

## Willingness to receive the COVID-19 vaccine in Switzerland: Who wants it, who does not, and why?

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**The debate around the Swiss vaccination campaign is in full swing. How big is the willingness to vaccinate in Switzerland? Who wants to get vaccinated and why? And who is still hesitating or refuses vaccination? Are we really as vaccination weary as portrayed in the media? We explore these questions with data from the COVID-19 MOSAiCH survey and show that even those willing to be vaccinated are skeptical and that much persuasion is still needed to reach a high vaccination coverage.**

At first, we did not have enough vaccine doses, now nobody wants them anymore. As headlined by 20 minutes<sup>2</sup> for example, every third person under 35 rejects vaccination and also the internet portal of the Swiss public television 'srf' claims that the upcoming summer break rather seems to discourage young people to get vaccinated.<sup>3</sup> The 'Tagesanzeiger'<sup>4</sup> argues along similar lines, noting strong differences between cantons, between women and men, and between age groups when it comes to vaccination.

According to the COVID-19 MOSAiCH survey conducted in spring 2021, around one-tenth of the survey respondents were already vaccinated at the time of data collection. Of those who had not yet been vaccinated, just under half said they were definitely going to be vaccinated and 28 percent were probably going to be vaccinated. Taken together, this sums up to a vaccination readiness of 78%, which is very positive at first sight. On closer inspection, however, it becomes clear that the group that probably wants to be vaccinated has little reason to do so at this particular time (see next section). In addition, there is a relatively broad skepticism about the safety and efficacy of the vaccine. If the vaccination coverage of the population is to be increased significantly in the coming weeks, there is still a lot of convincing to be done.

### *Get vaccinated to return to normality*

The reasons to get vaccinated for COVID-19 are easy to grasp. One third wants to return to a normal life and another third hopes it will help to contain the spread of the virus. In addition to these two main reasons, respondents say that they want to protect either themselves (17%) or family members (9%). Only a small part mentions that another reason (4%) was decisive, that it was the turn of her or his age group to get vaccinated (3%) or because the job required it (2%). Precisely the two main reasons provide little incentive to actually get vaccinated now in summer. Not only in Switzerland but also abroad, measures are being more and more relaxed. And although the Delta variant threatens us with a new wave, cases are currently very low in Switzerland.

With about 22%, an important share of the respondents is critical of vaccination. 14% will probably not and 8% will certainly not get vaccinated. As shown in Figure 1, **there are** more women (29%) than men (20.6%) **who do not** want to get vaccinated. Also, the vaccination readiness decreases for the young people as well as for people without tertiary education. So far, our results are in line with media reports.

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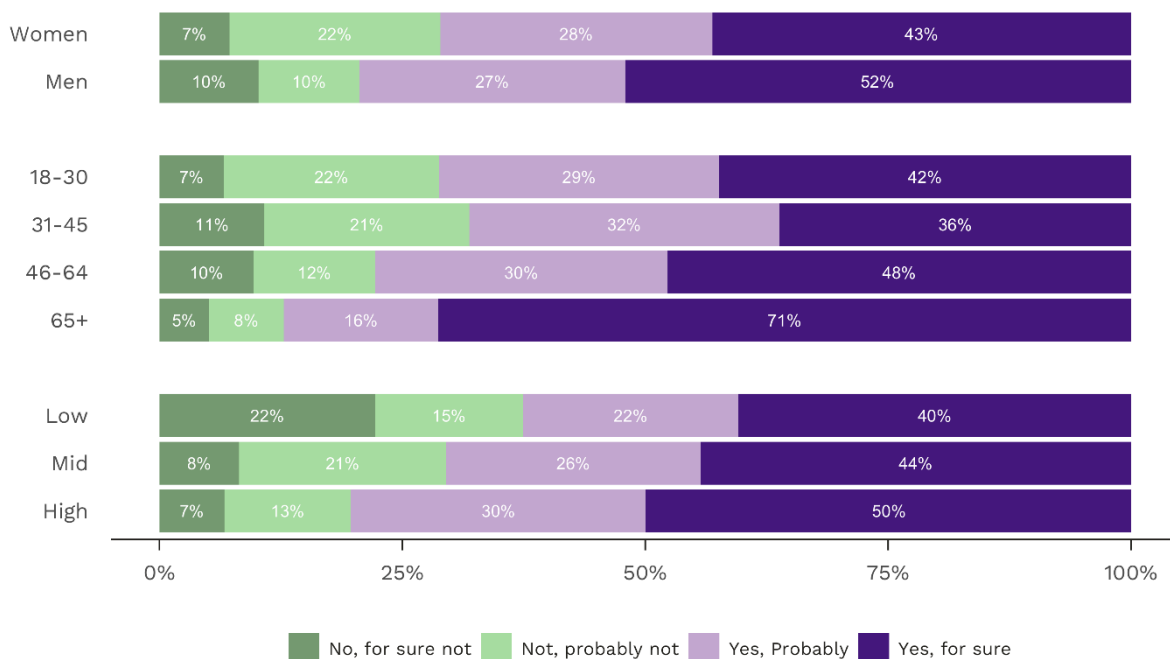
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<sup>2</sup> Issue from Zurich from June 18, 2021, page 3.

<sup>3</sup> Issue from June 22, 2021. <https://www.srf.ch/news/schweiz/coronavirus-kein-run-auf-impftermine-bei-jugendlichen>.

<sup>4</sup> Issue from June 22, 2021. <https://tagesanzeiger.ch/in-diesen-kantonen-ist-die-impfskepsis-am-groessten-334761356329>.

**Figure 1: Vaccination readiness according to sex, age, and education**

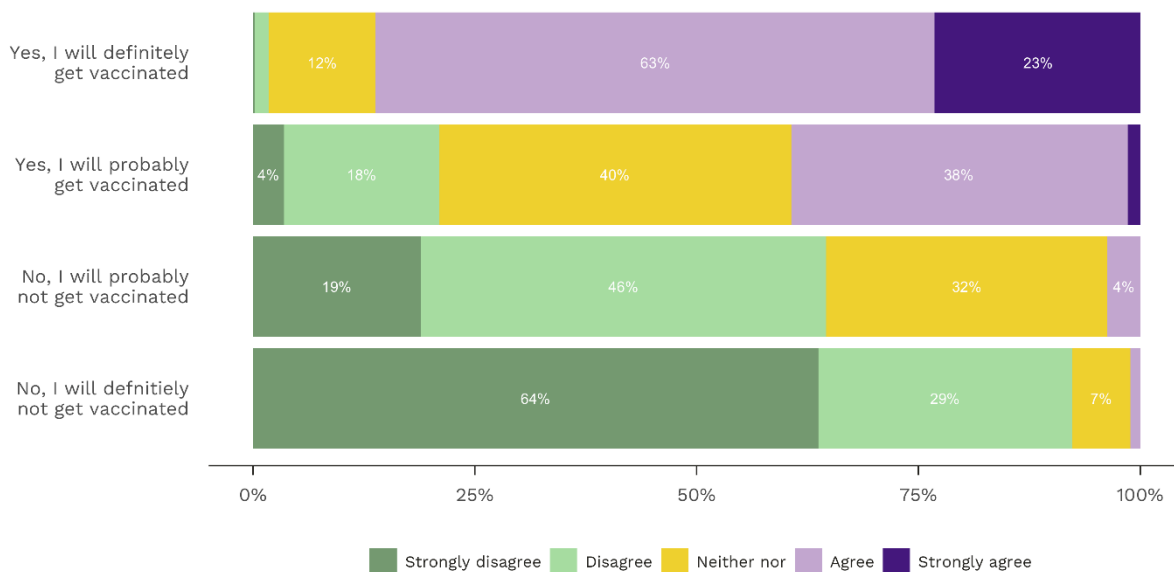


Note: Women n=515, Men n=538; 18-30 n= 198, 31-45 n= 323, 46-64 n= 329, 65+ n= 195; Low (ISCED 0,1,2) n= 99, Mid (ISCED 3) n= 282, High (ISCED 4,5,6) n= 616.

*Even those willing to be vaccinated doubt the safety and efficacy of the vaccine*

Our study not only shows who does not want to get vaccinated, but also hints at the reasons why this might be the case (Figure 2). For instance, trust in the vaccine is only widespread among respondents who want to get vaccinated for sure. 86% of them believe that the vaccine is safe. In contrast, only about 40% of those who probably want to get vaccinated believe that the vaccine is safe. Unsurprisingly, only very few of those who probably or for sure do not want to get vaccinated have confidence in the safety of the vaccine.

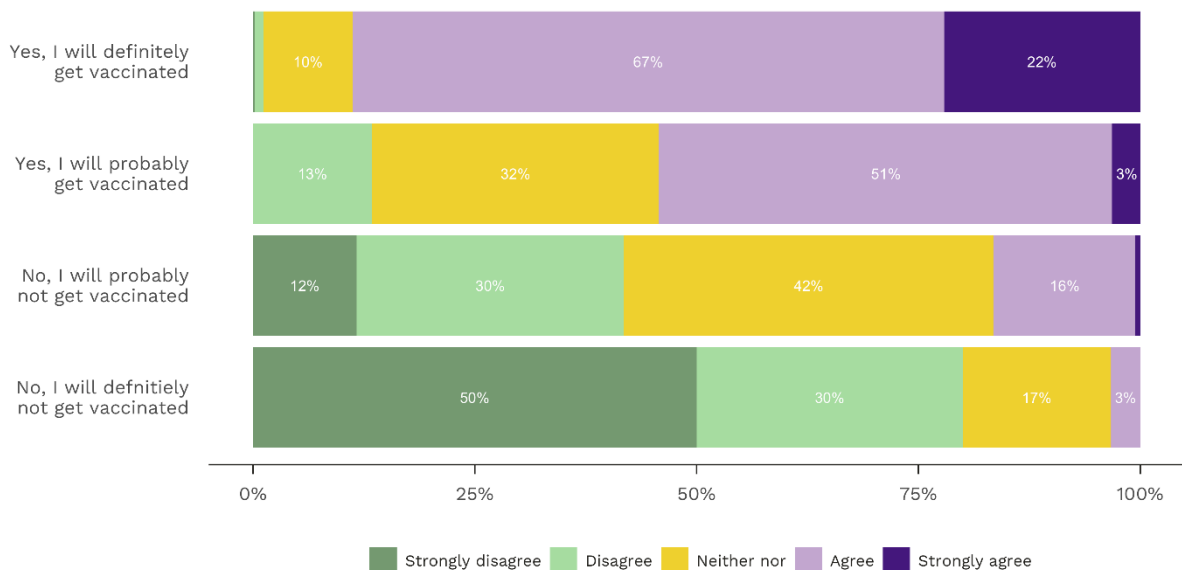
**Figure 2: Safety of the vaccine**



Note: Safety of the vaccine: I have complete confidence that the vaccines against COVID-19 are safe (n=1'041).

A similar conclusion can be drawn when it comes to the question of the efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccination (Figure 3). While about 90% of the respondents who definitely want to get vaccinated believe in its efficacy, only a small majority (54%) of those who probably want to get vaccinated share the same opinion. Those who probably (17%) or definitely (3%) do not want to get vaccinated are even more skeptical. Consequently, if one wants to significantly increase the vaccination coverage, one has first to convince the ones who probably wants to get vaccinated about the safety and the efficacy of the vaccine.

**Figure 3: Efficacy of the vaccine**



Note: Efficacy: I have complete confidence that the vaccines against COVID-19 are effective (n=1'035).

*Those not willing to get vaccinated are neither free riders nor COVID-deniers*

Not all of the people who probably (8.2%) or definitely (42.7%) do not want to get vaccinated are “COVID deniers”: Admittedly, they agree more with the statement that COVID-19 is not a real threat than people who probably (2.1%) or definitely (1%) want to get vaccinated. Nonetheless, a clear majority of those who do not want to get vaccinated disagree with this statement. The same is true for the accusation that vaccination opponents are free riders: only 40% of those who definitely do not want to be vaccinated and just 19% of the "probably not" group are of the opinion that they do not need to be vaccinated if everyone else has been vaccinated against COVID-19. Here, too, a minority is of the opinion that the others should rather be vaccinated and thus not expose themselves to the danger of possible side effects. Finally, there are more people who are against vaccines in general among those who do not want to get a COVID-19 vaccination.<sup>5</sup>

Taken together, these points are important to understand why people do not want to get vaccinated. Yet, it seems that it is also central to clarify the worries about the safety and the efficacy of the vaccine for the group of those who do not want to get vaccinated. Fundamentally, however, it seems important first of all to reach the people who are likely to want to be vaccinated with targeted campaigns. If this group is vaccinated, herd immunity could possibly already be achieved.

<sup>5</sup> 6.5% of the people who probably and 1.4% who certainly want to get vaccinated are also against vaccines in general.

Kasten:

### **FORS COVID-19 MOSAiCH Survey**

In order to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on the society in Switzerland, a three-wave online panel survey with questions on the coronavirus pandemic and the measures to control the spread of the virus was added to the annual social survey MOSAiCH (<https://forscenter.ch/mosaich/>). The focus of this COVID-19 survey is on questions about well-being, work, work-life balance, and politics. The first wave was fielded between end of April to mid-July 2020. The online questionnaire was answered by 2'421 people living in private households in Switzerland and aged 18 or above. The second wave was surveyed during October 2020 and answered by 1'270 respondents. All participants were surveyed a third time between mid-March and mid-April 2021 to better grasp the effects of COVID-19 in the long run. A total of 1'245 people participated in this wave. The results were statistically weighted to achieve better representativeness for the Swiss population.