said they planned to get vaccinated (accounting for 6.7% of the total sample); 39% said they were considering whether to get the jab (accounting for 12.8% of the total sample); and 39.9% said they did not intend to be vaccinated (accounting for 13.1% of the total sample).

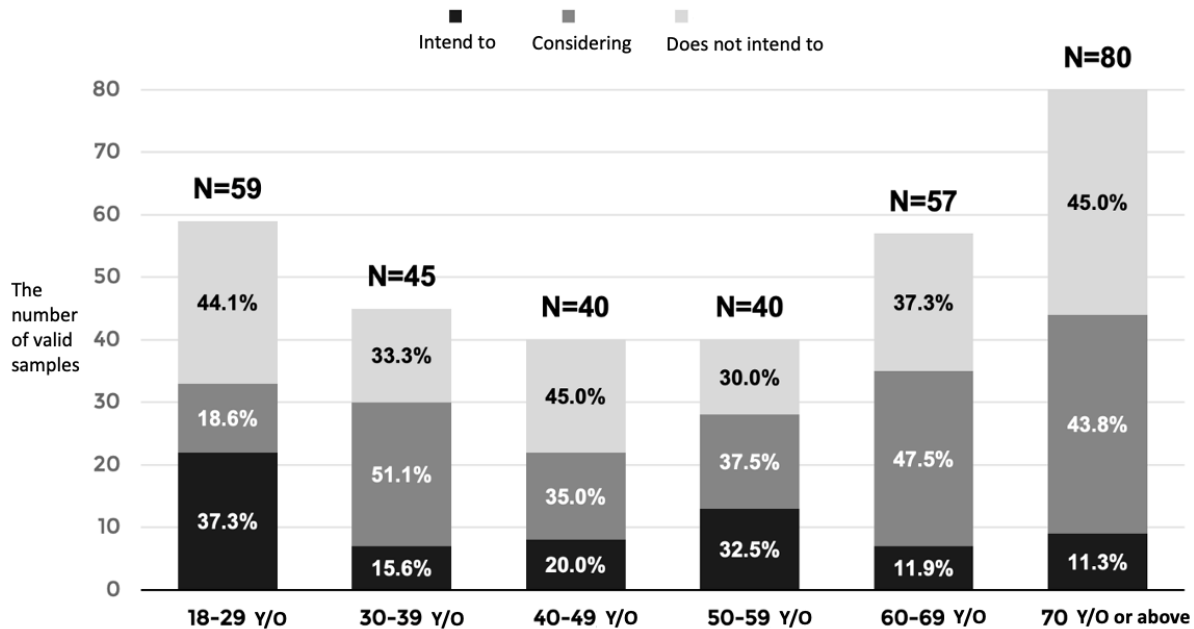
For cross-age groups comparison, the respondents aged 50-59 had the highest vaccination rate, with 78.3% being vaccinated; the respondents aged 70 years old or above had the lowest vaccination rate (44.2%).

Figure 1: Vaccination status by age



As for the unvaccinated respondents, the age group of 18-29 years old had the highest proportion (37.3%) intending to get vaccinated. Those aged 70 or above had the lowest vaccination intention, with only 11.3% intending to vaccinate.

Figure 2: Distribution of unvaccinated respondents' intention to get vaccinated (by age group)



When being asked whether their family members or friends had received COVID-19 vaccines, the majority of the respondents said that many of them had been vaccinated. Nearly half (47.2%) of the respondents said that many of their family members and relatives had received vaccination and 22.5% said most of them had been vaccinated. 17.2% of the respondents indicated that a relatively small number of their family members and relatives had received the vaccination, while only 4.9% and 3.7% said very few and none of them had been vaccinated, respectively. As for friends and peers, more than half (51.5%) of the respondents said that many of their friends had received vaccination, and 16.7% said most of them had been vaccinated. Only 4.2% and 1.9% of the respondents said very few and none of their friends had been vaccinated, respectively.

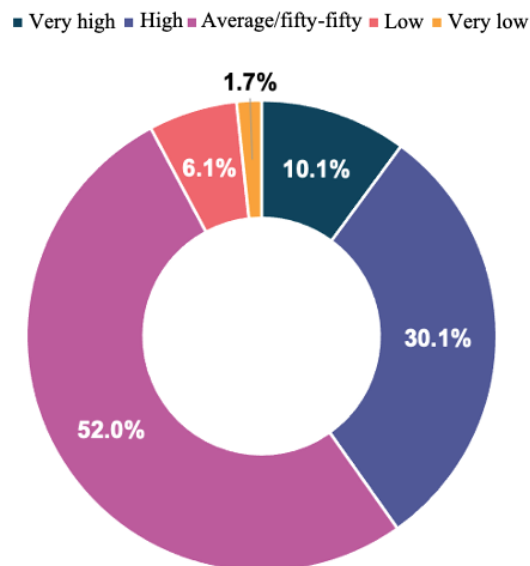
2) Confidence in the vaccine

Comparing the two types of COVID-19 vaccines currently available in Hong Kong, citizens have higher confidence in the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine (Comirnaty). The respondents were asked to rate the safety and efficacy of each vaccine on a 10-point scale (10 as the highest, 0 as the lowest). The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine's mean safety score was 6.32 (N = 940), and the mean efficacy score was 6.60 (N = 950). The Sinovac vaccine's mean safety score was 5.46 (N = 974), and the mean efficacy score was 5.09 (N = 966). There were no significant changes in the scores compared to the figures in the previous survey period.

3) Citizens and information related to health care and COVID-19

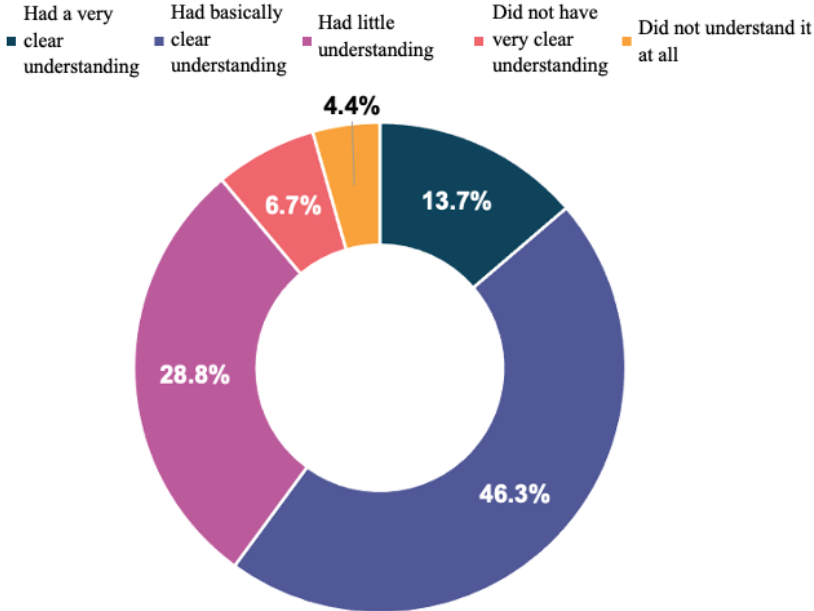
The questionnaire also includes questions about the respondents' ability to obtain health care information and their exposure to vaccine-related information. Concerning the ability to obtain health care information, more than half (52%) of the respondents thought their ability was average. 30.1% of the respondents believed that their ability to obtain relevant information was high, and 10.1% considered their ability very high. On the contrary, 6.1% responded that their ability to obtain relevant information was low, and only 1.7% considered their ability very low.

Figure 3: Self-evaluation of the ability to obtain health care information



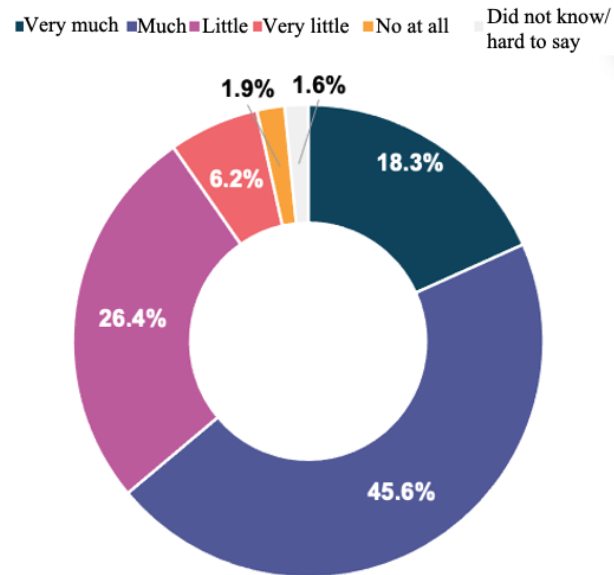
The majority of the respondents had a certain understanding of the health impact of COVID-19. 46.3% of them said they had a basically clear understanding. 28.8% responded they had little understanding, while 13.7% answered they had a very clear understanding. Only 6.7% and 4.4% said they did not have a very clear understanding and did not understand it at all, respectively.

Figure 4: Understanding of the health impact of COVID-19



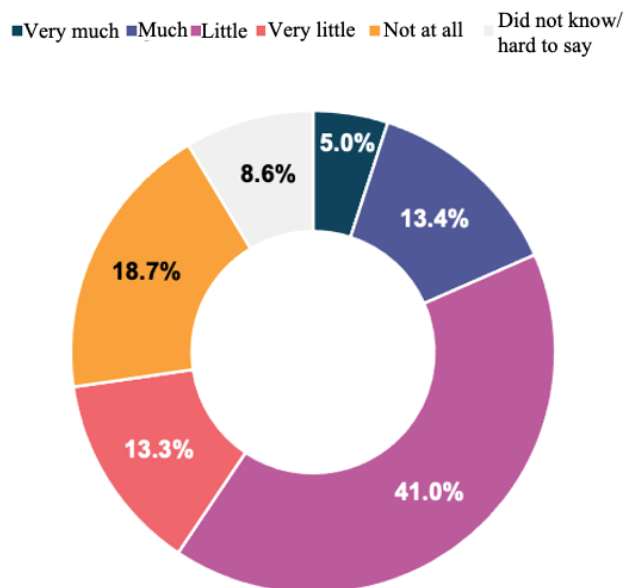
Concerning the health impact of vaccines, nearly half (45.6%) of the respondents believed that there was a large amount of relevant news and information in the past few months, and 18.3% thought there was a very large amount of relevant news and information. Only 34.5% thought that there was little or no relevant information at all.

Figure 5: News and information about the health impact of vaccines in the past few months



In the past few months, most respondents (73%) were exposed to little or even no fake news about vaccine safety. 41% said they were exposed to little relevant fake news; 13.3% responded they were exposed to very little relevant news; and 18.7% answered they were not exposed to it at all. 13.4% said they were exposed to a large amount of relevant fake news, and only 5% responded they were exposed to a very large amount of relevant fake news.

Figure 6: Exposure to fake news about vaccine safety in the past few months



Conclusion

According to the latest data, more than 4 million people, nearly 70% of the residential population, have taken at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine in Hong Kong. The percentage has increased significantly in the past two months. However, it's now becoming difficult to build an immunity barrier because of virus mutation. Comparing cross-age group figures, the vaccination rate is relatively low among the elderly people, especially in the elderly group of 70 years old or above. This indicates that the challenge of vaccine hesitancy has not been overcome completely. Hence, how to address the concerns of the elderly and persuade them to receive COVID-19 vaccination while taking their needs and feelings into account should be highlighted in the next phase of the anti-epidemic campaign.

Information affects our perceptions and behavioral judgments when making important decisions. With Hong Kong's open and free information environment, more than half of the citizens claimed they had a certain or high ability to obtain health care information. Citizens have developed their own perceptions of COVID-19 and vaccination through different information channels and even personal experience. Different information dissemination factors affect individuals' enthusiasm for vaccination. Fighting misinformation is the key to eliminating vaccine hesitancy. Based on the subjective perception data of survey respondents, the proportion of Hong Kong citizens who encounter misinformation about vaccine safety is not high. However, as the epidemic situation continues to evolve, the public should remain vigilant about inaccurate information. As we have mentioned in previous research reports, the emergence of false information, especially in the social media environment, is inevitable. Despite the continuous efforts of debunking misinformation by the Government and fact checkers, it is after all the audience to tell what is true. When gathering information during the decision-making process, citizens must verify the source, actively utilise the services provided by public sectors and fact-checking organisations, and compare different information channels, before deciding whether to believe it or not.

We hope all sectors of the Hong Kong community will continue to work together to end the epidemic. Let's return to normal life soon.