

New research confirms that racism in health care settings increases vaccine hesitancy among ethnic minority groups

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A new study examining the associations between racial and ethnic discrimination and COVID-19 vaccine refusal has found that 1 in 10

people from ethnic minority groups who refused a vaccine has experienced racial discrimination in a medical setting since the start of the pandemic. They also experienced twice as many incidents of racial discrimination as those who had accepted the vaccine.

The results of the survey, published by the *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, indicate a direct effect of racial discrimination on low confidence in the [health system](#) to handle the pandemic, which in turn predicted vaccine refusal.

The study participants included 633 adults belonging to ethnic minority groups who were offered a COVID-19 vaccine between December 2020 and June 2021. The study shows that 6.69% of participants who had refused the vaccine reported they had experienced poorer service or treatment than other people in a medical setting because of their race or ethnicity.

Lead author Dr. Elise Paul, Senior Research Fellow in Epidemiology and Statistics at UCL, said, "Our findings confirm evidence from before the current pandemic, which found associations between experiences of racial discrimination and distrust of the health care system and physicians among ethnic minority adults."

The researchers say that their findings underscore the importance of the role of the UK's National Health Service (NHS) in regaining trust from ethnic [minority groups](#) to increase vaccine uptake among these diverse groups.

The researchers say that public health campaigns to increase COVID-19 vaccine uptake in ethnic minorities should include not only trust-building in vaccines, but also strategies to prevent racial and ethnic discrimination and support people who have experienced discrimination.

Dr. Paul added, "Efforts to raise confidence in COVID-19 vaccines have been insufficient to prevent inequalities in vaccine uptake. Therefore, more work is urgently needed to mitigate the unequal and severe effects of the pandemic on ethnic minority populations."

Dr. Mohammad Razai, Research Fellow at the Population Health Institute, St George's University of London, noted, "Our study shows how racial discrimination erodes trust in the system and prevents ethnic minorities from engaging with the NHS. Failure to tackle racial discrimination would lead to a widening of systemic inequalities putting more ethnic minority lives at risk."

More information: Racial discrimination, low trust in the health system and COVID-19 vaccine uptake: a longitudinal observational study of 633 UK adults from ethnic minority groups, *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* (2022). [DOI: 10.1177/01410768221095241](https://doi.org/10.1177/01410768221095241)

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