

The COVID-19 Vaccination Intention and Confidence in Hong Kong

Reporting Public Opinion Polls—Part 1

Initiated by HKBU’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 points, we hope to provide insights for the Government and other stakeholders on how to make strategic decisions.

Methods

This report covers the results obtained through a telephone survey conducted from 8 July to 13 July 2021. The survey used a random sampling method and employed a dual sampling frame design with an approximate 1:1 ratio of landline telephone numbers to mobile phone numbers. A total of 502 Hong Kong residents aged 18 or above, including 252 landline telephone samples and 250 mobile phone samples, were successfully interviewed. The effective response rate was 74%. Based on the total sample size, the standard error was less than 2.2% (the sampling error was at +/- 4.5% 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 (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) The gap between awareness and action-taking

In general, most Hong Kong citizens are cognitively aware of the effectiveness of vaccination in preventing infectious diseases. About 82% of the respondents agreed that vaccination could effectively help protect them from infectious diseases. However, only 36% of the respondents indicated that they had taken actions to receive vaccination shot(s) against infectious diseases (such as seasonal influenza, hepatitis and HPV) over the past three years.

(2) The major groups with vaccine hesitancy

Around 48.5% of the respondents indicated that they had not yet received the COVID-19 vaccine. Of this group, 19.6% said they planned to be vaccinated [accounting for 9.5% of the total sample size]. 39.6% were considering getting vaccinated [accounting for 19.2% of the total sample size], and 39.8% did not intend to be vaccinated [accounting for 19.3% of the total sample size].

Relatively, the youngest group aged 18-29 had a lower willingness to be vaccinated. Among them, 51.2% did not plan to be vaccinated in the next month. 47.1% of the respondents aged 30-39 also said they did not plan to get vaccinated for the time being. On the contrary, the older groups' willingness for vaccination was relatively higher. Among them, the respondents aged 50-59 had the highest willingness to get vaccinated, with 41.5% planning to receive the COVID-19 vaccine in the next month.

Are you planning to be vaccinated in the next month?

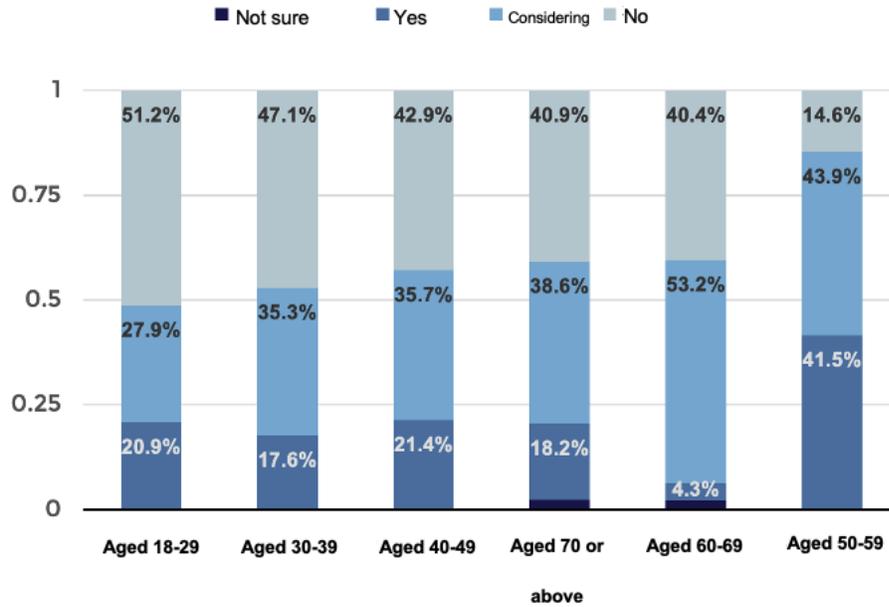


Figure 1: Vaccination willingness (by unvaccinated citizens) in different age groups

There was no significant difference across gender, educational attainment, and income groups. The results were similar to the findings of previous local and overseas related studies.

(3) Reasons for COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy

For the reasons of being hesitant or unwilling to receive the vaccine, 40.2% of the respondents in the unvaccinated group pointed that health conditions (such as poor health conditions or chronic diseases) were their main concern; the second common answer (25.4% of the respondents) was the safety of the vaccines (including side effects, sequelae and death). Other recorded reasons are shown in Figure 2 (sorting by descending percentage).

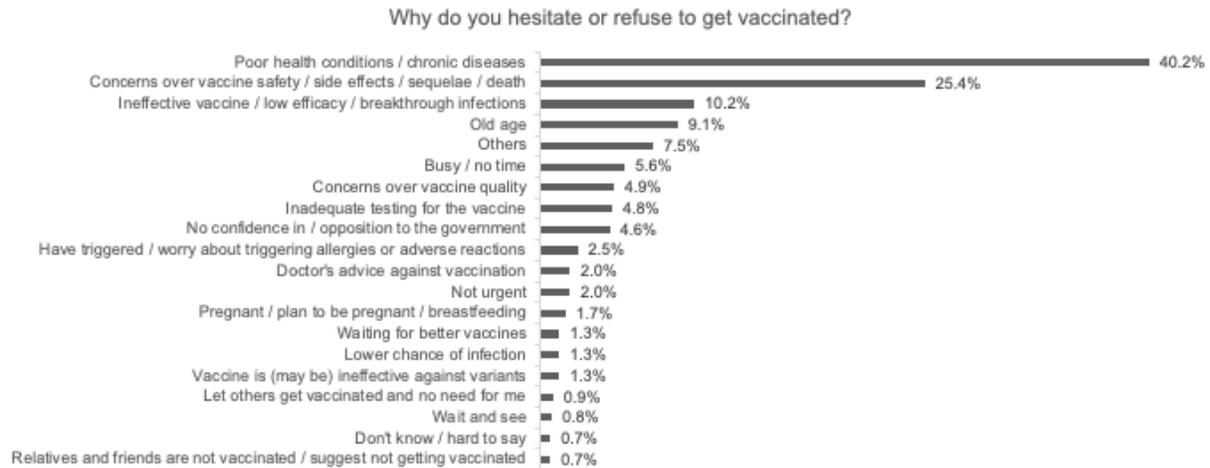


Figure 2: Reasons for vaccine hesitancy or refusal among the respondents

(4) Reasons for receiving vaccination

As for the vaccinated respondents, most of them (72.4%) indicated the major reason for vaccination was “to protect themselves or people around them”; followed by “fulfil job requirements” (17.3%) and “social responsibility” (12.5%). Other mentioned reasons are shown in Figure 3 (sorting by descending percentage).

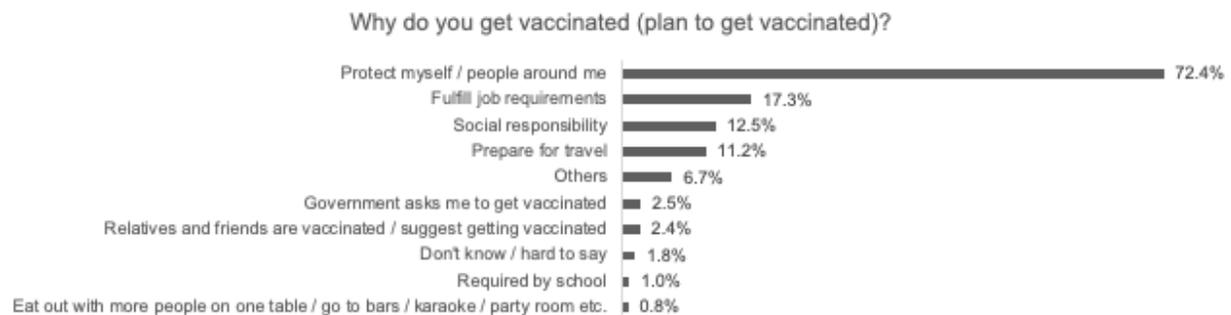


Figure 3: Reasons for getting vaccinated among the respondents

(5) Confidence in different vaccines

Comparing the two vaccines currently available in Hong Kong, the public has higher confidence in the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine (Comirnaty). Respondents were asked to rate their perceived

safety and efficacy of each vaccine on a 10-point scale (higher score represents higher level of perceived safety and effectiveness). For the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, the average safety score was 6.3 (N = 464) and the average efficacy score was 6.5 (N = 477). The average safety and efficacy scores for the Sinovac vaccine (CoronaVac) were 5.3 (N = 485) and 5.1 (N = 484) respectively.

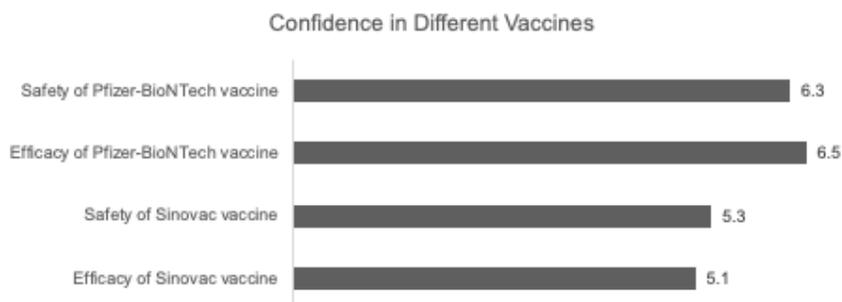


Figure 4: Respondents' confidence in different vaccines

Summary

The vaccination rate in Hong Kong is gradually improving. The vaccination rate of first dose is nearly 50% of the whole population now. How to mobilize, encourage and assist our citizens to actively participate in the vaccination programme will be the key to the success in fighting against the epidemic. Our survey data reveal that encouragement and support to the public from cognitive awareness to behavioural actions would be a feasible direction to alleviate the vaccine hesitancy in Hong Kong. Among those who have not been vaccinated, nearly 20% are planning to go and receive their first dose and around 40% are considering it. Proportionally, these two types of people make up about 30% of the population. If these citizens can take actions proactively, it will not be difficult for Hong Kong society to reach the herd immunity threshold of 70% vaccination rate.

The research team of Hong Kong Baptist University will continue to monitor the dynamic changes in public opinion in the coming weeks, so that different stakeholders in our society can keep up with the status of the long battle against the COVID-19 epidemic. Let's work together to end the epidemic and return to normal life soon!