

Quantum  
Market  
Research

# Sentiment Towards COVID-19 Vaccine Research

Department of Health

Report | February 2021

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THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 1982 (CTH)  
BY THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



# Research methodology



- Online survey conducted via an online research panel



- Questions relating to the COVID-19 vaccine were included in Quantum's AustraliaNOW survey – a weekly survey of 1,000 Australians tracking attitudes and behaviours during the COVID-19 pandemic.



- Nationally representative sample by age, gender and location (State)
- Total sample size of n=1,000 per wave



## Fieldwork dates:

- Wave 1: 2<sup>nd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> October 2020
- Wave 2: 5<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> November 2020
- Wave 3: 3<sup>rd</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> December 2020
- Wave 4: 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> January 2021
- Wave 5: 4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> February 2021

*The project was carried out in line with the Market Research International Standard, AS ISO 20252.*

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# Key take outs

1. **Overall intention to take up the COVID vaccine has remained consistent in February, at four in five Australians (80%).** However, among those that intend to be vaccinated, there has been a slight softening of intentions (a shift from 'very likely' to 'somewhat likely').
2. **There remains some key demographic and attitudinal differences between the cohorts of vaccine consideration, that should be considered in communications development.** The wait-and-see mindset continues to rise, with over a third of those 'somewhat likely' to be vaccinated against COVID-19 wanting to avoid being among the first to have the vaccine.
3. **Reassurance of the safety of the vaccine, combined with a sense of social momentum, are key factors for opening up consideration among those unlikely to be vaccinated.** Results suggest that vaccine hesitancy could be eased by showing evidence of others being safely vaccinated (both in Australia and world-wide), which reflects the key role that social influence plays in vaccine uptake.



# Findings: Sentiment Towards a COVID-19 Vaccine

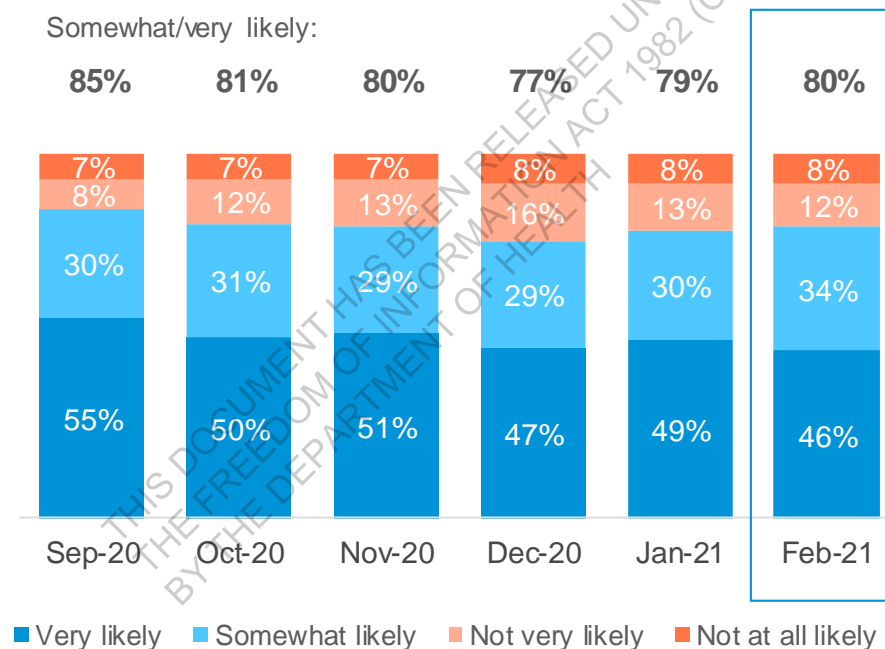
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# Overall intention to take up the COVID vaccine has remained consistent, at four in five Australians (80%)

- While the overall proportion that are 'very/somewhat likely' to be vaccinated remains at four in five, within this there has been a slight softening of intentions, with the proportion 'very likely' decreasing to 46% and the proportion 'somewhat likely' increasing to 34%.
- This has coincided with a slight easing of concern over the coronavirus situation, as well as an increasing amount of media coverage and information available about the vaccines.

## Likelihood to take up coronavirus vaccine (By month)

Somewhat/very likely:



February 2021:

## 80% somewhat/very likely

| BY STATE           | Monthly change (percentage points) |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| NSW (84%)          | +1                                 |
| VIC (78%)          | -1                                 |
| QLD (69%)          | -8                                 |
| SA (89%)           | +9                                 |
| WA (83%)           | +12                                |
| BY REGION          | Monthly change (percentage points) |
| Metropolitan (80%) | 0                                  |
| Regional (79%)     | +2                                 |
| BY AGE             | Monthly change (percentage points) |
| 18-29 (76%)        | +2                                 |
| 30-39 (77%)        | +2                                 |
| 40-49 (78%)        | 0                                  |
| 50-59 (78%)        | +2                                 |
| 60+ (87%)          | -1                                 |

Base: Australians, n=1,001 (February 2021 – AustraliaNOW).

By State: NSW n=322; VIC n=249; QLD n=206; SA n=81; WA n=97. By Region: Metropolitan n=662; Regional n=339. By Age: 18-29 n=214; 30-39 n=180; 40-49 n=171; 50-59 n=158; 60+ n=278.

Q10g. If a government-approved vaccine to prevent or minimise the severity of coronavirus/COVID-19 was available to you right now at no cost, how likely would you be personally to get vaccinated?

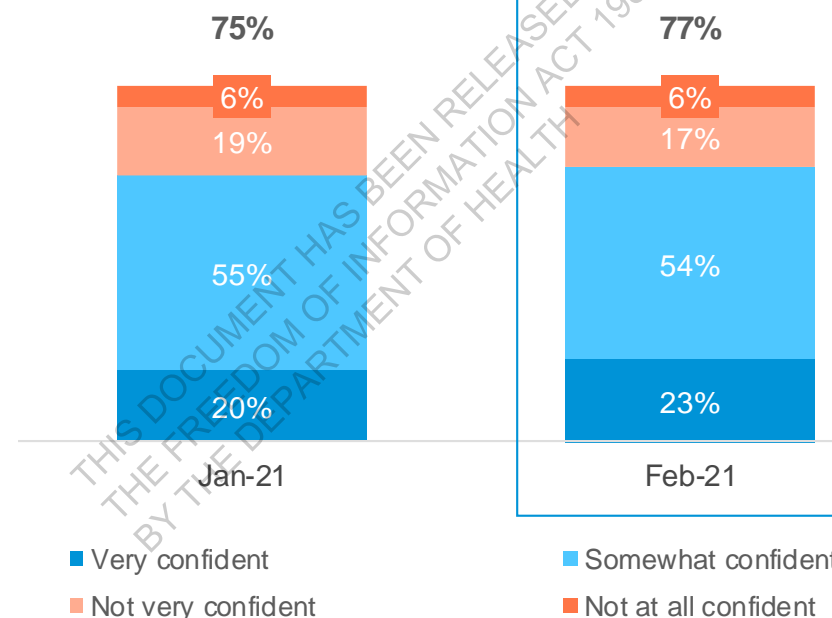


# There has been a slight increase in confidence that the COVID-19 vaccines will be effective

- In February, just over three-quarters of Australians (77%) feel confident that the COVID-19 vaccines that have been developed will be effective.
- There is a link between confidence in vaccine effectiveness and intention to take up the vaccine, with 59% of those who are *not* confident about effectiveness indicating that they would be *unlikely* to be vaccinated.
- Perceived effectiveness is one of a range of barriers to vaccine uptake.

## Confidence that the COVID-19 vaccines will be effective (By month)

Somewhat/very confident:



February 2021:

## 77% somewhat/very confident

| BY STATE           | Monthly change (percentage points) |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| NSW (82%)          | +1                                 |
| VIC (75%)          | +1                                 |
| QLD (75%)          | +2                                 |
| SA (80%)           | +5                                 |
| WA (69%)           | +1                                 |
| BY REGION          | Monthly change (percentage points) |
| Metropolitan (77%) | +1                                 |
| Regional (78%)     | +4                                 |
| BY AGE             | Monthly change (percentage points) |
| 18-29 (76%)        | +5                                 |
| 30-39 (79%)        | +4                                 |
| 40-49 (72%)        | +3                                 |
| 50-59 (72%)        | 0                                  |
| 60+ (84%)          | -1                                 |

Base: Australians, n=1,001 (February 2021 – AustraliaNOW).

By State: NSW n=322; VIC n=249; QLD n=206; SA n=81; WA n=97. By Region: Metropolitan n=662; Regional n=339. By Age: 18-29 n=214; 30-39 n=180; 40-49 n=171; 50-59 n=158; 60+ n=278.

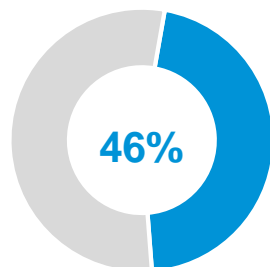
Q10m. How confident are you that the coronavirus/COVID-19 vaccines developed will be effective?

# There remains some key demographic and attitudinal differences between the cohorts of vaccine consideration

## COVID-19 Vaccine consideration – February 2021

| Very likely<br>46% |   | Somewhat likely<br>34% |   | Not at all/not very likely<br>20% |  |
|--------------------|---|------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|--|
| Who                | <b>Older retirees, males</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Males (55%)</li> <li>60+ years (38%)</li> <li>Retired (28%)</li> <li>NSW (37%)</li> </ul>   | Who                    | <b>Younger</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>18-29 years (27%)</li> <li>Single person living with friends (12%)</li> </ul>   | Who                               | <b>Not in the workforce, females</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Females (65%)</li> <li>Home duties (12%), unemployed (10%)</li> <li>QLD (30%)</li> </ul>   |
| Attitudes          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More concerned about the COVID-19 situation (53% very/extremely concerned)</li> <li>More likely to support current restrictions (85%) and border arrangements (84%)</li> <li>More likely to believe most people are acting for the greater good of the community (82%) and we are all working towards a clear, common goal (78%)</li> <li>Show lowest levels of concern about COVID-19 vaccine and highest perceived effectiveness of vaccine (96% confident about effectiveness)</li> </ul> | Attitudes              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feel that Australians are being asked to do too much against the threat of coronavirus (40% agree)</li> <li>Highly likely to want to wait until others have had the vaccine first (37%)</li> </ul> | Attitudes                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less concerned about the COVID-19 situation (15% very/extremely concerned)</li> <li>Less likely to support current restrictions (62%) and border arrangements (67%)</li> <li>Show the most concerns about the vaccine, most notably potential long-term side effects, and are least confident in the vaccine's effectiveness (67% not confident)</li> </ul> |
|                    | <b>Believe in shared community responsibility and vaccine effectiveness</b>   |                        | <b>Open to a COVID-19 vaccine, but are hesitant and likely to wait-and-see</b>  |                                   | <b>Hold the most concerns about the vaccine and are unconvinced of effectiveness</b>   |

# Those that are *very likely* to get vaccinated against COVID-19 still hold some concerns about the vaccine



**Very likely to get vaccinated against COVID-19**

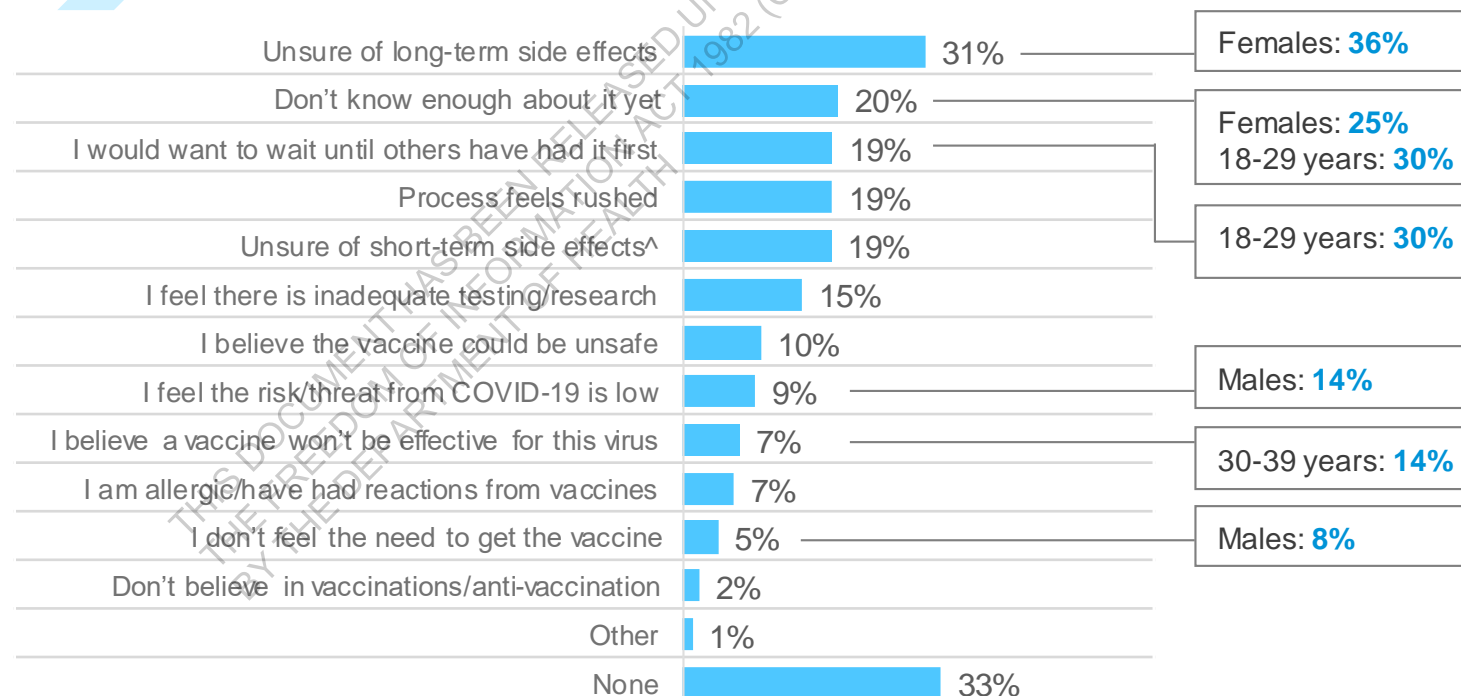
(Feb-21)

- Among those 'very likely' to be vaccinated' (46% of Australians), two-thirds (67%) indicate that they still hold concerns about the vaccine.
- The most common concern (both at the total level, and within this cohort), is uncertainty about the potential long-term side effects.



## Concerns about being vaccinated

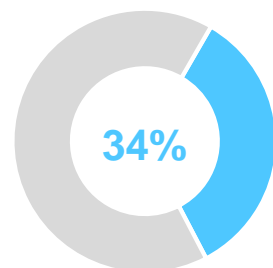
Those very likely to get vaccinated



Base: Very likely to get vaccinated against COVID-19, n=463 (February 2020 – AustraliaNOW). ^Note: New statement added February 2021 relating to side effects in the days following vaccination. Q10I. What concerns, if any, do you have about being vaccinated against COVID-19?



# Over a third of those *somewhat likely* to be vaccinated against COVID-19 want to avoid being among the first to have the vaccine



**Somewhat likely to get vaccinated against COVID-19**

(Feb-21)

- Within the growing cohort that are 'somewhat likely' to get vaccinated, whilst they show willingness to be vaccinated, they are clearly put off by the idea of being the first in the community to receive the vaccine.
- This suggests they would be receptive to a social message as the vaccine roll-out progresses.



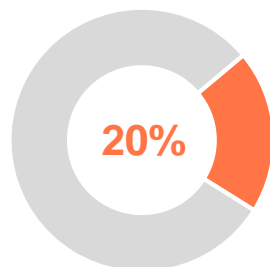
## Barriers to vaccination consideration

Those somewhat likely to get vaccinated

|   |     | Monthly change<br>(percentage points) | 3-monthly change<br>(percentage points) |
|---|-----|---------------------------------------|---|
| Unsure of long-term side effects                      | 40% | -2                                    | -2                                      |
| I would want to wait until others have had it first   | 37% | +3                                    | +6                                      |
| Don't know enough about it yet                        | 37% | -4                                    | -8                                      |
| Process feels rushed                                  | 32% | 0                                     | 0                                       |
| I feel there is inadequate testing/research           | 26% | -5                                    | -7                                      |
| Unsure of short-term side effects^                    | 25% | N/A                                   | N/A                                     |
| I believe the vaccine could be unsafe                 | 18% | +1                                    | -4                                      |
| I believe a vaccine won't be effective for this virus | 13% | +2                                    | +3                                      |
| I feel the risk/threat from COVID-19 is low           | 11% | -1                                    | +1                                      |
| I don't feel the need to get the vaccine              | 8%  | +1                                    | 0                                       |
| I am allergic/have had reactions from vaccines        | 8%  | +1                                    | +1                                      |
| Don't believe in vaccinations/anti-vaccination        | 5%  | +1                                    | -1                                      |
| Other   | 2%  | 0                                     | +1                                      |
| None  | 6%  | -5                                    | -4                                      |

Base: Somewhat likely to get vaccinated against COVID-19, n=342 (February 2020 – AustraliaNOW). ^Note: New statement added February 2021 relating to side effects in the days following vaccination. Q10I. Which of the following (if any) are preventing you from considering being vaccinated against COVID-19?

# The main barrier among those *unlikely* to be vaccinated is the concern about potential long-term side-effects



**Not very/not at all likely to get vaccinated against COVID-19**  
(Feb-21)

- Among this particular cohort (representing 20% of Australians), the barriers that have increased over the past three months include concern around the speed of process (up 12 p.p. to 51%) and the perception that there has been inadequate testing/research (up 9 p.p. to 51%).



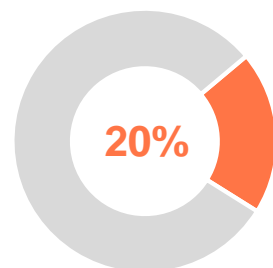
## Barriers to vaccination consideration

Those not very/not at all likely to get vaccinated

|   |     | Monthly change<br>(percentage points) | 3-monthly change<br>(percentage points) |
|---|-----|---------------------------------------|---|
| Unsure of long-term side effects                      | 60% | +6                                    | +7                                      |
| Process feels rushed                                  | 51% | +4                                    | +12                                     |
| I feel there is inadequate testing/research           | 51% | +6                                    | +9                                      |
| Don't know enough about it yet                        | 46% | -5                                    | +4                                      |
| I believe the vaccine could be unsafe                 | 42% | +6                                    | 0                                       |
| Unsure of short-term side effects^                    | 41% | N/A                                   | N/A                                     |
| I would want to wait until others have had it first   | 37% | +4                                    | +13                                     |
| I believe a vaccine won't be effective for this virus | 22% | +5                                    | +1                                      |
| I don't feel the need to get the vaccine              | 16% | -4                                    | -8                                      |
| I feel the risk/threat from COVID-19 is low           | 16% | -7                                    | -5                                      |
| I am allergic/have had reactions from vaccines        | 9%  | +1                                    | +1                                      |
| Don't believe in vaccinations/anti-vaccination        | 8%  | -3                                    | -5                                      |
| Other   | 3%  | -2                                    | -5                                      |
| None  | 3%  | 0                                     | -1                                      |

Base: Not very/not at all likely to get vaccinated against COVID-19, n=196 (February 2020 – AustraliaNOW). ^Note: New statement added February 2021 relating to side effects in the days following vaccination.  
Q10I. Which of the following (if any) are preventing you from considering being vaccinated against COVID-19?

# Reassurance of the safety of the vaccine, combined with a sense of social momentum, are key for opening up consideration



**Not very/not at all likely to get vaccinated against COVID-19**

(Feb-21)

- Among Australians that are unlikely to get vaccinated, over a third (36%) indicated they would consider it if they felt confident that it was safe.
- The next two most common factors (evidence of others being safely vaccinated) reflects the key role of social influence in vaccine uptake.



**What would encourage you to consider being vaccinated?**  
Those not very/not at all likely to get vaccinated

NET ANY:

**77%**

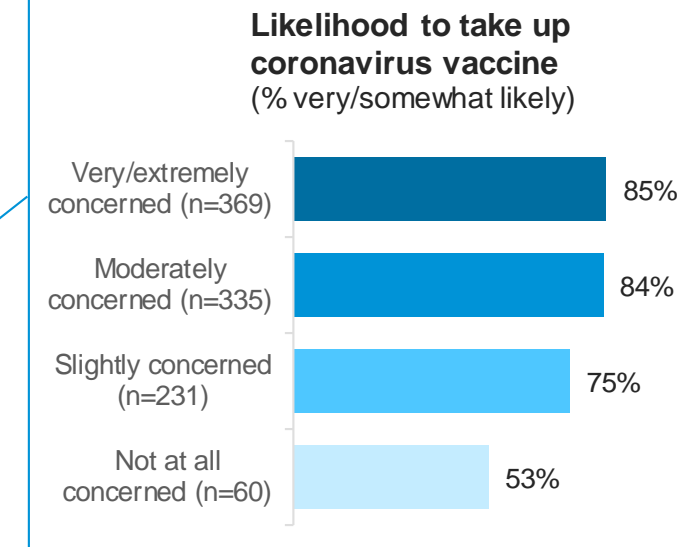
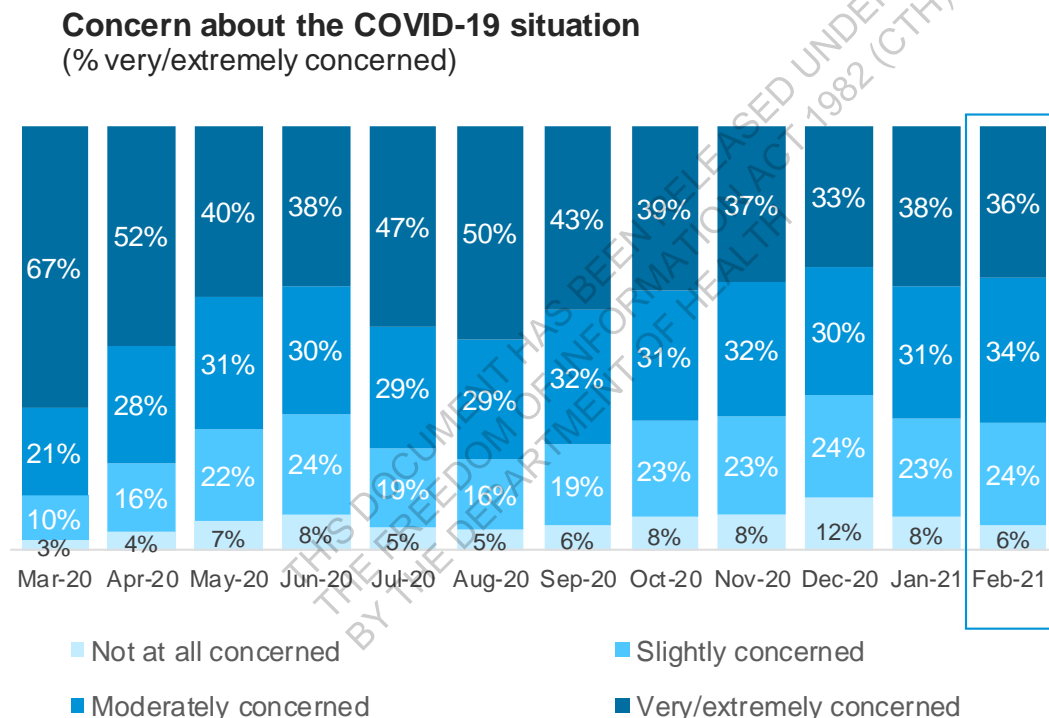
|   |            |
|---|------------|
| If I felt confident that it was <b>safe</b> for me to get the vaccine                                       | <b>36%</b> |
| If <b>large numbers of Australians</b> had been safely vaccinated against COVID-19                          | <b>30%</b> |
| If <b>large numbers of people around the world</b> had been safely vaccinated against COVID-19              | <b>25%</b> |
| If COVID-19 vaccines were shown to be <b>reducing the number of people getting severe symptoms or dying</b> | <b>21%</b> |
| If a COVID-19 vaccine was <b>required for overseas travel</b>   | <b>18%</b> |
| If it meant I <b>didn't have to quarantine</b> on arrival or return when travelling interstate or overseas  | <b>15%</b> |
| If vaccination helped us to <b>get back to normal life</b> more quickly                                     | <b>14%</b> |
| If there were <b>changes to my health</b> that made me more at risk from COVID-19                           | <b>13%</b> |

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| If I was <b>required to interact more in person</b> with the public and/or vulnerable/immuno-compromised people | <b>11%</b> |
| If it gave me <b>more freedom to travel</b> within Australia  | <b>11%</b> |
| If there was <b>community transmission</b> of COVID-19 in my local area   | <b>10%</b> |
| If it meant I <b>didn't have to self-isolate</b> if there was a local outbreak of COVID-19                      | <b>10%</b> |
| If <b>many of my family and/or social circle</b> had been vaccinated for COVID-19                               | <b>10%</b> |
| If vaccination <b>helped Australia's economy recover</b>  | <b>8%</b>  |
| If my <b>workplace/ employer gave me time off</b> to get vaccinated (and recover if I had side effects)         | <b>6%</b>  |
| Other   | <b>2%</b>  |
| None  | <b>23%</b> |

Base: Not very/not at all likely to get vaccinated against COVID-19, n=196 (February 2020 – AustraliaNOW).  
Q10n. Which of the following (if any) would encourage you to consider being vaccinated against COVID-19?

# Community concern about the COVID-19 situation has eased slightly at the beginning of February

- The proportion of Australians very/extremely concerned about the COVID-19 situation has decreased to 36% in February, from 38% throughout January.



Q8 - Firstly, how concerned are you about the Coronavirus/Covid-19 situation in general? \*Note: first week of February only  
All respondents, n=c.980-7,300 per month. 'Don't know' responses excluded.

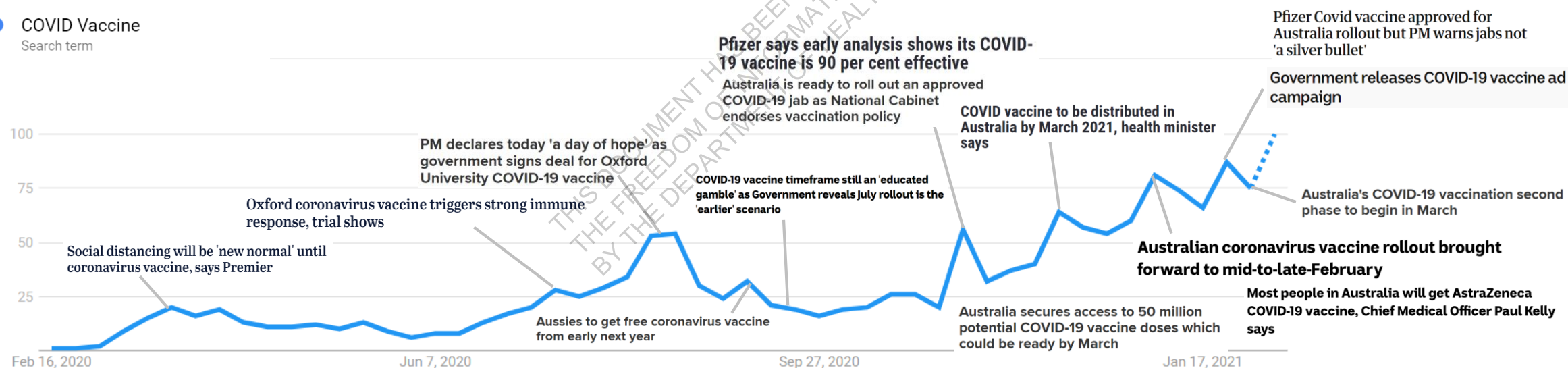
# Public interest in the COVID-19 vaccine has continued to rise towards the end of January and early February

- According to Google Trends data, public interest in the COVID-19 vaccine continued to grow, peaking again in the last week of January, as the government information campaign was announced.

## Google Trends

(Interest over time - Australia)

● COVID Vaccine  
Search term



Source: Google Trends

# About the research

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# Respondent profile

Nationally representative sample by age, gender and location.

N=1,000 per wave

| Wave same size | N=    |
|----------------|-------|
| February 2021  | 1,001 |
| January 2021   | 1,002 |
| December 2020  | 1,001 |
| November 2020  | 1,000 |
| October 2020   | 1,006 |

## Quotas and weighting

Quotas were applied to ensure a representative spread of responses by gender, age and State. Data has also been weighted by State and gender to achieve a representative profile.

## Sample accuracy

The results are based off a total sample size of n=1,000, yielding a maximum margin of error of +/-3.1% (at the 95% confidence interval). This means that for a result of 50%, we can be 95% confident that the result in the actual population will range between 46.9% and 53.1%.

| November 2020                   | Proportion of sample (weighted %) | Number of respondents (n=) |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Total</b>                    | 100%                              | 1,001                      |
| <b>Gender</b>                   |                                   |                            |
| Male                            | 49%                               | 497                        |
| Female                          | 51%                               | 502                        |
| Gender fluid/diverse/non-binary | 0%                                | 2                          |
| <b>Age</b>                      |                                   |                            |
| 18 – 29 years                   | 22%                               | 214                        |
| 30 – 39 years                   | 18%                               | 180                        |
| 40 – 49 years                   | 17%                               | 171                        |
| 50 – 59 years                   | 16%                               | 158                        |
| 60+ years                       | 27%                               | 278                        |
| <b>State</b>                    |                                   |                            |
| NSW                             | 32%                               | 322                        |
| VIC                             | 26%                               | 249                        |
| QLD                             | 20%                               | 206                        |
| SA                              | 7%                                | 81                         |
| WA                              | 10%                               | 97                         |
| Other                           | 5%                                | 46                         |

# Appendix I: Survey questions

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# Survey questions

Survey questions added to AustraliaNOW from 4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

ASK ALL

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FOI 2398

If a government-approved vaccine to prevent or minimise the severity of coronavirus/COVID-19 was available to you right now at no cost, how likely would you be personally to get vaccinated?

## [SINGLE RESPONSE]

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Very likely.....       | 1 |
| Somewhat likely.....   | 2 |
| Not very likely.....   | 3 |
| Not at all likely..... | 4 |

ASK ALL

[IF Q2=2-4] Which of the following (if any) are **preventing** you from considering being vaccinated against COVID-19?

[IF Q2=1] What concerns, if any, do you have about being vaccinated against COVID-19?

## [MULTIPLE RESPONSE]

|  |    |
|--|----|
| I believe the vaccine could be unsafe .....                                    | 1  |
| I feel there is inadequate testing/research.....                               | 2  |
| Unsure of short-term side effects in the days just following vaccination ..... | 14 |
| Unsure of long-term side effects.....  | 3  |
| Process feels rushed.....  | 4  |
| Don't believe in vaccinations/anti-vaccination .....                           | 5  |
| Don't know enough about it yet .....   | 6  |
| I am allergic/have had reactions from vaccines.....                            | 7  |
| I feel the risk/threat from COVID-19 is low.....                               | 8  |
| I don't feel the need to get the vaccine .....                                 | 9  |
| I would want to wait until others have had it first.....                       | 10 |
| I believe a vaccine won't be effective for this virus .....                    | 11 |
| Other (please specify) .....   | 12 |
| None.....  | 13 |

# Survey questions

Survey questions added to AustraliaNOW from 4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

## ASK IF Q2=3-4 (NOT AT ALL LIKELY/ NOT VERY LIKELY)

Which of the following (if any) would encourage you to consider being vaccinated against COVID-19?

### [MULTIPLE RESPONSE, RANDOMISE]

|  |    |
|--|----|
| If there was community transmission of COVID-19 in my local area .....   | 1  |
| If vaccination helped us to get back to normal life more quickly .....   | 2  |
| If vaccination helped Australia's economy recover. ....  | 3  |
| If I felt confident that it was safe for me to get the vaccine .....   | 4  |
| If large numbers of people around the world had been safely vaccinated against COVID-19.....                   | 5  |
| If large numbers of Australians had been safely vaccinated against COVID-19.....                               | 6  |
| If COVID-19 vaccines were shown to be reducing the number of people getting severe symptoms or dying.....      | 7  |
| If many of my family and/or social circle had been vaccinated for COVID-19.....                                | 8  |
| If my workplace/ employer gave me time off to get vaccinated (and recover if I had side effects) .....         | 9  |
| If it gave me more freedom to travel within Australia.....   | 10 |
| If a COVID-19 vaccine was required for overseas travel .....   | 11 |
| If it meant I didn't have to quarantine on arrival or return when travelling interstate or overseas .....      | 12 |
| If I was required to interact more in person with the public and/or vulnerable/ immuno-compromised people..... | 13 |
| If it meant I didn't have to self-isolate if there was a local outbreak of COVID-19.....                       | 14 |
| If there were changes to my health that made me more at risk from COVID-19 .....                               | 15 |
| Other (please specify) .....   | 16 |
| None.....  | 17 |

# Survey questions

Survey questions added to  
AustraliaNOW from 4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> February  
2021.

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**ASK ALL**

How confident are you that the coronavirus/COVID-19 vaccines developed will be effective?

**[SINGLE RESPONSE]**

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Very confident.....        | 1 |
| Somewhat confident.....    | 2 |
| Not that confident.....    | 3 |
| Not at all confident ..... | 4 |

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