

Taking the Pulse of the Nation

How do Australian parents feel about vaccinating their children against COVID-19? It turns out a high proportion of parents remain unwilling or unsure about getting their children vaccinated.

Melbourne Institute's Taking the Pulse of the Nation Survey

2021 Survey Results*: Wave 44 and 45 (1st and 19th November)**

Are Australian parents willing to vaccinate their children?

Vaccination of children is relatively common across Australia, with over 90% of children routinely immunised for a range of diseases such as hepatitis, diphtheria, rotavirus, pneumococcal, tetanus, HPV, measles, mumps and rubella. On the 27th of August, the Australian Technical Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) approved COVID-19 vaccines for children aged over 12 years old. Those between 12 and 15 years old are just as likely to become infected as 18 to 29 year-olds, but much less likely than adults to experience severe disease and many may have no symptoms. However, the chance of infecting others is similar to adults.

Yet COVID-19 vaccination for children remains controversial. As lockdowns end across Australia, the vaccination of children over 12 years old and mandatory vaccination of teachers in public schools have allowed children to return to high school safely. In turn, this has avoided the necessity to close whole schools when positive cases emerge, reducing significant disruption to children's education, psychological wellbeing and parents' work. 61.5% of 12 to 15 year-olds have been fully vaccinated as of 20th November, so there is still some way to go for this age group.

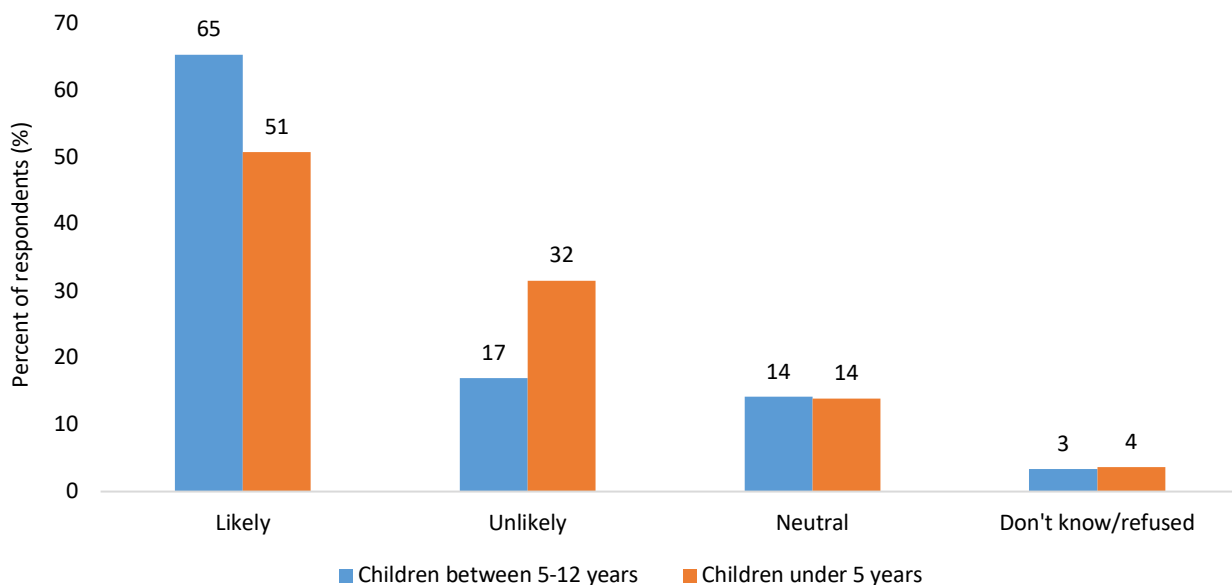
Since vaccination is not currently recommended for children under 12, the potential for disruptions to education and work remain for these children and their parents. Approval of vaccination for children between 5 and 11 years old is being considered by the Therapeutic Drugs Administration but is unlikely to be approved until 2022 when more data becomes available. Vaccination for children 5 to 11 years old has been approved in the United States but not yet in the United Kingdom. Mass vaccination for younger children is not yet being considered in Australia.

Our latest Taking the Pulse of the Nation (TTPN) survey asked specifically about the willingness of parents to have their children under 12 years old vaccinated against COVID-19.

Most parents would want to vaccinate their children, but many remain hesitant

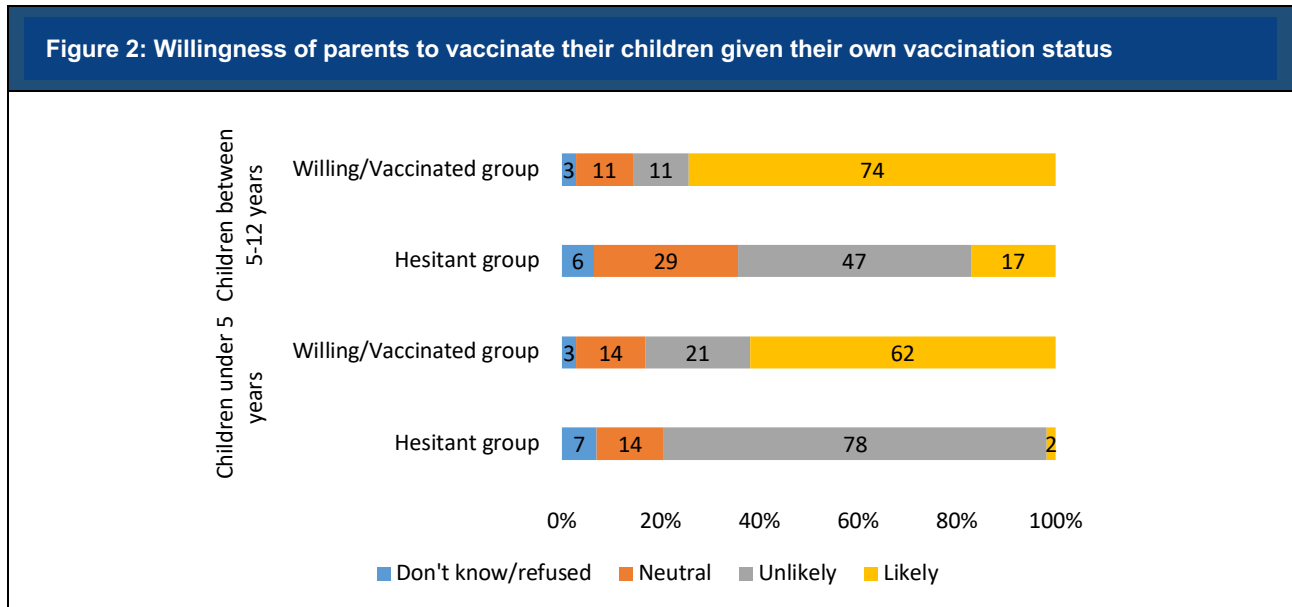
Almost 2 out of 3 parents are willing to vaccinate their 5 to 12 year old children. This drops to 1 in 2 for parents who have children under 5 years old. A high proportion of parents remain unwilling or unsure about getting their children vaccinated.

Figure 1: When an approved COVID-19 vaccine becomes available for your children aged 5-12 and/or aged under 5, how likely/unlikely are you to take your children to get vaccinated?



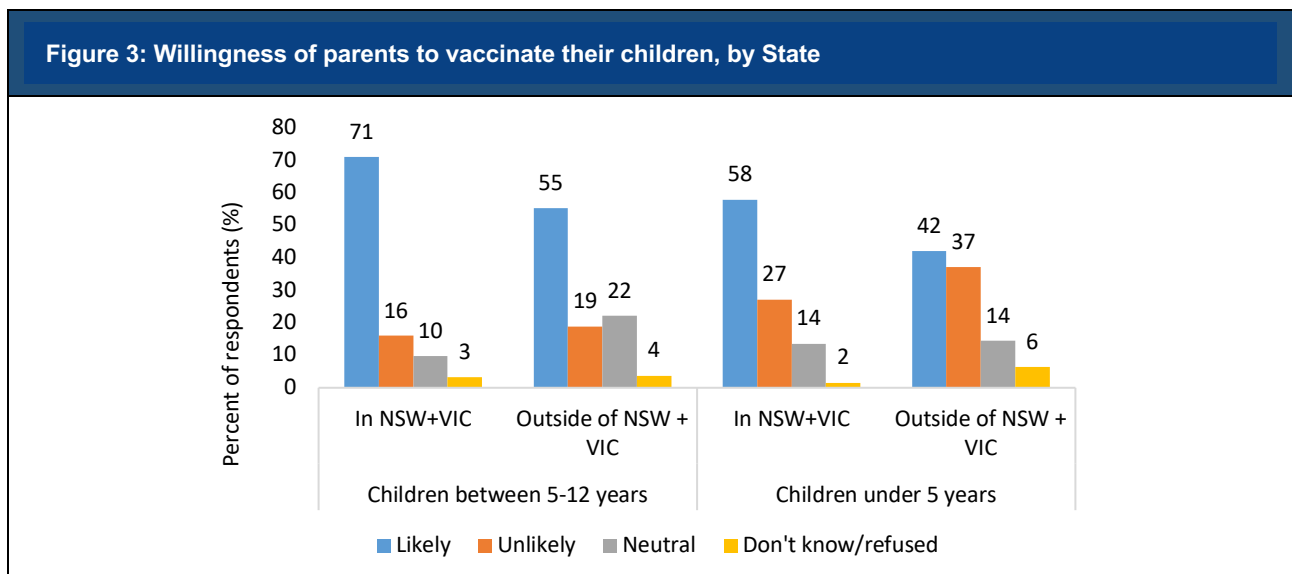
Parents' willingness to vaccinate their children depends on their own vaccination status, but not as much as you think.

Parents are generally more likely to vaccinate their children if the parent is vaccinated or is willing to get vaccinated. This difference is highest for parents of 5 to 12 year-olds compared to parents with younger children. But even among non-hesitant parents at least 26% of them are unwilling or unsure to vaccinate their children. For the vaccine hesitant, almost one-fifth would be likely to have their 5 to 12 year-old children vaccinated, but almost no one would have their under 5's vaccinated.



The willingness of parents to get their children vaccinated is strongly related to previous experience of COVID-19

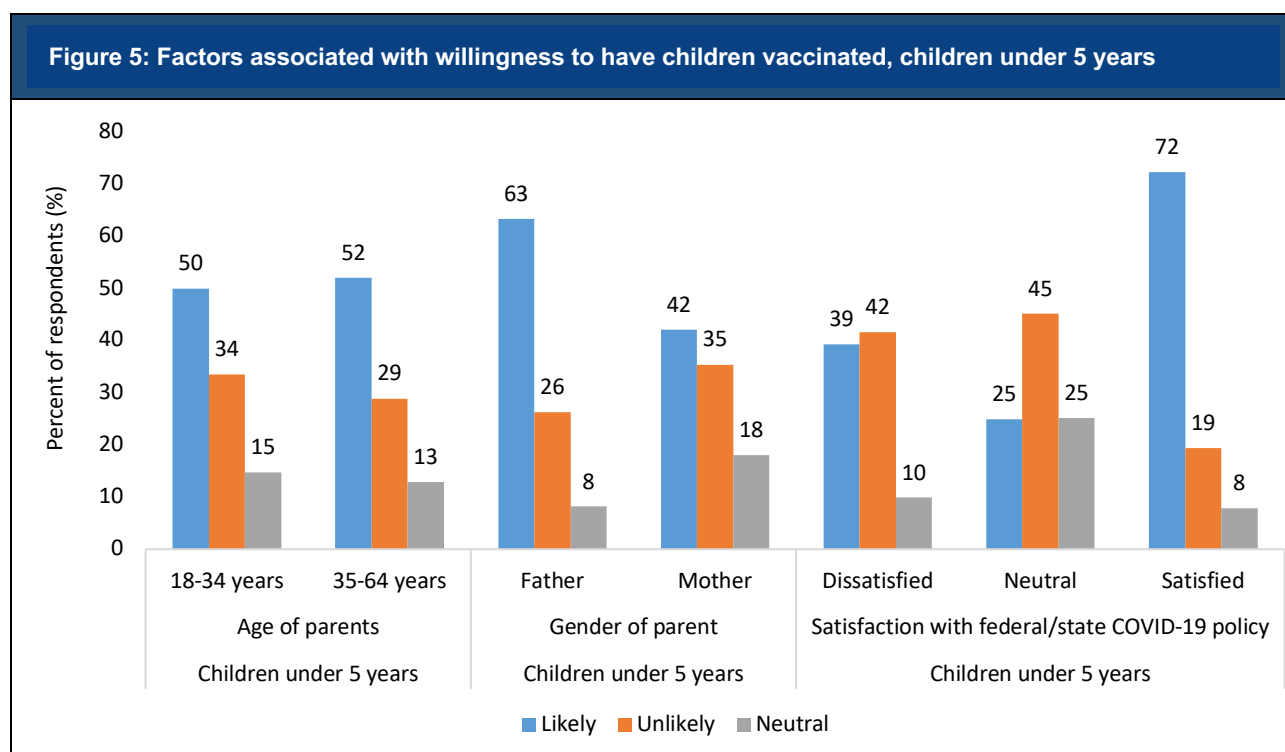
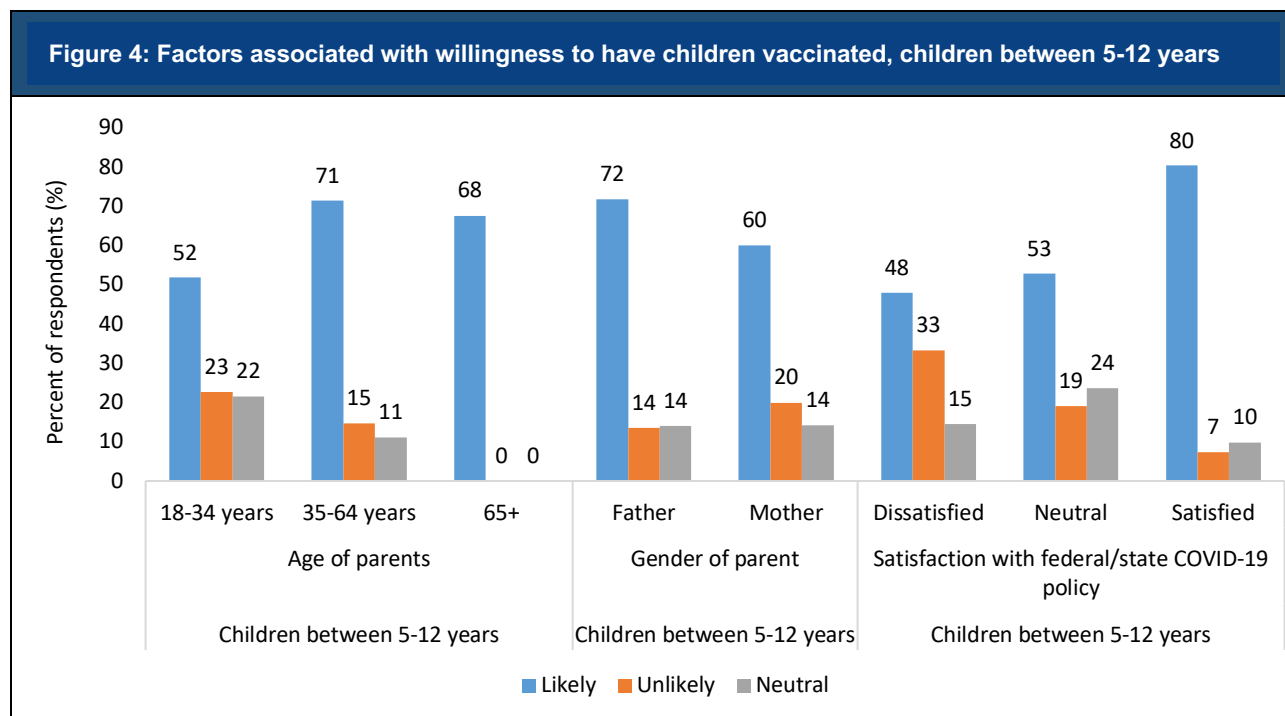
In our [Vaccine Hesitancy Tracker](#), hesitancy has been highest in States that have experienced fewer cases of COVID-19. This also relates to parents' willingness to have their children vaccinated. Parents in New South Wales and Victoria are more willing to have their children vaccinated than parents in other states. These two states have reported the most exposure to the virus and experienced the longest lockdowns.



Age, gender, and satisfaction with government is associated with parents' willingness to vaccinate their children

Younger people and females have traditionally been more vaccine hesitant. This is also the case for younger and female parents. Parents aged under 34 years old are much less willing to have their children vaccinated compared to older parents, and this is stronger for those who have children under 5 years old. Mothers are also less willing to have their children vaccinated than fathers, with these effects again stronger if they have very young children.

Those who are dissatisfied with the federal and state government's COVID-19 policies are much less willing to have their children vaccinated.



* The survey contains responses from two waves of TTPN conducted in November 2021. Data are from 2400 persons, aged 18 years and over, of which 422 had children between 5-12 years while 367 had children under 5 years and responded to the questions. The sample is stratified by gender, age and location to be representative of the Australian population.

**This Report is written by Professor Anthony Scott and Dr Kushneel Prakash.

Melbourne Institute: Applied Economic & Social Research

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About the survey

These results have been drawn from **Taking the Pulse of the Nation** - Melbourne Institute's survey of the impact of COVID-19. The aim of the weekly survey is to track changes in the economic and social wellbeing of Australians living through the effects of the coronavirus pandemic whilst adapting to various changes in Federal and State government policies.

The survey contains responses from 1200 persons, aged 18 years and over each week. The sample is stratified by gender, age and location to be representative of the Australian population.

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