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Rich, white and bolsonaristas are groups that took the least vaccine against Covid

The portion of the Brazilian population most disbelieving with the vaccine against Covid-19 is white, rich, Bolsonarian and evangelical. This is what a survey carried out by the Sou Ciência (Center for Society, University and Science Studies) at Unifesp points out.

Among the richest – those with an income of more than six minimum wages –, 41% claim to have received one or no doses of the immunizer, against 59% who say they have received at least two. In the general population, these numbers are respectively 21% and 79%.

In addition, 32% of those who have completed higher education, 29% of those who declared themselves white and 29% of the men interviewed said they had taken one or no dose of the vaccine, also above the average for the general population.

The highest adherence to the immunizer is among the poorest (86%) — whose income is up to one minimum wage — with only elementary education (89%), women (89%) and blacks (87%).

Political factors also influence the theme. The survey shows that 90% of those who say they vote for Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (PT) have taken two, three or more doses of the Covid-19 vaccine. Among the voters of Jair Bolsonaro (PL), the percentage drops to 63%.

The study center conducted the telephone survey in two rounds, on July 27 and August 10, 2022.

In all, 1,200 people were interviewed in all regions of the country, aged 16 or over, of different educational levels, race, color, income and social class. The margin of error for the total sample is 2.85 percentage points, plus or minus.

Pre-candidate for federal deputy for the PRTB, civil engineer and founder of the National Alliance, Giovani Falcone is an example of the group that was least vaccinated.

White, with a college degree, evangelical and a Bolsonaro voter, he says that the immunizer will only be accepted when the current president receives the doses.

A father of three, he claims that no one in his family has been vaccinated. “They want to force us to take it,” he says. “If it was once a year, I would. But, we have to take four doses, I’m against it.”

Falcone also says that he also decided not to take the flu vaccine this year. “I didn’t take it because it was too messy and I was afraid to take it and give it to Covid-19 together”, he says.

The survey by Sou Ciência shows that, among those hospitalized as a result of complications from the coronavirus, 28% have higher education, with 14% having only elementary education. The percentage is also higher among those with an income of more than six minimum wages (19%), and lower among the poorest (8%).

Another difference that the study points out is hospitalization between sexes – while 22% of men needed medical services, the number was 12% among women.

The study center points out that the percentage may be linked to other factors, such as facility or not with the hospital network. However, he highlights that men, richer and more educated, were at the same time those who chose to be the least vaccinated and those who ended up being the most hospitalized.

Falcone says he has never been infected by the virus and takes ivermectin monthly to protect himself against Covid-19 – the antiparasitic drug is not recommended by the World Health Organization and has no proven effectiveness in treating the disease.

The medicine is part of the so-called Covid kit, which has no scientific proof, and also has other medicines such as hydroxychloroquine, chloroquine, azithromycin and doxycycline.

The research also showed that ineffective drugs are used mainly among evangelicals and Bolsonaro supporters. Among Catholics and Lula voters, the use of the kit among those infected by the virus is much lower.

For Soraya Soubhi Smaili, a researcher at the São Paulo School of Medicine at Unifesp and coordinator of Sou Ciência, the research reveals that scientific denialism has nothing to do with schooling. “[O movimento antivacina] is being imported, which gained a lot of strength from this government with fallacious versions and narratives”, she says.

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For Pedro Arantes, also a professor at Unifesp and coordinator of Sou Ciência, the study sheds light on the part of the population that has been most opposed to scientific positions.

“It’s a kind of rebellious elite,” he says. “What is surprising is that those who have more access to information and could take a conscious attitude are those who are acting in a non-precautionary way putting others at risk.”

He draws attention to yet another research topic that shows that the richest and most educated are the ones who advocate more cuts in funding for science and universities.

The numbers show that 19% of the richest are in favor of cuts, while 46% are indifferent. Among those who have completed higher education, 17% agree with the cuts and 30% are indifferent. Overall, the numbers are 11% in favor, 62% against and 22% indifferent.

“We are facing a richer part of the population that does not care if Brazil ceases to have a health, science and research system”, says the professor.

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