



# State of Vaccine Confidence in the EU+UK 2020:

## Executive Summary

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## Summary

In the State of Vaccine Confidence 2020, a total of 27,158 members of the public and 13,053 healthcare professionals (HCPs) are surveyed across the European Union (EU)'s 27 member states and the United Kingdom (UK), making this one of the largest ever single studies into Europeans' attitudes towards vaccines to date.

The public and healthcare professionals are surveyed on their confidence in vaccines generally (e.g. I think vaccines are important, safe, effective, and compatible with my religious beliefs) as well as on their views towards specific vaccines (e.g., I think the measles/mumps/rubella (MMR), seasonal influenza, and human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccines are important and safe).

Public and healthcare professionals' confidence is mapped across the EU+UK; a temporal comparison is made between values obtained in the 2018 State of Vaccine Confidence report; and the socio-economic drivers of vaccine confidence are determined. The study's key findings are outlined below.

# Key Findings

The State of Vaccine Confidence in the EU+UK 2020 report contains a number of key findings.

## Public confidence in vaccines across the EU+UK (Chapter 2)

- A large majority of the EU+UK public believes that vaccines are important (92%), safe (87%), and effective (90%)
- A large majority also agrees that the MMR (measles, mumps, rubella), seasonal influenza (flu), and HPV (human papillomavirus) vaccines are important and safe (Figure 2.1)
- Confidence in the safety and importance of vaccines generally, and in the MMR and seasonal influenza vaccine specifically, have increased sharply since 2018 across the EU+UK (Figure 2.2, Figure 2.3, Table 2.2B, Figure 2.7, Figure 2.8)

## Public confidence in vaccines: country-specific (Chapter 2)

- An overall vaccine confidence metric is created and used to rank countries by their overall confidence in vaccines (Figure 2.4)
- This metric is defined as the percentage of respondents agreeing that vaccines are important, safe, effective, compatible with religious beliefs, and that MMR, HPV and influenza vaccines are important and safe
- Based on this metric, Portugal and Spain (both 70%) have the highest vaccine confidence across the EU in 2020, while Hungary (36%) and Malta (39%) have the lowest (Figure 2.4)

## Changes in vaccine confidence since 2018 (Chapter 2)

- Since 2018, overall confidence has increased in all but four countries: Hungary, Romania, Greece, and the UK (though the confidence drop was minor in these last two countries)
- The percentage of respondents agreeing that vaccines are safe has fallen by 5.7 percentage points (pp) in the Netherlands (Table 2.2A and Figure 2.5)
- The percentage agreeing that vaccines are important has decreased by 4.2 pp in Spain (Table 2.2A and Figure 2.5)
- Although confidence in the MMR vaccine has increased across many EU states (such as Finland, Belgium, and Poland), confidence has decreased in the Netherlands, where agreement that the MMR vaccine is safe and important has decreased by 8.1pp and 8.8pp respectively (Table 2.2B and Figure 2.7)
- Almost every country has seen considerable increases in their perceptions of the importance and safety of the seasonal influenza vaccine (Table 2.2B and Figure 2.8)

## Determinants of vaccine confidence (Chapter 2)

- Females are found to be less likely than males to have high overall confidence in 11 countries, most notably in Czechia (Table 2.4)

- Over 65s have higher overall confidence than younger age groups in most EU+UK countries (Table 2.4)
- Respondents who do not provide a religious affiliation report lower confidence than atheists/agnostics: an effect found in 12 countries (Table 2.4)

### Healthcare professional vaccine confidence (Chapter 3)

- Overall confidence among HCPs (General practitioners (GPs), other doctors, nurses, other health care workers) is higher than confidence among the general public
- GP confidence is relatively low in Bulgaria, Croatia, and Romania (Figure 3.2)
- GPs surveyed in Czechia, Hungary, and Slovakia are the least likely to recommend the MMR vaccine to patients (Table 3.3)
- The majority of GPs surveyed in Czechia and Bulgaria would not recommend the seasonal influenza vaccine to pregnant women (Table 3.3)
- Only 68% of GPs surveyed in Czechia, 74% in Slovakia, and 75% in Bulgaria would recommend the HPV vaccine, the lowest among all 28 countries (Table 3.3)

### Comparison between healthcare professionals and the public (Chapter 4)

- A strong association is found between the percentage of the public with high confidence in the safety and effectiveness of vaccines and the percentage of healthcare professionals with high confidence (Table 4.1)
- A strong association is also found between the percentage of the public with high confidence in the safety and importance of the HPV and the percentage of healthcare professionals with high confidence (Table 4.1)

## Conclusions

Overall confidence in vaccination in the EU+UK is high in 2020, both among the public and healthcare professionals. Moreover, confidence in the importance and safety of the MMR and seasonal influenza vaccines has increased markedly in a large number of countries. The State of Vaccine Confidence in the EU in 2020 report reveals that countries can undergo significant changes in vaccine confidence in short periods of time, highlighting the importance of continuous monitoring of vaccine confidence to allow rapid responses to address waning confidence and mitigate damaging effects on vaccination uptake.

Vaccine confidence is particularly important in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although perceptions towards a novel COVID-19 vaccine are not explored, this study highlights countries and socio-economic groups with relatively low confidence in vaccines that may require targeted attention to confidence building.