



Attitudes Towards Vaccines from Young People in North West London

About Healthwatch Ealing

Healthwatch Ealing (HWE) is an independent, statutory organisation representing people who use NHS and publicly funded health and care services in Ealing. We collect patient and public feedback and use these experiences as evidence to drive change, campaign for and influence commissioners and providers to ensure the design and delivery of services is equitable for all.

Our vision is for Ealing to have high quality services, consistent levels of public engagement and an excellent service user experience that meets patient needs and preferences.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank all of the participants for taking part in this study. We want to thank our steering group of 11–13-year-olds who helped us create our vaccine for young people

We thank the schools and youth clubs in NWL that helped us administer our survey.

We would also like to thank the public health team from the Ealing Council and the NWL London Vaccination Board for their input in creating our survey materials.

About this Project

Aim

To discover what thoughts and opinions towards vaccination and immunization is amongst young people in North West London. Vaccine hesitancy has been on the rise since the covid-19 pandemic, and determining how young people feel about vaccines is important for developing vaccine education

Methodology

Our goal for this study was to tell the story of an underheard and often forgotten about population. In order to best achieve this goal, we elected to use interviews and surveys in a mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Profile of Participants

We primarily focused on two groups during our study, first children between the ages of 10–18, and second the rest of the general population 18+. We also focused on efforts in areas that had low vaccine uptake, such as Acton.

We did not limit ourselves by race, religion, nor gender, and sought to capture the opinions of underheard communities when and where possible during the course of this study.

In total we engaged with 86 children, and 328 adults.

Executive Summary

- Overall, both children and adults have positive attitudes towards vaccines, only a small minority having negative sentiments towards them.
- Only 4% of children and adults have **never** gotten a vaccine of any sort.
- We found that HPV was lagging behind other vaccines in uptake, reasons given for this were gender-based misconceptions.
- 36% of children do not list a trusted source as their primary place to get vaccine information.
- We found misconceptions about what a vaccine is and does to be prominent reasons for distrusting them.
- Most people believe more transparency around vaccinations would make them more comfortable with them.

Executive Summary: Recommendations

- Our recommendations following this project include:
 - Conducting an information campaign centered on the HPV vaccine to combat gender-based misconceptions.
 - That any education surrounding vaccines include how to determine what is and is not a reliable source
 - That further detailed vaccine education be given in schools and to the public.
 - That health teams continue to have a presence in the communities of NWL, in order to continue to build trust in the healthcare system.

How to read this report

This report is divided into sections including;

1. Our Findings

- a. Which vaccines have been taken** – Here we examined resident's vaccine history, what they have / have not taken, and for what reason.
- b. Where do people get their vaccine information from?** – Where our population primarily hear or learn about vaccines from.
- c. What do people think about vaccines?** – The overall opinion on vaccines, and whether or not they cause harm.

2. Appendix – Other findings, statistics, and demographics.

It should be noted that all percentages in this report are rounded to their nearest whole number.



Our Findings

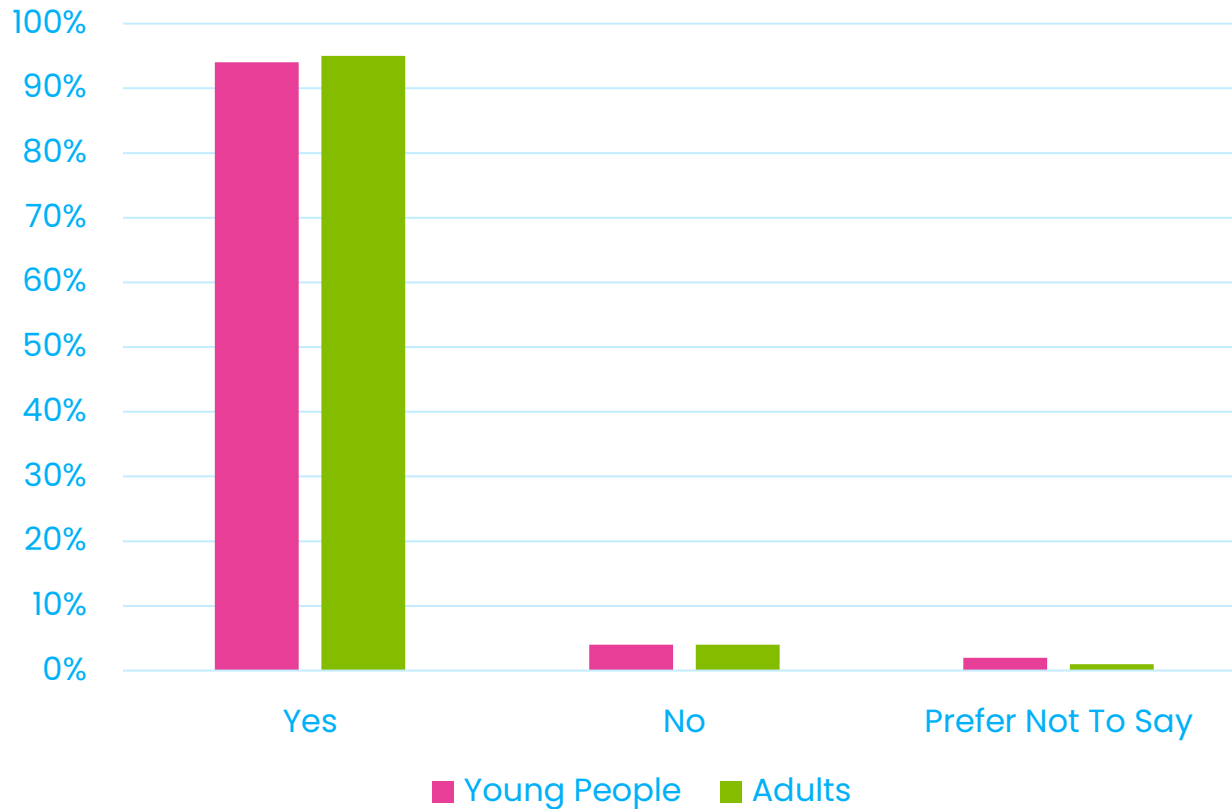


**Which vaccines
have been taken?**

healthwatch

Have you Ever Been Vaccinated?

How young people and adults compared



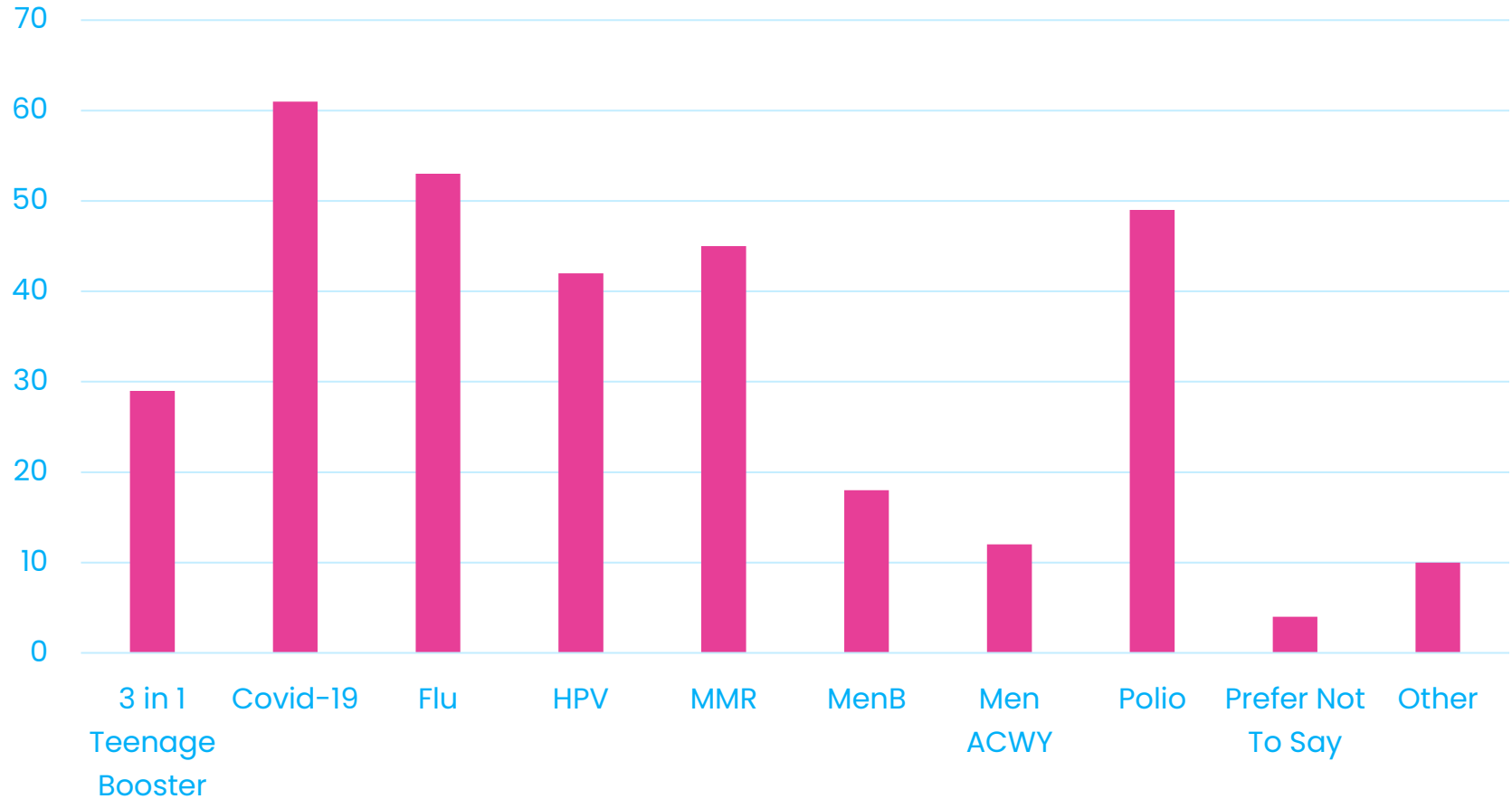
Have you Ever Been Vaccinated?

We asked respondents if they had ever in their life had a vaccination. From our findings only **4%** of adults and children we surveyed told us that they have **never** received a jab.

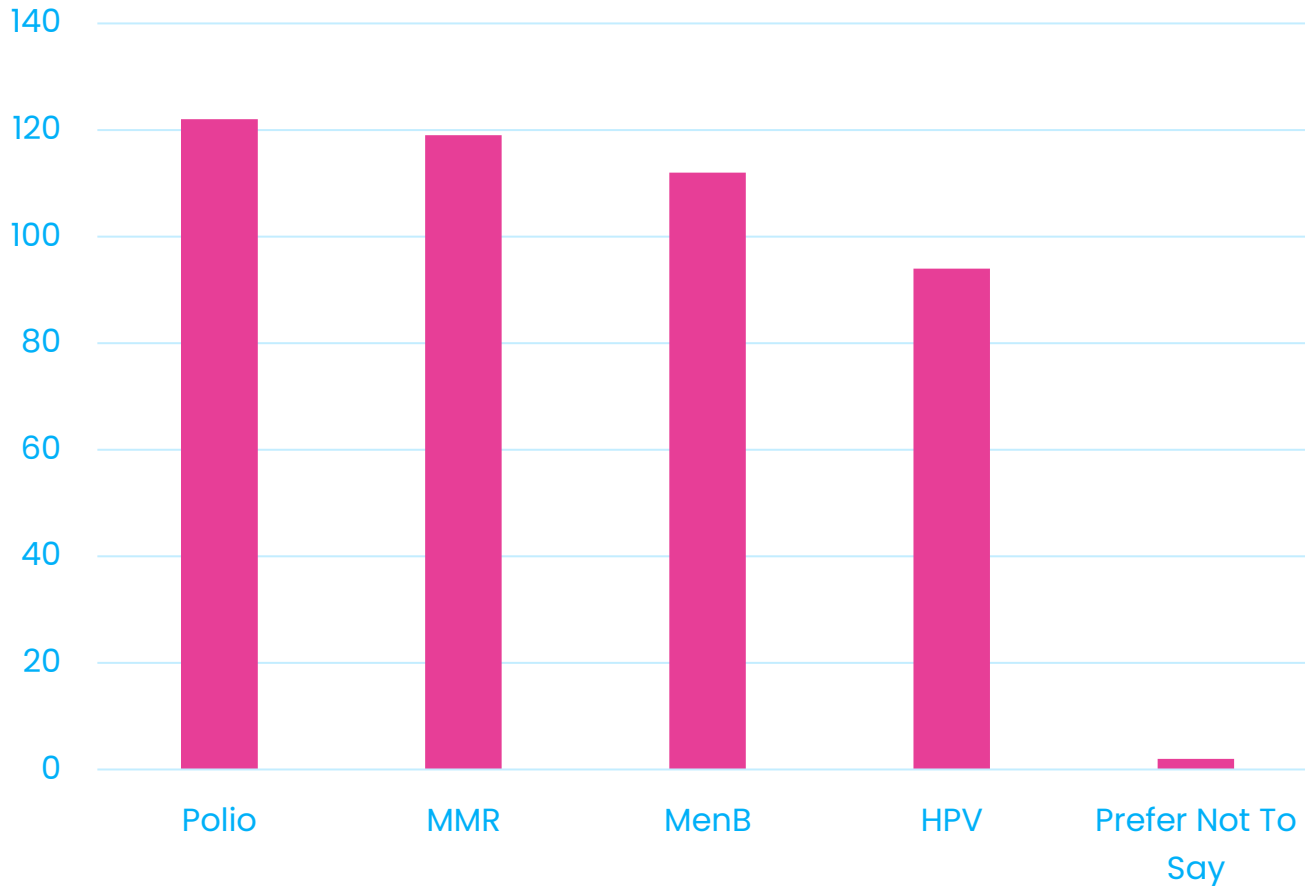
While this figure is relatively low, it is vital to know why this proportion of people have never been vaccinated – as we explore further in this report

This finding is important because it helps establish a number. If in future studies we see that percentage increase, then we know vaccine hesitancy is in fact increasing.

Children: Which Vaccines Do You Have?



Adults: Which vaccines their children have.



The HPV Issue

One of the most concerning things we discovered during the course of this study was pertaining to the vaccine used to prevent the **Human papillomavirus**. We found that this vaccine lagged behind others in both children and adults.

We believe that this is caused by the misconception that only women need this vaccine. Several respondents told us that they believed that they did not need the vaccine for themselves or their sons because they thought it was only for women.

HPV is a leading cause of cervical cancer so it is often emphasized that young women get the vaccine, but boys can and should receive it as well, since patients with HPV are prone to certain head and neck cancers (Sabatini et al 2019)

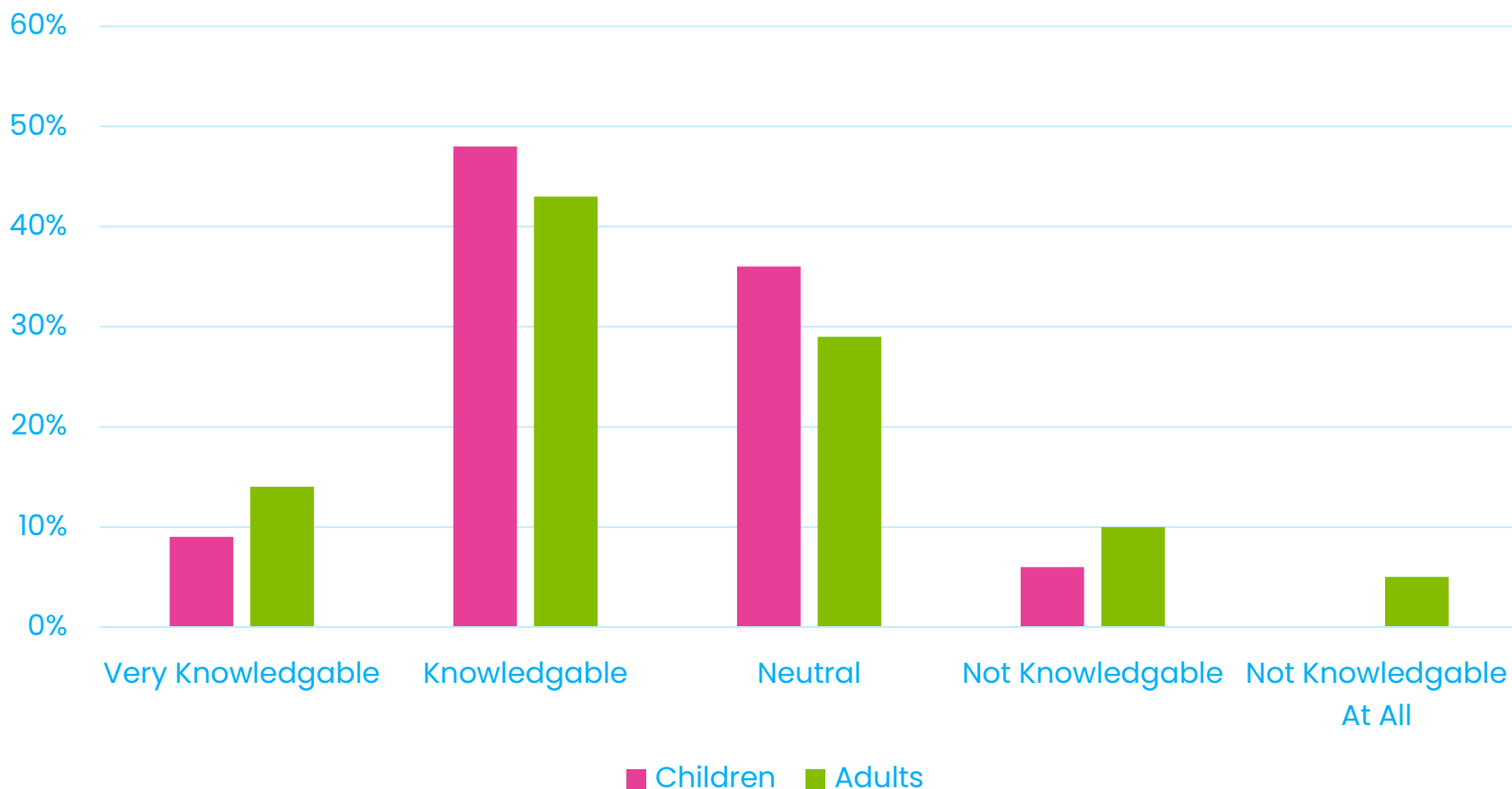
While other vaccines, such as men B, were lower, our respondents did not mention why they weren't taking them as they did with HPV

Recommendation: HPV

We believe the best way to combat this misconception would be to have an information campaign centering on the impacts of HPV that are not just cervical cancer. We need to be putting emphasis on the fact that men are also impacted.

Reaching out to sports clubs, schools, and other social settings where men and boys gather might help to make an effective campaign.

How do you rate your vaccine knowledge



How do you rate your vaccine knowledge

When asked how they would rate their known vaccine knowledge, we see a divide between children and adults. Adults were more likely to tell us that they were not knowledgeable than their child counterparts, who were more likely to say they were neutral or knowledgeable on their own knowledge.

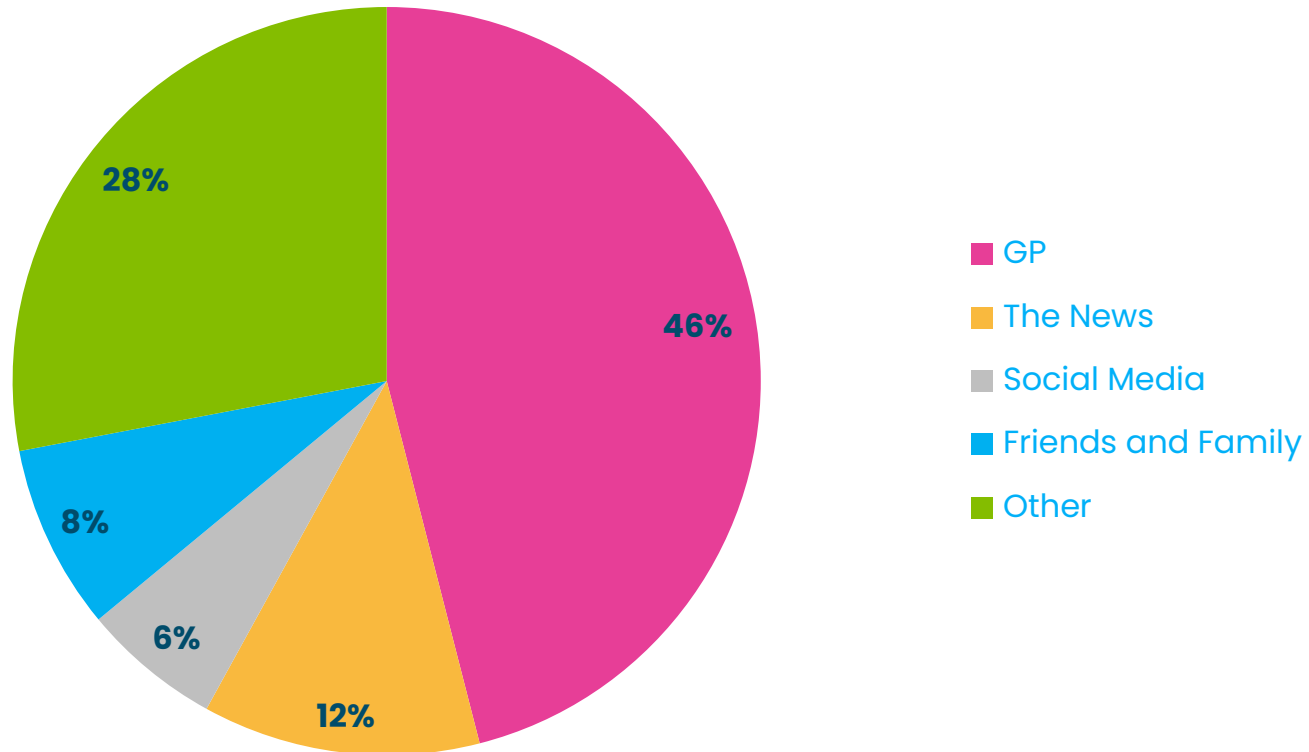
This could be explained by children currently being in science and health class, having been taught the information more recently than their adult counterparts.



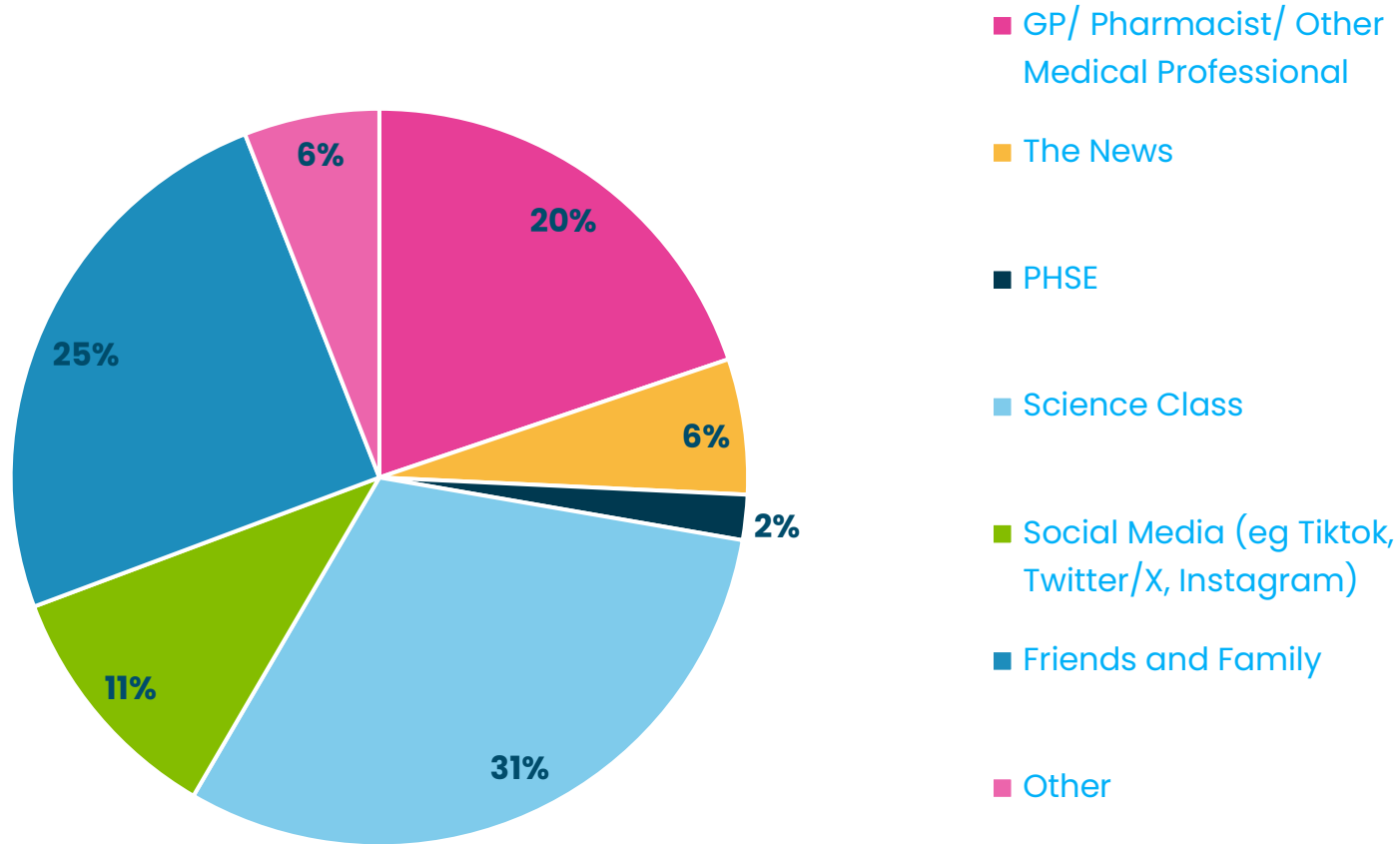
**Where do people
get their vaccine
information from?**

healthwatch

Adults: What is the primary source of your information on vaccines?



Children: What is the primary source of your information on vaccines?



Where they get their information on vaccines from

This question was very important for us to ask, as **where** people get their information about vaccines from can influence **how** they think about them.

20% of Children and 46% of adults told us that GPs and other medical professionals were their primary source of information.

As children are in compulsory education, we asked them about science class and PHSE, **where 31% and 2% of our respondents told us that they got their information from.**

We did see a higher percentage of children listing social media as their primary source as opposed to their adult counterparts, **11% and 6%** respectively. This is in line with children using social media more than their older counterparts.

Information continued

People will often seek advice from friends and family for guidance in life, We saw a vast difference between children and adults in this category. **Whilst only 8% of adults told us this was their primary source, 25% of our child respondents told us that it was theirs.**

This can be explained by the fact that children naturally are more dependent on their family and will often come to them in order to seek advice about things that impact their life.

36% of children do not list what can be considered to be a trusted source as their primary place to get vaccine information.

Recommendation: Education on Source Validity

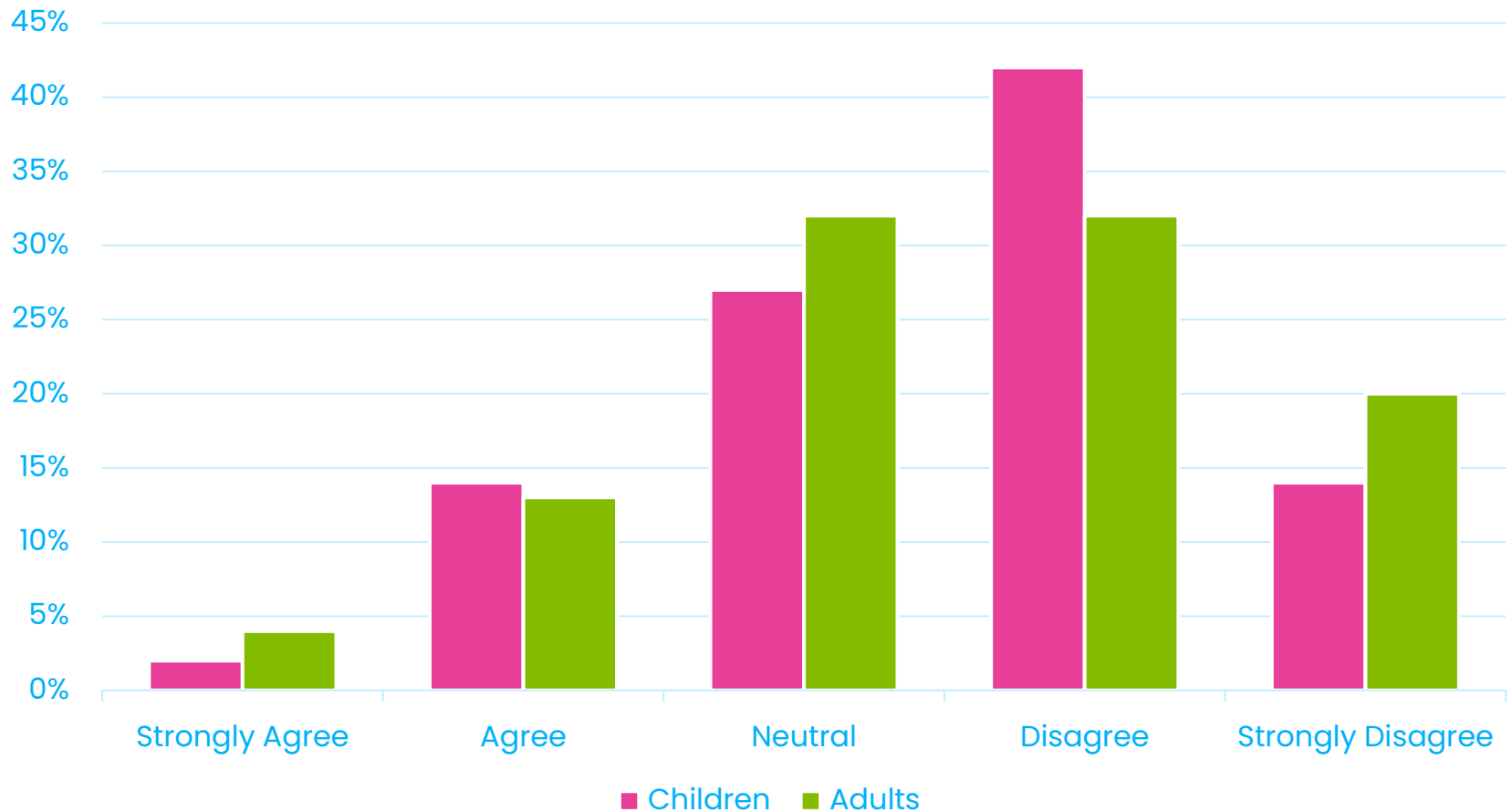
We strongly recommend integrating thorough education on identifying reliable sources and detecting misinformation into vaccine educational materials. Such an inclusion is vital not only for aiding individuals in evaluating the credibility of vaccine-related information but also for empowering them to navigate information across various aspects of life.

By providing detailed guidance on discerning credible sources and recognizing misinformation within vaccine educational resources, we equip individuals with essential skills for informed decision-making. This includes building trust. This approach not only enhances vaccination literacy but also fosters broader critical thinking abilities applicable to diverse contexts, ultimately contributing to a more resilient and well-informed society.



What do people think about vaccines?

When Asked if they believe vaccines can cause harm



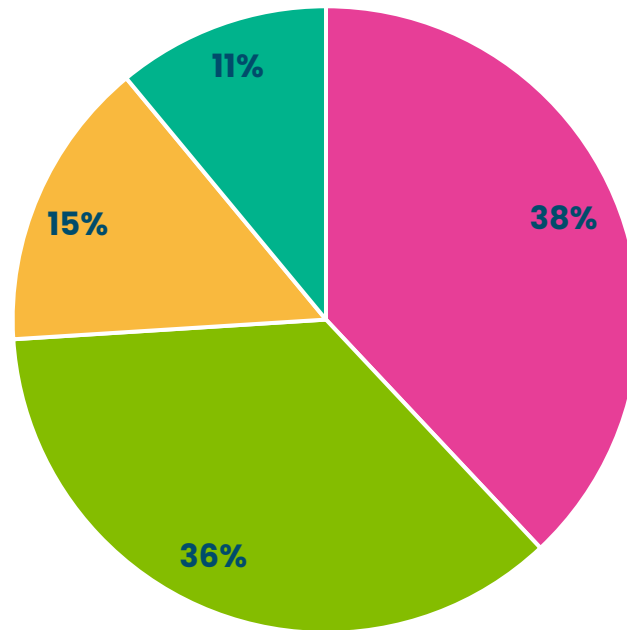
Belief that Vaccines Can Cause Harm (cont)

We found that children and adults were mostly similar to each other when it comes to their opinions on whether they believe that vaccines can cause harm.

When we asked the population if they believed vaccines can cause harm we received a large diversity of opinion. Some people told us they did not believe vaccines caused harm whatsoever, others told us that yes they can cause harm but the benefits outweighed the risks, to others telling us they believed that we were simply test subject in an experiment run by pharmaceutical companies.

That being said a clear majority do not believe that vaccines cause harm.

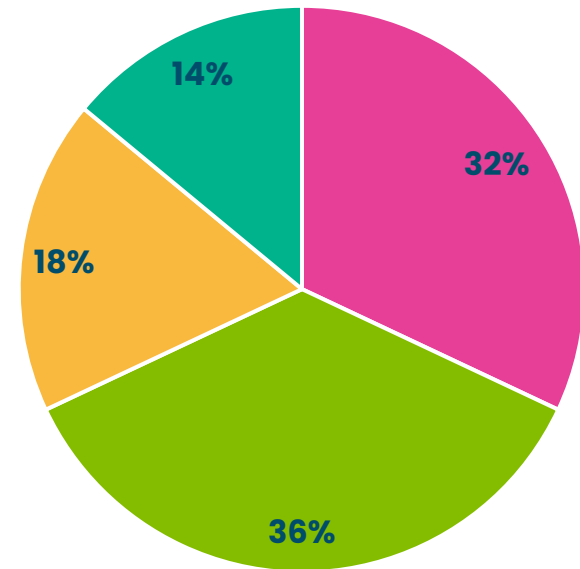
How has the pandemic changed views for children?



- View Has Not Changed
- View Has Changed Positive
- View Has Changed Negative
- View Has Changed Unsure

How the views of unverified sources have changed

When we examine the 36% of those who do not list a trusted source as their primary source of information, we see a decrease in those whose view has not changed, and a slight increase in negative change and unsure change.



- View has Not Changed
- View has Changed Positive
- View Has Changed Negative
- View Has Changed Unure

How has the pandemic changed views for children?

We wanted to know how living through a pandemic at a young age impacted how one viewed vaccines. When we asked young people how their views changed:

From our results we see that a plurality of respondents did not change their views, they already thought that vaccines were positive. **36% told us that their views changed for the positive.** They realised how important vaccines are, and how herd immunity is beneficial to society.

11% did tell us that their views became more negative since the pandemic. They attribute this to the government response to the pandemic, worries about side effects, and concerns over the speed of the covid-19 vaccine development.

What is causing concern for people

When asked what caused people concerns around vaccines, a common topic we heard was around the speed at which the covid-19 vaccine was created. Adults especially said that how quickly it was made gave them pause around it, this has since extended to other vaccines.

We also heard misconceptions surrounding how vaccines worked. People told us they lost faith in them because they still got covid despite being jabbed for it.

Other areas for concern we heard about included **side effects**. Those who have had bad side effects from vaccines in the past are less likely to take them in the future. They feel as though vaccines will only make them sick, as opposed to helping prevent sickness.

Quote:

"[...] around side effects. I gave my older son a flu vaccine and he was the most ill when we all got flu."

What would make people more comfortable?

When asked what would make them more comfortable in order to get vaccinated in the future our respondents told us that they would appreciate further information about vaccines.

Transparency was the most common thing mentioned when asked what would make individuals more comfortable to take vaccines in the future.

Quote: “More information, lack of enforcement and/or consequences if not taken, thorough public testing, being funded by government associations rather than large pharmaceutical companies.”

Recommendation: Concern and Comfort

We **recommend that further detailed vaccine education be given in schools and to the public.** This education should include the history of vaccines, what goes into vaccines, how they are made, and how side effects occur and what they mean. **This will help address the concerns of those hesitant to take vaccines.**

Recommendation: Information Sessions in Community Centres

The NWL Vaccine Teams should continue to link up with community centres and or the newly established family hubs in order to disseminate information regarding vaccines and to continue to have a reliable link for outreach into the community. Having a presence in the community can go a long way to build trust, and the current work the NWL vaccination team is doing is doing just that.

We held a pilot of an information session focusing on the MMR vaccine in Hammersmith and Fulham. A survey conducted with participants of the Session indicated that they felt more informed about vaccines afterwards, with many expressing their intention to vaccinate their children or feeling more inclined to do so.

Conclusion

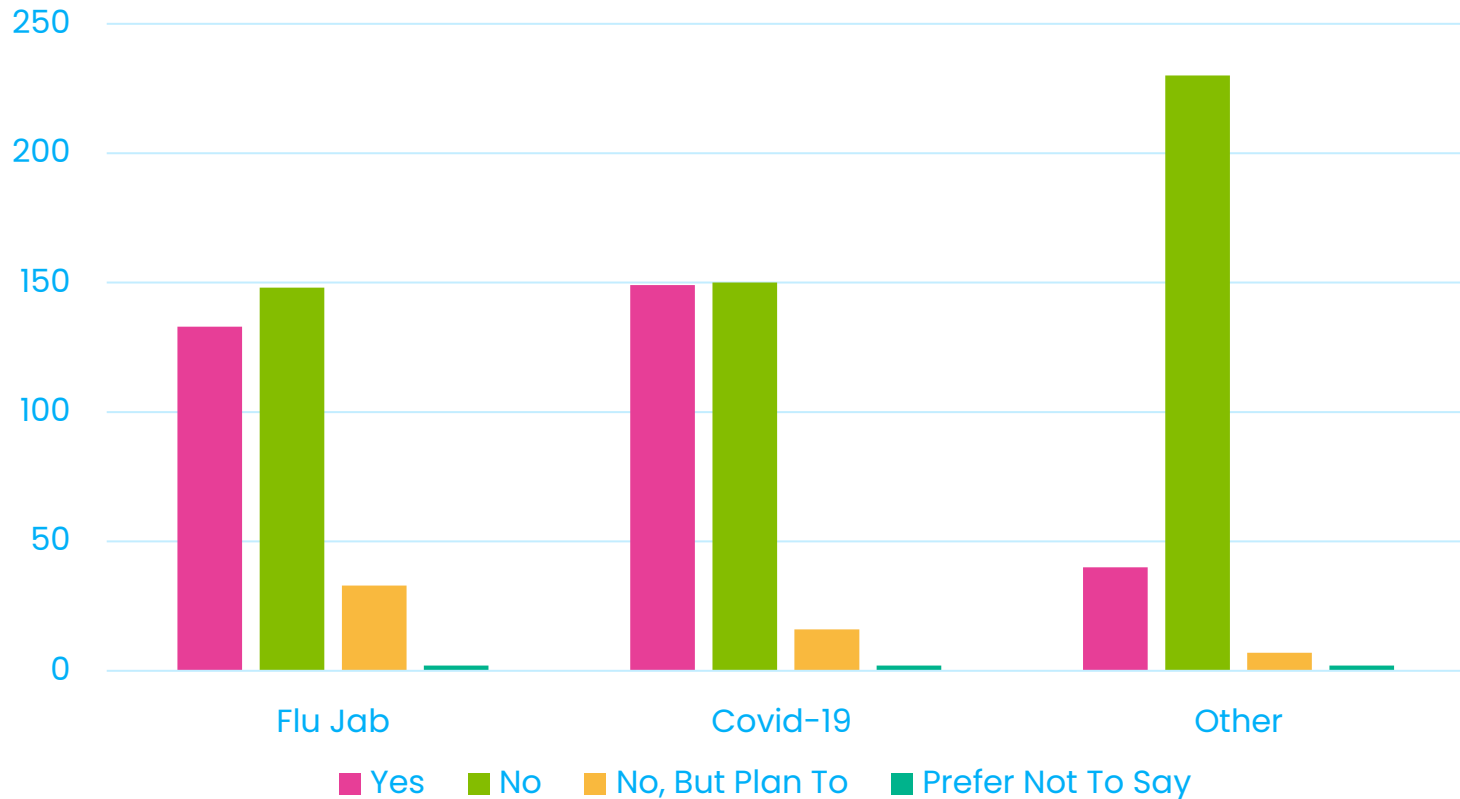
We acknowledge vaccinations have been a sensitive topic in the 21st century. However, we as a community must endeavor to have a robust vaccine education programme that is fit for purpose. We believe, based on our recommendations, that vaccine education in NWL can be more effective, and hopefully lead to an increase in vaccine uptake if implemented.



Appendix

Adults Yearly Vaccines

When asked if they had received any yearly vaccinations in the last 12 months

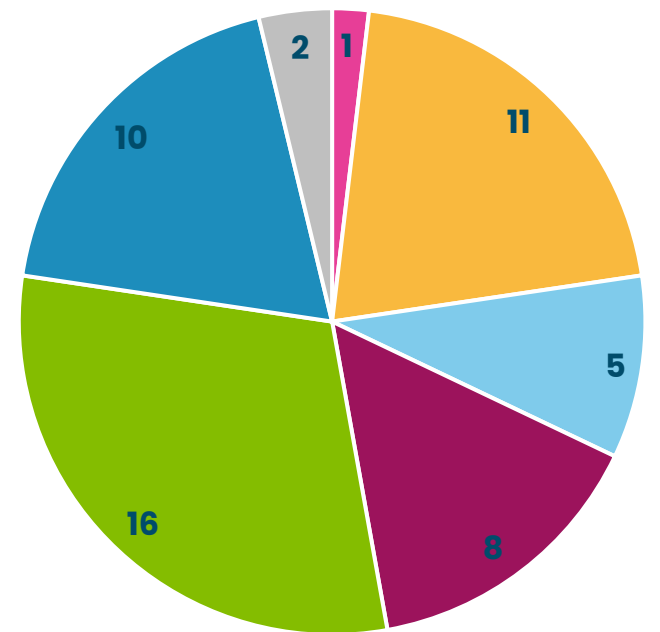


Yearly vaccinations

- When asked about yearly vaccinations, we find that only half of those asked get them.
- Those who do get yearly vaccinations tell us they do because they themselves are immunocompromised, they do not want to deal with getting sick, or because their GP recommended them to do so.
- Those who do not get regular vaccines told us that they did not want to bother with them, as they think their own immune system is enough, or that they got sick when having had them in the past, so they do not see a point in continuing to get yearly vaccinations.
- Our earlier recommendation on furthering vaccines education should address this

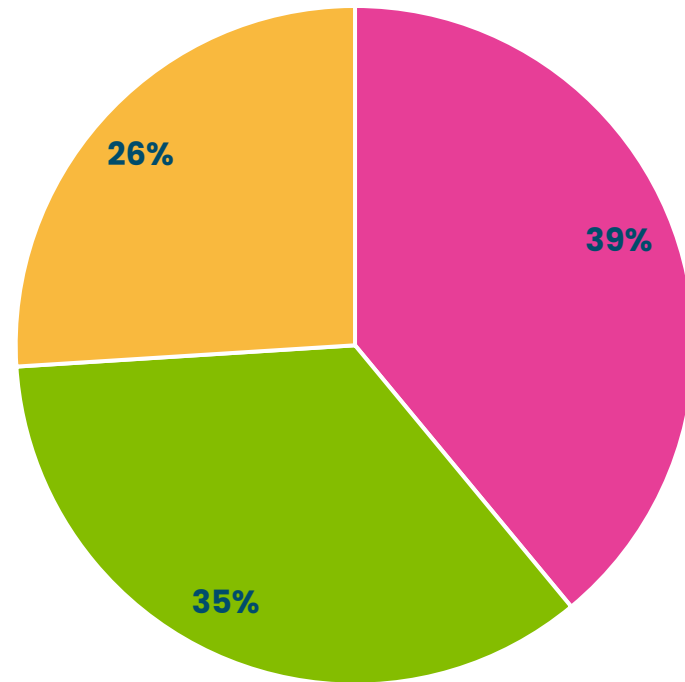
What age do children believe they should be able to choose to get vaccinated on their own?

We asked children at what age they believe they should be able to decide when they got vaccinated without having parental approval, a majority told us that above the age of 14 was appropriate. Some respondents did emphasize that it should be a case-by-case basis depending on the maturity of the child.



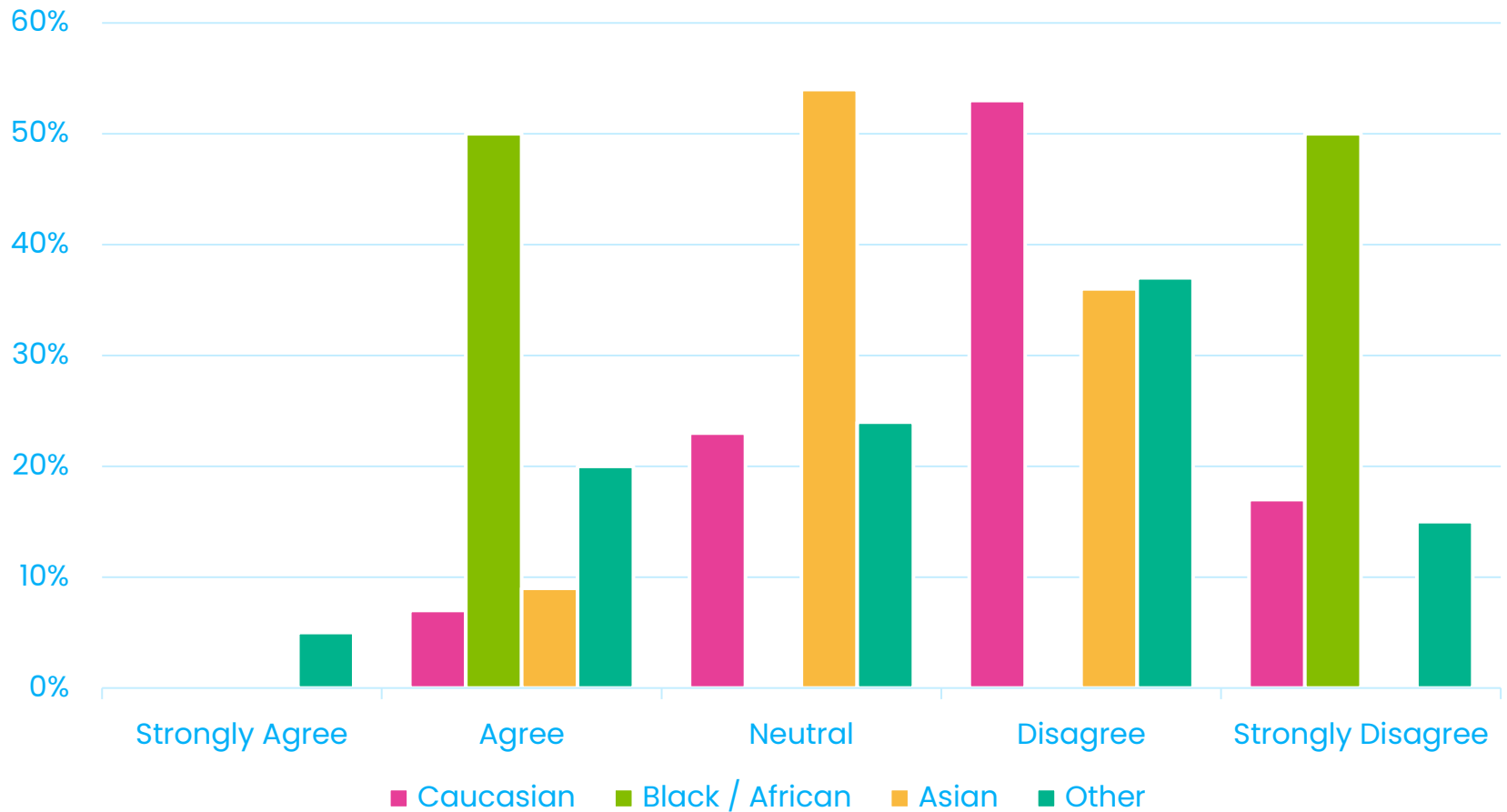
Do Children Want to Learn More about Vaccines?

We asked explicitly if children wanted more education on vaccines, more than half told us no or that they were unsure. This can be explained by the earlier knowledge confidence we saw in our young respondents.

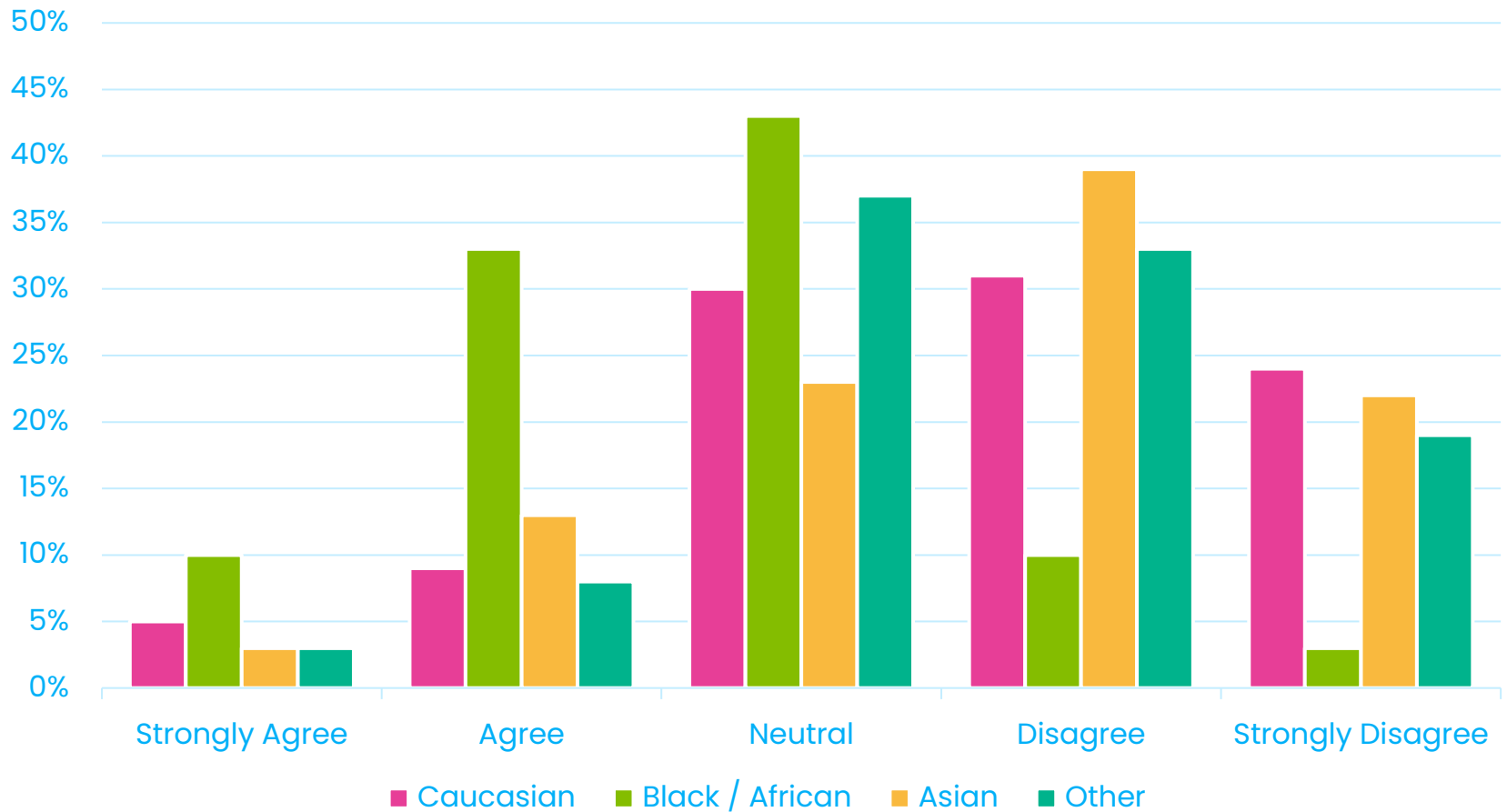


■ Yes ■ No ■ Unsure

When Asked if they believe vaccines can cause harm: Children Ethnic Breakdown



When Asked if they believe vaccines can cause harm: Adult Ethnic Breakdown



Having your Child Vaccinated

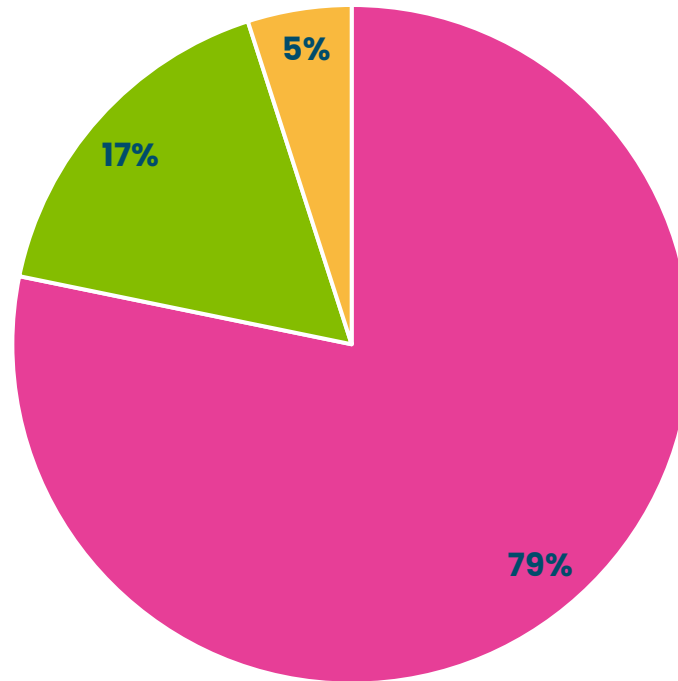
Parents when asked if they have ever had their child vaccinated

Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	102 75%
No	19 14%
I am considering my options	15 11%

How Often 18+ get vaccinated

Answer Choices	Responses
Yearly	128 41%
Every Few Years	24 8%
Whenever my GP tells me to	90 29%
I Do Not Get Vaccinated Yearly	63 20%
Prefer Not to Say	7 2%

Do children have the opportunity to discuss vaccines with their parents



■ Yes ■ No ■ Other

Demographics Children

Gender	Percentage %
Man(including trans man)	27%
Woman (including trans woman)	66%
Non- binary	0%
Other	4%
Prefer not to say	4%
Total	

Age	Percentage %
10-11	4%
12-13	14%
14-15	35%
16-17	32%
18	15%
Total	

Ethnicity	Percentage %
White British	35%
Gypsy or Irish traveller	1%
Irish	1%
Roma	0%
Asian British	6%
Indian	4%
Bangladeshi	0%
Pakistani	2%
Chinese	1%
Black British	1%
African	1%
Caribbean	0%
White and Asian	3%
White and Black African	1%
White and Black Caribbean	7%
Other	35%
Total	

Borough	Percentage %
Ealing	43%
Hammersmith & Fulham	17%
Hounslow	32%
Other	8%

Demographics Adults

Gender	Percentage %
Man(including trans man)	30%
Woman (including trans woman)	69%
Non- binary	0%
Other	0%
Prefer not to say	1%
Total	

Age	Percentage %
18-24	8%
25-34	19%
35-44	21%
45-54	16%
55-64	16%
65+	21%
Total	

Ethnicity	Percentage %
White British	29%
Gypsy or Irish traveller	0%
Irish	4%
Roma	0%
Asian British	12%
Indian	11%
Bangladeshi	1%
Pakistani	2%
Chinese	3%
Black British	3%
African	4%
Caribbean	3%
White and Asian	1%
White and Black African	1%
White and Black Caribbean	1%
Other	24%
Total	

Borough	Percentage %
Ealing	40%
Hammersmith & Fulham	42%
Hounslow	3%
Other	16%
Total	

Sources

Sabatini, M. E., & Chiocca, S. (2019, November 11). *Human papillomavirus as a driver of head and neck cancers*. Nature News.

About the Author

David Crawley is a Project Officer for HWE. He joined Healthwatch in May of 2023. He has a BA in Secondary Education a Masters in Public Administration from Marshall University.

Special Contributions by:

Carleen Duffy Area Manager

Ruchi Wadwha – Project and Engagement Officer.



For more information

Healthwatch Ealing

2nd floor, Rooms 15 & 16 | 45 St Mary's Rd |
Ealing | W5 5RG

Monday to Friday 9am- 5pm

Telephone: 020 3886 0830 | 07944387895

www.healthwatchealing.org.uk

E: info@healthwatchealing.org.uk

 [@HW_Ealing](https://twitter.com/HW_Ealing)

healthwatch