



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Annals of Epidemiology

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Trust in government and compliance to COVID-19 vaccination policy



Roger Yat-Nork Chung, PhD, MHS^{a,b,c,*}, Gary Ka-Ki Chung, PhD, MPH^a, Yat-Hang Chan, MA^a, Thomas Sze-Kit Lee, MSc^d, Esther Sui-Chu Ho, PhD, MA^d, Siu-Ming Chan, PhD, MSW^e, Ji-Kang Chen, PhD, MSW^f, Hung Wong, PhD, MA^{a,f}

^aCUHK Institute of Health Equity, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China

^bJC School of Public Health and Primary Care, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China

^cCUHK Centre for Bioethics, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China

^dDepartment of Educational Administration & Policy, Faculty of Education, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China

^eCityU Department of Social and Behavioural Sciences, The City University of Hong Kong, China

^fDepartment of Social Work, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China

Purpose The launch of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) vaccines among students provides an opportunity to re-open schools safely. Nonetheless, under the voluntary vaccination policy, the lack of trust in government since the unprecedented massive social unrest in Hong Kong may hinder the vaccination progress. This study aims to assess the impact of trust in government on the willingness, uptake, and intention of COVID-19 vaccination among students in Hong Kong.

Methods Based on maximum variation sampling of 12 secondary schools of diverse socioeconomic background, 1020 students aged 14–16 years completed an online survey between September and October 2021.

Results 59.2% of the sample received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, 25.2% showed willingness of vaccination, 44.7% of the unvaccinated intended to receive the vaccine, whereas 13.4% were trustful to the government. Results from multivariable logistic regressions showed independent associations of trust in government with greater uptake (adjusted odds ratio [aOR] = 1.63 [95% confidence interval {CI} = 1.06–2.51], compared to distrust), willingness (aOR = 12.40 [95% CI = 8.07–19.05]), and intention (aOR = 4.49 [95% CI = 2.04–9.88]) of vaccination. However, the impact of trust on vaccine uptake reversed (aOR = 0.53 [95% CI = 0.31–0.88]) after additional adjustment for the willingness of vaccination.

Conclusions Students with higher trust tended to have greater vaccination willingness and hence uptake; nonetheless, given the same level of willingness, distrust might have facilitated a faster adoption of vaccination as a self-initiated protective behavior. As the level of trust in government is generally low among secondary school students, rebuilding trust during adolescence is of importance for better preparedness of and greater resilience against the next pandemic.

Acknowledgments The authors acknowledge Worldwide Universities Network Research Development Fund for funding this project.

Supplementary materials Supplementary material associated with this article can be found, in the online version, at doi:[10.1016/j.annepidem.2022.06.012](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annepidem.2022.06.012).